A French Postcolonial Museum or Mission Impossible? The Politics of Postcolonialism at the Musée du Quai Branly and Mucem

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Declaration

I certify that this thesis:

1. does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and

2. to the best of my knowledge and belief, does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

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Abstract

Since their inception, modern museums have played a role in establishing identity. Museums have represented one's own culture and other cultures, and have often been used to convey messages of national identity. However, the types of identity messages that museums convey about self and other have changed over time in response to changing social and historical conditions. As countries have moved beyond colonialism and began grappling with what it means to be a postcolonial society, this has necessitated some significant rethinking around the form and purpose of museums. There are definite difficulties in the creation of a postcolonial museum, due to the philosophical underpinnings and the history of the institution.

These tensions inherent in creating a postcolonial museum are particularly interesting in the case of France. Museums hold a uniquely important role within French culture. Moreover, France has a very significant colonial history and holds political values that are sometimes at odds with the tenets of postcolonialism. This thesis therefore seeks to examine the portrayal of other cultures in contemporary postcolonial museums within France, considering the strengths and limitations of, and possible approaches to, the application of postcolonialism to the museum institution.

The first chapter gives a theoretical and contextual background. It considers the museum's historical background, as well as its role in society as an institution of power-knowledge through its ability to define and to perpetuate norms and behaviours. The chapter then considers how postcolonial writings contribute to the issue of knowledge and identity construction. This chapter concludes by considering how postcolonialism can be applied to the museum context. The second chapter

illustrates these points using the case of France as an example. France highlights particularly clearly the museum's links to national identity construction and the challenges postcolonial museographic approaches can pose in particular political contexts.

The subsequent two chapters provide case studies of the Musée du Quai Branly and Mucem, two museums that treat postcolonial relationships. Overall, this thesis finds that in neither case is a postcolonial museum successfully created. Both fail to give an effective representation of other cultures. Musée du Quai Branly falls into the trap of excessively exoticising the Other, while Mucem takes an overly assimilating approach. However, in both cases, the institutions' postcolonial agendas have been diluted by messages of national or regional French identity and have faced competing and sometimes contradictory demands of other French local or national political goals.

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1-Introduction

Museums are heterotopias, according to Foucault ("Des Espaces" 17). Heterotopias are places that are both real and unreal, both inside and outside normal society, distinct from everyday space (Foucault, "Des Espaces" 15). Museums are outside time, but are "infinitely accumulating time", attempting to preserve all eras in one space (Foucault, "Des Espaces" 17).

While some museums aim to present all places, they are also a product of their own time and place. This is highlighted by two relatively recent, innovative additions to the museum landscape in France, the Musée du Quai Branly (MQB) and the Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée (Mucem), both of which replaced "outdated" institutions. Both centre around cultural representation through the disciplinary lenses of art and ethnography, and both touch on the colonial past and postcolonial present, whether the museum was explicitly declared a "postcolonial museum", as Chirac declared Branly to be, or whether its postcolonial ambitions were more implicit, as is the case at Mucem (Strand 38).

The creation of a postcolonial museum is rather a fraught undertaking. There are tensions between the tenets of postcolonialism and the museum institution, derived from the museum's historical and conceptual underpinnings, which combine to render the creation of a postcolonial museum challenging. Historically, museums have been associated with national identity and display of colonial wealth, while conceptually they have validated and imposed a specifically Western knowledge. In France, where museums play an especially significant role, this is clearly illustrated.

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This thesis seeks to assess the effectiveness of France's efforts to create museums responsive to postcolonialism, using MQB and Mucem as case studies. The research focuses on ethnographic and art museums, as these museums are those most clearly associated with cultural representation. The research is guided by four questions. What is a postcolonial museum? What limitations and possibilities are present in a postcolonial museum? How do identities of self and other complicate the creation of a postcolonial museum? How successfully has France created postcolonial museums with MQB and Mucem?

The second chapter seeks to create the theoretical background and contextual framework to examine the first three questions. Using the works of the philosopher Foucault and postcolonial critics such as Said and Torgovnick, it analyses the conceptual framework and historical background which challenge the outworking of a postcolonial vision in a museum space, and particularly examines the links between knowledge, identity creation and colonialism. The chapter then considers how to develop an authentically postcolonial museum, with particular reference to Spivak and Bhabha. The third chapter illustrates the arguments developed in chapter one to the French case, highlighting how these conceptual and historical limitations apply in France, and considering the possibility of developing such an institution in the French context, given France's specific historical and political relationship to the museum, and French scepticism towards postcolonialism.

Chapters four and five focus on the case studies of MQB and Mucem. Both institutions aim to represent collections with former colonial histories in

contemporary, postcolonial environments; however, both have approached these objectives very differently. The case studies examine the institutions' effectiveness in obtaining these objectives, considering limitations associated with competing agendas and institutional and historical context.

This paper aims to make an original contribution by considering cultural representation in France across the two newest significant museums to adopt a postcolonial approach to cultural representation. While increased concerns around museal representations of cultures, particularly in ethnographic museums, dates from the 1980s, the topic remains contentious and has led to ongoing attempts to rethink and renovate museums, particularly in Europe (Mazé et al. 35).

A catalyst for this concern was Bennett's *The Birth of the Museum,* published first in 1995. Here he introduced the concept of the "exhibitionary complex" which analysed the perpetuation of racist colonial constructs within museums. Bennett subsequently argued that museums can move beyond the exhibitionary complex through innovative practice, such as "multisensory forms of visitor engagement" (*Exhibition* 57).

Anthropologist Michael Ames's *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes,* published in 1992, was a further early influential work, being among the first to connect museums to postcolonialism. He highlighted problems of stereotyping, fabrication and exploitation associated with museal representation of other cultures, as well as the difficulty of the art/artefact divide. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett further developed this problematic art/artefact division in her 1998 book *Destination Culture*, which considers the

museum context's role in establishing the meaning of displayed peoples and objects and notes increasing preference for the categorisation of objects as art rather than artefact as an attempt to revalorise ethnographic objects (25).

Recently, postcolonialism in museums has been given a more thorough treatment, with various edited books appearing. *Museums in Postcolonial Europe*, edited by Thomas and published in 2010, highlights issues of race and racism within museums, and warns against the erasure of the colonial past, while *The Postcolonial Museum*, edited by Chambers et al. and published in 2014, provides examples of how postcolonalism is necessitating a worldwide reimagining of the institution.

The postcolonial museum MQB has attracted significant media and scholarly debate. Initially, a great deal of the debate played out in French newspapers, particularly *Le Monde,* during the early 2000s. While L'Estoile wrote in *Le Monde* a critical account of the museum's regressive and exoticising tendencies ("De l'Exposition Coloniale"), other contributors to *Le Monde* noted its success with a wide audience (eg. de Roux, "Un Public Nouveau"). L'Estoile devotes a chapter in *Le Goût des Autres* to developing his criticisms. Sally Price's 2007 publication, *Paris Primitive,* remains the only academic monograph devoted to the MQB, and she identifies similar concerns to L'Estoile and criticises the museum's primitivist trope.

The journal *Le Débat* devoted an entire issue to MQB. It concentrated on the debate between art and ethnography debate, which had engulfed the museum in relation to its primarily disciplinary affiliation (eg. Derlon; Descola). MQB has remained a

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subject of some academic interest, with recent articles exploring specific exhibitions or artefacts rather than evaluating the entire concept.

Unlike the academic excitement occasioned by MQB, Mucem has received surprisingly limited attention. There have been a few brief articles on the museum, often discussing technical design details. Some writers have discussed Mucem in relation to urban planning, including Mah, Gascquet-Cyrus and Andres. Analysis of the Mucem' museography, however, seems altogether lacking. Similarities of the objectives and challenges at Mucem and MQB make a comparison between the two a rich topic to explore. However, the only comparison, undertaken by Bourisquot, is brief and written prior to Mucem's completion.

This thesis aims to address the gap in relation to scholarship around Mucem, and to provide a much fuller comparative treatment of Mucem and MQB. Much research has focused on individual cultural institutions, with some exceptions pertaining to comparisons between MQB and Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration (eg. Fauvel). However, comparative approaches create a broader perspective. Comparative approaches indicate different ways cultural representation can be addressed, enabling identification of their benefits and disadvantages. Similarities across institutions may highlight trends that are not simply the result of a particular institutional context, but reflective of broader social trends. Moreover, in the case of MQB and Mucem, opened seven years apart, this comparative approach allows the potential to trace developments in thinking around cultural representation in France.

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2-Museums and Postcolonialism: A Conceptual Challenge

2.1-Postcolonialism Meets the Museum

Given that museums such as ethnographic and arts museums are engaged in the display of other cultures, it is unsurprising that the concept of the postcolonial museum has generated interest in the museum world.

This chapter aims to consider what a postcolonial museum could be, and to identify limitations and possibilities for museums' engagement with postcolonialism. The chapter firstly begins by considering limitations with the adoption of postcolonialism within the museum. Two main limitations are identified: historical and conceptual. To grapple with these limitations, which are linked, this chapter draws upon the work of Foucault, and postcolonial scholars such as Said and Torgovnick. However, the museum also offers possibilities for engagement with postcolonialism. This chapter's discussion of these possibilities is informed by postcolonial critics Spivak and Bhabha, as well as examples of contemporary practice.

2.2-Conceptual Limitations of the Postcolonial Museum

2.2.1-Construction of Knowledge in the Museum

Museums' power and political utility derive from their capacity to define knowledge. Foucaults thoughts on the nature of knowledge help illuminate this relationship between museums and knowledge. Two aspects of Foucault's work are particularly useful: firstly, the socially and historically constructed nature of knowledge; and

secondly, the relationship between power and knowledge. These ideas draw attention to conceptual limitations of the museum, as they suggest that we inadvertently replicate our own culturally specific worldview when we structure and represent knowledge within the museum, and thus impose our own knowledge on the representation of knowledge from other cultures.

Foucault illustrates the culturally and historically specific nature of knowledge by examining a historic Chinese encyclopedia (Foucault, *Order of Things* xviii). This encyclopedia classifies animals into seemingly ludicrous categories, such as fantasy animals, embalmed animals and the emperor's animals (Foucault, *Order of Things* xvi-xviii). These categories seem strange to us, Foucault suggests, not because we have not heard of, for example, fantasy animals, but because we are unaccustomed to seeing these groupings of information classified and juxtaposed in this way (Foucault, *Order of Things* xvii). Contemporary readers of this encyclopedia may have found such arrangements of knowledge self-evident; to us, however, this proximity of the real and fantastical appears incongruent (Foucault, *Order of Things* xix).

Through this example, Foucault highlights that taxonomies, classifications, labels and orders that underlie our construction of knowledge are specific to our time and place, no matter how neutral or scientific they appear (Foucault, *Order of Things* xx-xxi).

For Foucault, underlying our construction of knowledge there is an *episteme*, an epistemological field particular to a place and time, creating the conditions of

possibility of knowledge (*Order of Things* xxiii-xxiv). Foucault argues that the history of knowledge is not a narrative of progress, but rather simply a reflection of what is rendered possible by the historical and material conditions of a given period (*Order of Things* xxiv-xxv). For Foucault, historical conditions are not merely influential but rather constitutive of knowledge; this indicates that the knowledge of our own period, which may seem self-evident and objectively true, is merely another transient historical and material product (*Order of Things* xxvi).

Museums are, of course, both a product of, and contributor to, their *episteme*, this epistemological unconscious of an era. The concept of the museum institution is itself a product of a particular place and time, originating as a result of the social conditions of the late eighteenth century. Ongoing shifts in museums' form and purpose reflect the changing socio-political landscape.

Museums can, of course, be deliberately used as tools shape political views through processes such as propaganda; however, the processes of knowledge construction Foucault discusses are more subtle and unconscious social processes of knowledge construction, resulting from the epistemological field itself. Just as the Chinese encyclopedia presents a concept of knowledge in its classification system, so too do museums. In their classification systems and layouts, museums present an ordered conception of the world. It is in this ordering of objects, rather than the objects themselves, that a narrative is created (Amato 49). Museums are never simple reflections of an objective knowledge, but shape a knowledge that is a historically-contingent social product.

For Foucault, knowledge and discourse are inseparable. Discourse is constructed from statements; yet Foucauldian statements are not limited to linguistic utterances. Rather, statements include entities as diverse as grammatical tables, graphs, taxonomies and algebraic equations (Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* 92-3). Statements such as tables, classifications and taxonomies can provide an exhaustive classification of a field of knowledge, creating order, hierarchies and relationships that structure the discursive object (Hirst 382). Hirst argues that museums' layouts and classifications are a Foucauldian discursive statement (382). In creating categories and hierarchies, museums define objects, their relationships, and what is included or excluded in a field. To represent other cultures in this way, one is faced with the difficulty of imposing one's own knowledge on other cultures who may have entirely different ways of organising knowledge.

2.2.2-Museums as Institutions of Power-Knowledge

There are incompatibilities with museums' functions as institutions of power-knowledge and their delivery of a postcolonial message, given that institutions of power-knowledge are associated with perpetuating culturally specific norms and behaviours. Indeed, postcolonial writers are sceptical of institutional authority, given the role of institutions in exercising colonial power (Darian-Smith 292).

In *Discipline and Punish,* Foucault discusses institutions' capacity to exercise social control through their relationship to knowledge. Foucault proposes the concept of "power-knowledge" to explain institutions' power to govern individuals' behaviour. Foucault traces the origins of power in modern society to the emergence of new

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social and political institutions appearing in the late 18th century ("Une Histoire"

106). According to Foucault, power in the Enlightenment period resided in the

sovereign (Hirst 390). This was essentially a negative, arbitrary power, based in

repression and punishment (Hirst 390). Power in modern society, by contrast, is not

prohibitive so much as productive (Hirst 391). Foucault explains that power is

accepted because it is not "a force that says no, but…it induces pleasure, forms

knowledge, produces discourse" ("Power/Knowledge" 119). Rather than top-down,

power is better conceived of as pervasive and diffused throughout society (Hirst

392).

Power is no longer limited to state organs visibly associated with power, such as

courts and parliaments; instead, it is disseminated through many less obvious

institutions, such as clinics, prisons and asylums, which derive their authority from

the sciences of medicine, psychology and criminology (Foucault, *Discipline* 18-22).

There is a symbiotic relation here between knowledge and power: power needs

knowledge to be productive, and knowledge requires power to construct and

organise the knowledge-creating institutions (Hirst 391). As Foucault explains:

> there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of
>
> knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the
>
> same time power relations. (*Discipline* 27)

It is this mutually constitutive relationship which leads Foucault to identify the hybrid

of power-knowledge.

Although Foucault did not explicitly identify museums as institutional articulations of

power-knowledge, they nevertheless carry hallmarks of this, being an expression of

both state authority and an environment of knowledge development. Museums perpetuate the *episteme* of our era, illustrating and sustaining the taxonomies and classifications which form the basis of the disciplines they present. They have functioned as "surfaces of emergence" for particular constructions of knowledge, such as art history and ethnography (Crimp 24-5.) This role in shaping knowledge and norms leads Preziosi and Farago to claim that "museology is by nature not simply complicit with modern social practices: it is constitutive of it" (23).

Given that any construction of knowledge is a product of a place and time, it would seem difficult to accurately represent one's own culture, and nearly impossible to authentically represent another culture. Moreover, the role of the museum as a power-knowledge institution contributing to the governance of a population seems to be at odds with the creation of a postcolonial museum, given that postcolonialism challenges authority and hierarchy. Thus, there are conceptual difficulties with the museum as a tool for developing a postcolonial perspective on other cultures.

2.3-Historical Limitations of the Postcolonial Museum

Alongside these conceptual difficulties, the museum's historical associations with nationalism and colonialism jeopardise its compatibility with postcolonialism. This section traces the development of the modern museum in the eighteenth century to the colonial museum and its implications for museums today. Our consideration of these historical limitations is underpinned by our previous discussion of Foucauldian thought in relation to the museum institution. It utilises the definition of the museum provided by Duncan and Wallach, who focus on the "Universal Survey Museum"

which incorporates such public and national museums such as the Louvre and British Museum (452). Such museums are particularly pertinent, being the first and most influential type of modern museums, developing alongside the nation-state to support the development of national identity, citizenship and civic values (Duncan and Wallach 452).

2.3.1-Museums as Political Institutions

Modern museums are both sources of knowledge and political tools, defining what is known, what is valued, and what is silenced. As Anderson identifies: "museums, and the museumising imagination, are both profoundly political" (178). As official institutions, state museums present state-sanctioned, "authoritative" version of truth, telling a people's story. Fittingly, Bhabha notes that nations are also narratives ("Nation and Narration" 1). Indeed, the desire to create a narrative of national origin and identity was what led to the growth of the modern museum. Museums can therefore be contested sites, as they determine the representation of the community and its most significant truths (Duncan 101-2). What is presented in a museum "involves the much larger question of who constitutes the community and who shall exercise the power to define its identity" (Duncan 102).

2.3.2-Origins of the Museum

Modern museums emerged in the eighteenth century in conjunction with the development of the nation-state. Princely galleries, existing since the sixteenth

century, functioned to demonstrate the monarch's identity and status to foreign and domestic visitors, a function that remains somewhat perceptible in contemporary museums (Duncan 93). However, the emergence of the modern nation-state saw a significant shift in the museum's purpose. Changing socio-political conditions, such as the rise of nationalism and of the bourgeoisie, redefined the relationship between people and the museum. McClellan finds a correlation between the emergence of nationalism and the arrival of the "museum age" post-1820, noting that "the foundation of a national museum has been a high priority of many newly founded nation-states" (29). Collections, formerly illustrations of royal power, became illustrations of the nation's identity, heritage and artistic genius (Duncan 93-5). They also function as demonstrations of the nation-state's characteristics and its relationship to its people. Visitors are now "addressed as citizens" and shareholders in the displayed wealth (Duncan and Wallach 455-6), and museums demonstrate the nation's virtue in its provision of enlightenment and education for citizens (Duncan 88).

2.3.3-Development of the Exhibitionary Complex

Bennett, following Foucault, identifies the exhibitionary complex as an explanation of the social forces at work in the nineteenth century museum. An increasing range of institutions of display developed during the nineteenth century, including exhibitions and museums; these functioned as institutions of power-knowledge, linked to emerging disciplines, such as art history, biology and anthropology (Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex" 413).

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In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault proposes that, by the nineteenth century, society has shifted from one of spectacle to one of surveillance (10-14). Activities that were formerly public became private. Most notably, discipline moved from the public spectacle of the scaffold to the privacy of the institution (Foucault, *Discipline* 10-14). These shifts reflect the changing nature of power. While public executions intended to impress state power upon the masses, by the nineteenth century, discipline was aimed at reformation (Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex" 417). Criminals were hidden, subject to reforming schemes and surveillance, designed to cause the internalisation of desired behaviours (Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex" 414-417). This, Foucault finds, is evidence that power in society has moved from spectacle to surveillance, based on internalisation of discipline (Foucault, *Discipline* 216-7).

Bennett, however, finds this an overgeneralisation ("The Exhibitionary Complex" 418). While punishment was no longer spectacular, Bennett argues that this does not mean that spectacle and display of power has ceased, as evidenced by spectacular exhibitions such as London's 1851 Great Exposition and Paris's 1855 Exposition Universelle ("The Exhibitionary Complex" 418). Rather, Bennett identifies the emergence of the "exhibitionary complex" in the nineteenth century, which is both a juxtaposition and parallel to Foucault's surveillance complex, part of this same shifting relationship between the state and people ("The Exhibitionary Complex" 414-5). While punishment became increasingly private, the exhibitionary complex turned formerly private objects into public spectacles in museums and exhibitions, with the goal of displaying power (Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex" 414).

Unlike punishment, which aimed to terrorise and construct people as objects of state power, the museum "position[ed] people on the other side of power," as its subjects and beneficiaries (Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex" 420). People were invited to see state power and wealth as theirs, and observe how organisation and knowledge functioned for the public good (Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex" 420). As Bennett explains:

> to identify with power, to see it as, if not directly theirs, then indirectly so, a force regulated and channelled by society's ruling groups but for the good of all; this was the rhetoric of power embodied in the exhibitionary complex - a power made manifest…by its ability to organize and coordinate an order of things and to produce a place for the people in relation to that order. ("The Exhibitionary Complex" 420)

As such, museums, similarly to discipline, aimed to instil self-discipline and governance in individuals, but used education rather than punishment (Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex" 415).

Part of the educational process involved promoting civilised identity, which became part of the role of nineteenth century museums. As an institution of power-knowledge, museums shape people's identity, moulding self-governing citizens through the internalisation of values and behaviour. During the nineteenth century, initial fears about exposing museums to the "rowdy" public gave way to the use of museums as civilising tools (Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex" 423-4). It was, as Kellogg noted, as if exhibitions themselves created public orderliness, with imposing buildings and religious-like ceremonies aweing crowds into decorum (qtd. in Rydell 14). Some institutions even provided visitor etiquette guidelines (Bennett, "The

Exhibitionary Complex" 425). Museums became "new instruments for moral and cultural regulation" and effectively constructed their own public (Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex" 426-33).

2.4-Colonialism and the Museum

While representation of identity are fundamental to modern state museums, this identity has been formed in processes of comparison. As chapter three discusses, the Louvre displayed classical Greek and Roman works to create a French identity of enlightenment. With the arrival of colonialism, many European museums became repositories for colonial artefacts, demonstrating the nation's power and wealth. Identities of colonies and colonisers became increasingly connected, with the prestige of one enhancing the prestige of the other (Anderson 180). Postcolonial criticism examines the role of identities, and highlights links between identities, knowledge and power.

2.4.1-Overview of Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism is a field of study that has developed since the late 1970s. It examines the history and legacy of colonial rule, and analyses the continued impacts of colonial and neo-colonial power on contemporary culture and politics (Ashcroft et al.). Postcolonialism explores the ideological framework that underlies colonialism and neo-colonialism. Indeed, the identity constructions that enabled colonialism to occur were founded in particular ideological frameworks, such as Darwinism. French identity, grounded in concepts such as republicanism and humanist civilisation,

propelled France to extend a *mission civilisatrice* to "uncivilised" peoples (McDougall

494-5).

Fanon, a Martinique-born psychiatrist writing in the 1950s and 1960s, already

encompassed themes about identity that would become familiar to postcolonial

writers. Fanon focuses on the complexities of identity resulting from colonialism. He

notes that black identity is created in opposition and inferiority to white identity,

becoming white's "other" (Fanon 217). Fanon made clear that otherness was a

"construct designed to uphold and consolidate imperialist definitions of selfhood"

(Fuss 24). While white is not defined against black, black remains chained to white

for its identity; it is always an object to white subjecthood (Fuss 23).

Said, considered the founding father of colonialism, echoes many of Fanon's ideas in

relation to his discussion of colonialism in the Middle East. Said employs the term

"Orientalism" to describe the West's view of the East. Orientalism is "a system of

knowledge about the Orient and an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into

Western consciousness", which passed from scholarly understanding into general

culture (Said, *Orientalism* 14). Drawing on Foucault's work, two core problematics

Said explores are "the representation of other cultures, societies, histories; [and] the

relationship between power and knowledge" (Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered" 1).

Orientalism posits that Western perceptions of the East are socially constructed and

mutually dependent, resulting in the creation of an Eastern exotic other (Dorsey and

Readale 186-7). East functions as the West's binary opposite; with perceived

qualities of irrationality, inferiority, and incivility, the East serves to reinforce the

West's identity as logical, educated and civilised (Dorsey and Readale 186). By

contrast to this constructed Orient, Europe gained its identity and perception of superiority, while the Orient served as a "surrogate and even underground self" (Said, *Orientalism* 11). There was nothing consensual about Europe's construction of the Orient; rather, Europe simply spoke for the East (Said, *Orientalism* 5).

Similar binaries identities are evident in the concept of primitivism, another fantasy pervading the West's perception of their colonies in so-called primitive (Torgovnick 10). The exotic other was also established in opposition to the West. It is by contrast to the simplicity and degeneration of primitive cultures that Western cultures could identify themselves as upright agents of the *mission civilisatrice* (Torgovnick 8). It is by contrast to the stasis of primitive cultures that civilized nations could know themselves to be advancing (Torgovnick 11).

2.4.2-Museums as Colonial Institutions

Western constructions of knowledge, then, underlie the understanding of other cultures, and their representation in museums. Through the colonial period, Western disciplines such as anthropology, biology and geography, and their associated tools and institutions, enabled the establishment of a knowledge of so-called "non-civilised" peoples. Scientific theories and descriptive mechanisms were utilized to classify people's position within broader human categories, and to define in scientific terms the relationship between coloniser and colonised. As Bennett explains, history and archaeology were employed to explain the origins of European cultures, while geology, biology and anthropology were employed to understand "uncivilised" cultures; anthropology in particular allowed a link between culture and nature to be

established, a zone which was thought to best account for the description of

"uncivilised" people ("The Exhibitionary Complex" 430).

The application of various Western tools of measurement to colonies enabled these

disciplinary classifications. Anderson suggests that the tools of defining geographic,

social and cultural knowledge, specifically maps, censuses and museums, were

among the most visible "institutions of power"; these gave colonisers the power to

label, classify, and categorise colonial possessions, constructing their colonies'

identities in the world's eyes (163-4). In choosing which data to collect, colonisers

defined what would constitute knowledge in relation to their colonies (Anderson 167-

8). Categories were established with reference to the coloniser's vision of what

society should be, rather than what was in existence; imposed identities often failed

to correspond to locally established identities (Anderson 166-7). For example,

Spanish colonisers imposed the categories *principales* (princes), *hidalgos*

(noblemen), *pecheros* (commoners) and *esclavos* (slaves) across several Spanish

colonies, without reference to pre-existing social structures (Anderson 166-7). While

such tools might appear neutral, they nevertheless imposed certain, European

constructions of the world, which denied other groups their own identities, social

structures and organising tools.

Loss of voice and rights to self-representation are broached by Spivak. She

introduces the concept of subalternity, in which subaltern peoples are those

excluded from a colony's hierarchy of power. Spivak defines the subaltern as

someone "removed from all lines of social mobility" ("Scattered Speculations" 475).

As Gandhi notes, the issue of subalternity is always present when investigating

historical relationships of dominance and subordination (2). Spivak's most notable

explication of this concept is her 1988 essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" This

question forefronts issues of representation by questioning who has the right to

speak, and for whom. To participate in political discourse, the subaltern unfortunately

must adopt hegemonic ways of engagement and speech; moreover, the subaltern is

often spoken for by Western intellectuals, who think they know what the subaltern

needs (Spivak, "Can the Subaltern?"). Spivak highlights this issue in her essay

"French Feminism in an International Frame," where she responds to French feminist

Kristeva's text *About Chinese Women.* She criticises Kristeva's observations on a

group of Chinese women: the reader never hears the Chinese women speak in

Kristeva's text, so they never have the right to self-representation; we only hear

Kristeva's fanciful and under-researched interpretation of their situation (Spivak,

"French Feminism" 155). Such silencing reminds us of the mute nature of

subalternity (Gandhi 2).

Said finds similar processes at work in relation to the Orient, whereby the creation of

knowledge of the Orient enables control of it. Classifying, re-naming and re-defining

the Orient enables "scrutiny, study, judgement, discipline or governing" over it (Said,

Orientalism 41). Said explains that Orientalism can be considered a:

> corporate institution for dealing with the Orient - dealing with it by making
>
> statements about it, authorising views of it, describing it, by teaching it,
>
> settling it, ruling over it: in short, orientalism as a Western-style for dominating
>
> restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (Said, *Orientalism* 11)

Museums and exhibitions were particularly powerful in making this construction of knowledge of the other publicly visible. Said notes the role that museums play in reifying constructions of the Orient, and indeed considers that the entire Orient is represented as "an imaginary museum without walls" insofar as perceptions of the Orient have become fragmented and classified, as in a museal representation of knowledge, due to the application of Western knowledge tools to the Orient (Said 166).

Colonial displays, however, spoke about as much about the coloniser as they did about the represented colony (Anderson 180). It is through relationship with a colony that the colonising country can cast itself as civilised and benevolent, and to acquire and showcase wealth. In fact, identity, as constructed by scientific classification, was applied within museums to legitimise a scientific, yet blatantly racist, view of the world, and to justify and normalise colonial relationships. Based on the newly emerged theories of evolution and social Darwinism, there was a belief that people groups could be classified across a scale from primitive to civilised. Exhibitions sought to visibly illustrate this "knowledge". As Rydell explains, "the scientific approach, with its emphasis on classification, stressed the diversity of racial types" (5). According to Bennett, this use of a scale of humanity was new to the nineteenth century; in the previous century, museums had showcased the diversity of the human species, but not sequentially ("The Exhibitionary Complex" 431).

Categorisation according to race was first established in London's Great Exhibition in 1851; previously exhibitions had been classified by product rather than race (Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex" 433). It was also evident at the Exposition

Universelle in Paris in 1889, where colonies had a smaller display section, separate from European nations (Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex" 433). Rydell's exploration of racialist classification in US World fairs from 1876-1917 is particularly thorough. Rydell provides the example of the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, which allocated roles to nations in accordance to perceived evolutionary development (21-26). The US, UK, France and Germany enjoyed pride of place (Rydell 21). "Teutonic peoples" were positioned beside Germany, Latin countries beside France, while other countries, such as Japan and China, were given less prominent places (Rydell 22). Despite the implied hierarchy, at least these countries had autonomy to organise their own nation's representation.

By contrast, the Smithsonian organised an ethnographic exhibition of American Indians, intended to "present savage life and conditions in all grades and places" (Rydell 23). This contrasted with the trade- and progress- focused exhibits of the "civilized" nations, creating a clear delineation between primitive and non-primitive societies. The implication was that Native Americans were part of the "interminable wasteland of humanity's dark and stormy beginnings" (Rydell 25). Black Americans were relegated stereotypical, infantine roles, while Africans were excluded, with the African section showcasing only natural resources (Rydell 29). These blatantly racist representations of groups in exhibitions served to demonstrate the superiority of colonial powers, with the most impressive representation going to the host country (Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex" 434). Uncivilised people therefore served as a foil to better demonstrate Western superiority and progress.

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Such racist representations come about because the colonial powers gave themselves permission to know and to "speak for" the colonised. As Spivak notes, Western knowledge is not neutral, but supports Western interests (Praveen 48). Based on Western scientific constructs, museums and exhibitions have fabricated identities for the colonised, denying them voice and agency in their own representation. As Said notes, Western hegemonic discourse enabled Europe to "manage - and even produce - the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-enlightenment period" (*Orientalism* 3). Meanwhile, the Orient remained a mute object in relation to Western subjecthood (Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered" 5).

This problematic "speaking for" extended to the selection of museum objects. Objects were selected as metonymic devices to represent their culture of origin. Although objects clearly do provide some information about their creators, the information provided by objects is only ever partial, and their selection and interpretation were controlled by Western ethnographers and museologists (Amato 48-9). Often objects were subject to re-interpretation and re-purposing in the museum context. For example, in the museum context, spiritual objects can be framed as scientific objects, or utensils can become artwork (Conley 38). As Amato finds, the Western museum context generates the way objects are understood: their position, grouping and displayed information are under the control of the museum, giving the institution the authority to frame and interpret (48-49).

A further example of this speaking for colonial subjects can be found in the concept of the "Eye" which dominated the so-called category of primitive art, or the art that

emerged out of Africa, South America and Oceania. While Western art is understood to be the product of Great Men of individual genius, primitive art was considered the product of a culture or a people. Provenance, so important within the art world, proved difficult to apply in the case of primitive art, whose provenance was generally unclear. As such, it became the collector, or the "Eye" who became the source of provenance. Effacing the role of the original creator, the European art dealer who had acquired the work and identified its value became the source of provenance (Monroe 62). Rather than celebrating the artist, as is typical for Western arts, in the case of primitive arts, it is Primitive art collectors such as Paul Guillame and Charles Ratton, who were considered to possess the genius of discriminating taste, and it is they who obtain any celebrity associated with the work (Monroe 62). This provides a further example of the difficulty of application of Western systems of classification to impose meanings on non-Western cultures.

While Western systems of scientific knowledge paved the way for the classification and exhibition of colonial objects, and thereby, the construction of the colonial other, its construction also owed something to other forms of Western thought - mythology and fantasy. Alongside scientific knowledge, fantasy and mythology were also powerful forces in constructing identities for both subject and object. Said finds that the construction of the East was derived from a "sovereign Western consciousness" with a "battery of desires, regressions, investments, and projections" (Said, *Orientalism* 8). This constructed the East as an "imaginative geography" and revealed more about the West and its desires, projections and fantasies than it did about the East (Said, *Orientalism* 54). Primitivism also corresponded to Western mythology, looking to the myth of the origins of humanity and, according to Fanon,

the "eternal primitive" (Fuss 23). For example, upon unearthing some statues, the

archaeologist Frobenius imagined he had located Atlantis (Torgovnick 10).

However fanciful such myths might sound, they did have concrete impacts on the

representation of colonies. The stone friezes decorating the Musée Permanent des

Colonies were inscribed with exotic, happy and highly sexualised figures, within the

harmonious, ordered and industrious environment of a French colony (Demissie

196). The myth of timelessness, or stasis, however, was particularly important to

Western countries. As much of the exhibition of colonies occurred in world's fairs,

whose core purpose was to demonstrate Western development, the representation

of static colonies served to highlight the West's progress (Bennett "The Exhibitionary

Complex" 433-434). Colonies served as part of a "progressivist taxonomy for the

classification of goods and manufacturing processes...laminated on to a crudely

racist teleological conception" (Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex" 434). The

museum institution itself furthered this sense of stasis, as permanent collections

created an impression of an eternal and unchanging state of being (Amato 48-9).

Through representation by colonial powers, colonies became an object, a spectacle

for gazing upon and knowing. The Western world was the subject of this objectifying

gaze; a totalising gaze, which sought to know the entire colonial world at once, and

so obtain a controlling, specular dominance (Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex"

432). There are plenty of examples of this desire for controlling, all-encompassing

vision from this time. The Eiffel tower, for example, was constructed to give a view of

the entire Exposition Universelle at once, while the Exposition Coloniale presented a

strange African dance programme, which sought to represent dances from every

French colony, many occurring simultaneously on the same stage, for the surveying gaze of a primarily French audience, and serving to "accentuate [the dances'] status as collectible ethnic objects of French and Belgian empire" (Levitz 609-610). A further example is the planned construction of a series of miniature villages representing every French colony, each replete with a full complement of their local resources and products in the goal of providing an exhaustive catalogue of all the products and resources in the French empire.

In this way, Bennett's exhibitionary complex functioned differently for colonisers than for the colonial subjects. While the exhibitionary complex functioned in a "civilised" society to position the people on the side of power, as the subjects of a power that functioned through self-regulation, the "uncivilised" were never invited to this privileged place; rather, they became the uncivilised other, against whom processes of civilisation were defined and outworked ("The Exhibitionary Complex" 420).

2.5-Possibilities for a Postcolonial Museum

Given the museum's conceptual framework and its historical links to national identity and colonialism, the construction of an effective postcolonial museum would seem a highly challenging affair. However, Price notes that contemporary Western museums displaying cultural difference have developed several strategies, often employed simultaneously, to distinguish themselves from previous colonial museums (*Paris Primitive* 170). Moreover, works of postcolonial critics suggest how relationships between groups can be furthered, and enable us to draw implications for use in the museum.

As Spivak's work highlights, the concept of voice is of paramount importance. Her work indicates the necessity of allowing people to speak for themselves, rather than attributing feelings or thoughts to them. Western scholars or leaders have frequently tried to speak for subaltern people in attempts that are sometimes well-intentioned but nevertheless culturally ignorant (Praveen 48). While Spivak indicates that the subaltern is unable to speak, she notes that often those occupying a place of privilege also feel disqualified from speech due to their privilege. However, according to Spivak, claiming disqualification from speech due to social position is also an easy excuse to avoid engaging with issues (*Post-Colonial Critic* 62-3). Rather, she encourages people in privileged positions to learn about the so-called Third World, and consider their own position from which they are thinking. Through this approach, Spivak suggests, the privileged be able to engage meaningfully in the discussion (*Post-Colonial Critic* 62-3). As such, this suggests that so-called "privileged" cultures to do have the opportunity to engage with learning about other cultures, provided their position is self-reflexive and open.

Cultural representation in museums also forefronts the issue of voice. Museums undertaking cultural representation frequently engage with the voices of the people from the represented cultures. Typically, North American museums, for example, consult widely with groups whose artefacts are being represented and seek narratives, interpretations and voices from relevant communities (Price, *Paris Primitive* 172). These strategies are well used in institutions such as Te Papa in New Zealand, the National Museum of Australia and the National Museum of the American Indian, and the strategy is increasingly evident in the Smithsonian and the British Museum (Price, *Paris Primitive* 170). Engagement with the communities

includes employing members of the culture as contributors, consultants or tour guides (Price, *Paris Primitive* 170). This is practice is common in the Netherlands and Australia (Greenberger). Other museums take the approach of incorporating objects' colonial history in their exhibition, highlighting the European construction of knowledge and its role in power relations; the Museum of Ethnography in Vienna is one such example (Price, *Paris Primitive* 171).

Bhabha's concept of the "Third Space" has also been influential in postcolonial criticism, and is useful for envisaging the liminal space where cultures meet, exchange and communicate. For Bhabha, the notion of "pure" cultures occupying binary opposite positions of coloniser and colonised is, in reality, untenable (*Location* 55). It leads to essentialised and fixed views of "the Other," based on stereotypes; this in no way reflects culture's fluid nature, nor the liminal and in-between spaces that are a part of the colonised/coloniser relationship (Bhabha, *Location* 55).

Bhabha contrasts cultural diversity and cultural difference. He is critical of the Western liberal discourse that patronisingly celebrates cultural diversity, while seeking to use the concept of diversity to define and contain difference inside a universalist, liberal framework (Rutherford 208-9). By contrast, when Bhabha speaks of cultural difference, he is speaking of a genuine acceptance of difference in all its nuanced iterations; it is not something that can fit neatly inside a universalist framework, nor can we assume that all cultures can fit together easily or share underlying values (Rutherford 209).

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Core to the Third Space is the concept of hybridity. In Bhabha's work Hybridity is "celebrated and privileged as a kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of in-betweenness…and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference" (Hoogvelt 158). Hybridity occurs through the negotiation of difference in identity, creating a potentially infinite array of identity positions between coloniser and colonised (Kapoor 566). While colonisers try to define the identity of colonial subjects, they effectively create an essentialised identity that might be similar to, but not the same as, the entity they hoped to define (Ghasemi et al. "Study of the Third Space" 26). Similarly, colonial subjects are encouraged to become like their colonial authorities, but they are never considered identical (Ghasemi et al.," Third Space" 36).

For Bhabha, this Third Space is the space in-between the cultures, which requires ongoing translation and negotiation (Bhabha, *Location* 13). This Third Space, then, is a productive and ambivalent space offering new potentials, and questioning existing boundaries, categories and limitations (Meredith 2-3). In the Third Space, there is no "primordial unity or fixity" about cultural meaning, representation or identity (Bhabha, *Location* 55). Rather, the Third Space is a space of transgression and subversion of binary opposites (Meredith 3). It is a space of inclusion, providing "innovative sites of collaboration and contestation" (Bhabha, *Location* 12).

Hybrid identities, between the extremes of colonised and coloniser, give access to this Third Space. Hybrid identities allow translation and mediation, and challenge the hegemony of the coloniser (Meredith 3). Interaction between cultures shapes new

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identities, as interaction with others changes one's own identity (Ghasemi et al.,

"Study of the Third Space 27).

Translating a "Third Space" concept into a museum would necessitate a nuanced

approach to cultural difference and interaction. Firstly, the concept of identity would

require appropriately complex presentation. Rather than positing an essentialised,

opposite and static identity based on a creation of "the other", a Third Space would

necessitate a consideration of identity sensitive to fluidity. A Third Space museum

would consider the myriad of possible hybrids and identities that the interactions and

the in-between spaces between two cultures generate. It might problematise

interpretations of identity, and would certainly provide exhibitions that impact on and

provoke reflections on one's own identity, as engagement with others changes one's

identity (Ghasemi et al.," Study of the Third Space 27). Migration experiences and

exchange between cultures might also feature prominently (De Angelis et al. 3).

Rather than providing a single authoritative interpretation of displayed objects, a

Third Space museum provides multiple interpretations, and encourages visitors to

formulate their own interpretations. This is in line with De Angelis et al.'s suggestion

that a postcolonial museum should offer "alternative interpretive tools" (1) and

challenge univocal interpretations of historical narratives (2). It might highlight the

use of objects or constructs in different times and places. As De Angelis suggests, a

postcolonial museum also draws attention to the inherently non-neutral nature of a

museum (11). Such museums should demonstrate a self-reflexive awareness that

European values system inherent in art museums are frequently at odds with non-

Western perspectives (Conley 37).

A Third Space museum would create opportunity for dialogue, interaction and exchange between cultures. Personal experience would be prioritised over the display of the collection, as Vergès envisages in her postcolonial "museum without objects" (25).

 A Third Space museum would not be afraid to challenge universalist assumptions by presenting topics that stretch beyond comfortable rhetoric of celebrating cultural diversity to present some more uncomfortable instances of genuine cultural differences, as Bhabha's definition of cultural difference includes confronting those cultural values which are difficult to reconcile to one's own (Rutherford 209). While encouraging innovation and collaboration, it would also look to foster challenges and contestations. As De Angelis et al. term it, a postcolonial museum offers opportunities for a "disruptive encounter" (1). However, a postcolonial museum also encourages visitors to approach the museum experience with openness and empathy (Elhaik 161).

Given the tensions provided by the museum's institutional nature and historical legacy, is it even possible to make an authentic postcolonial museum such as this? Moreover, is this approach compatible with the current social, cultural, political and historical realities of France? While this chapter has provided a generic consideration of the challenges and possibilities associated with the postcolonial museum, the next chapter applies these specifically to France, considering the challenges associated with the French context, where the museum has a particular a legacy.

3-A Postcolonial Museum in France?

In few countries are museums so important as in France. France has arguably shaped the modern museum more than any other country, with the Louvre being the first modern museum and remaining the world's most popular museum (Bin et al. 3). Moreover, in France there is a closer link between politics and culture than in most democracies, with French politicians exerting a more direct influence on the cultural scene than, for example, in the US or UK (Vicente et al. 657).

This chapter illustrates the historical and conceptual overview of the museum presented in the previous chapter by examining how these concepts apply to France. France makes an especially interesting case study, due to its clear relationship between state, identity and the museum. This chapter also explores the unique historical, political and social factors that pose challenges to the creation of a French postcolonial museum.

3.1-History of the Museum in France

France has had a uniquely influential role in the museum's development, with its history demonstrating the changing relationship between state and museum. French museums, most notably the Louvre, advanced a nationalist ideology which became a model for new state museums across the globe (McClellan 29-30). Museums have an ongoing unique "political resonance" in France and continue to be important repositories of national culture, memory and identity (DeRoos 17).

From the late seventeenth century, arts began to emerge as a vehicle for French nationalist sentiment. Perrault's 1688 publication, *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes*, was the first to use comparison to argue for national superiority of French arts, suggesting the superiority of contemporary French painters compared to Italian Renaissance and Baroque painters (McClellan 31). Comparison by national group to establish relative merit became a norm of museum hanging, indicating that establishment of identity of self by reference to others has long been a museum tradition (McClellan 32).

Similarly, the Museum of Monuments, opened in 1795, used comparison to highlight France's achievements. French art was presented alongside masterpieces from classical Greece and Rome, suggesting that France was the inheritor of classical culture and the carrier of modern artistic achievement (Stara 31-41). As one visitor noted, the museum encouraged a love of France and its laws, suggesting a belief in art to develop patriotism and citizenship (Stara 20). The museum catalogue's preface makes this link clear, explaining:

> the cultivation of the Arts in any nation…improves the morals of the people, and renders them both milder and more disposed to pay obedience to the laws. Impressed with this truth, the National Assembly...directed the...preservation of those monuments. (Lenoir ix)

This demonstrates the museum's role as an institution of power-knowledge, having a governing effect on citizens. Museums, therefore, not only portray national identity, but also seek to shape it.

3.1.1-History of the Louvre

It was, however, the Louvre, opened two years earlier in 1793, that became a highly influential model for national museums worldwide. The Louvre was the site of tension around competing expressions of French identity with the political turmoil during the revolutionary period being reflected in the changing museum program. Originally intended to promote monarchy, patriotism and virtue to a primarily domestic target audience (McClellan 33-5), the Louvre became "the building blocks for the new national construct" (Stara 5). The Louvre's building and contents were converted to public goods, embodying principles of liberty, fraternity and equality (McClellan 37). National art was intended to promote belonging, loyalty to the state, and republican values of indivisibility and universalism (McClellan 37). The target audience was also widened to include international visitors, with the museum intended to showcase France's superior and universal understanding of the arts (McClellan 34). For example, Minister of the Interior, Jean-Marie Roland, proclaimed: "[the Louvre] should attract and impress foreigners. … a national monument... proclaiming the illustriousness of the French republic" (qtd. in Meyer and Savoy 1).

The Louvre's development was aided by the spoils of war sent to Paris as a result of Napoleon's military campaigns. While the justification of these acquisitions was that works of genius ought to reside in the land of liberty, this masked France's desire to be the global cultural capital (McClellan 120). These acquisitions were also motivated by a desire to showcase France's political and aesthetic universalism (Lebovics *Mona Lisa* 36).

Despite this internationalisation of the collection, the Louvre's iconographic program still presented a clear message of French superiority. Modern acquisitions were almost exclusively French, giving the impression that the French tradition had superseded previous traditions (McClellan 35-6), and was "heir to classical civilisation" (Duncan and Wallach 459).

This hanging approach conscripted works from across Europe to present a clear message of French identity and superiority. However, the Louvre's classification system also worked to construct the discipline of art history. Art history became understood as the celebration of great individuals and national genius, with these categories becoming organising constructs of the discipline (Duncan 97-99). Through the museum, the discipline of art history has traditionally been limited to high culture and individual achievements, and represented the state's highest values of individualism and nationalism (Duncan and Wallach 463). The Louvre, therefore, functioned as a Foucauldian "surface of emergence" of a discursive formation in the field of art history (Crimp 25). It became a tool for national unity, premised on a single, national culture based on universalist concepts. As Duncan and Wallach explain, the Louvre's "final claim...is that the universal is embodied in the state" (463).

3.1.2-History of Colonial Museums in France

With the end of the Napoleonic conquests, France began to look to colonial conquests to further its reputation as cultural capital (Lebovics, *Mona Lisa* 7).

Various colonial museums and exhibitions sprang up in the late nineteenth century.

The Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro, established in 1878, showcased artefacts

from Africa, South America and Oceania, while colonial sections were included in

Paris's Expositions Universelles in Paris in 1878, 1889 and 1990. Their popularity led

to the creation of the 1931 Exposition Coloniale Internationale, an enormous

exhibition which lasted six months and attracted eight million visitors (Palais de la

Porte Dorée). As part of this exposition, the Musée Permanent des Colonies was

created in 1931.

These displays signalled France's wealth, power and prestige to domestic and

international audiences. An aim of the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro, for

example, was to honour French explorers' bravery and demonstrate the empire's

wealth (Conley 38). The frieze around the Musée Permanent des Colonies depicted

"the entire work realized in the colonies by the French genius" according to its

General Report (qtd. in Morton 360), while the Exposition Coloniale demonstrated

French colonial power to French citizens (Darlington 73).

Colonial exhibitions portrayed French colonies to suit French narratives. At the

Exposition Universelle, colonies were presented to conform to notions of primitivism

and otherness. On viewing an exhibit of a primitive Senegalese village, one offended

Parisian resident of Senegalese origin commented: "to be exhibited this way, in huts

like savages…do[es] not give an idea of Senegal...we have large buildings, railroad

stations, railroads" (qtd. in Palermo 291). On another occasion, African dancers were

required to act out a spectacle of otherness for French spectators, being obligated to

wear traditional costume during their entire French trip, including during leisure time

(Levitz 610-1). Christian, French-speaking Kanak performers were required to masquerade as cannibals (Levitz 611-612). These incidents recall Fanon's argument that Black people must mime alterity to support Western identity constructs (Fuss 25).

However, decolonisation altered international relations, and changed the representation of these cultures within French museums. By the late 1980s, concerns emerged about the display of non-Western art, with increasing concerns around the misrepresentation or even invention of foreign cultures for domestic political purposes (Duncan 89). Changing views in relation to cultural representation is reflected in the changing museum names. For example, the Musée Permanent des Colonies became the Musée de la France d'Outre Mer in 1935, then the Musée des Arts Africains et Océaniens in 1960 and finally the Musée National des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie (MNAAO) in 1990, which is MQB's main predecessor.

3.2-Postcolonialism in France

Representation of other cultures remains an area fraught with difficulty. This is particularly the case in France, given its relationship with the postcolonial movement. While French influence is felt in postcolonial studies, with the writings of French scholars such as Lacan, Deleuze and Foucault informing postcolonial scholars such as Bhabha, Spivak and Said, French academics generally consider postcolonialism an Anglo-American construct. According to Bertaux, postcolonial studies is downright controversial in France (202), while Stoler suggests French academia have "colonial aphasia", in their difficulty communicating about colonialism and postcolonialism (128).

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The limited inroads that postcolonialism has made in France is partly due to France's longstanding political identity, dating back to the French revolution. Universalism, based on the Jacobin ideals of liberté, égalité, fraternité, laïcité[1], and indivisibility, is in many ways opposed to multiculturalism (Laborde 718; Bertaux 202). Principles of indivisibility and equality ensure people are given equal treatment, regardless of religion or ethnicity (Laborde 720). As such, regional and ethnic identities do not play a role in the political sphere, to the extent that the state does not keep statistics on ethnicity (Bertaux 213). Citizenship is based in an abstract, neutral social contract rather than the communitarian concept applied in Canada or the US (Gosson 128). Plural allegiances and minority expressions are often viewed as opposed to assimilation and cohesion, so universal liberalism tends to promote a colour-blind, culture-blind view of citizenship (De Wenden 78). The difficulty with a universalist position is determining what is, in fact, universal; in France, universal is often considered synonymous with traditional French culture (Laborde 723). Political inclusion is often viewed as assimilation within *la civilisation française*[2] (Lebovics, *Mona Lisa* xi). Postmodern multiplicity is considered a threat to this culture; while France has had a long history of immigration, foreign migrants are expected to become naturalised within the national culture (Lebovics, *Mona Lisa* 4).

It is hardly surprising, then, that postcolonialism has not enjoyed the same consideration in France as it has in the English-speaking world, which has typically taken a multiculturalist rather than assimilationist approach to diversity (Labadi 218).

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[1] Liberty, equality, fraternity, secularism

[2] French civilisation

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Postcolonialism challenges universalism in many respects. While universalism is often premised on Western perspectives, postcolonialism values concepts such as multivocality, hybridity and marginality. However, France's difficulty coming to terms with the colonial past is also rooted in ongoing "neo-colonial reflexes" in its engagement with former colonies (Hargreaves and McKinney 18). One such example is the Communauté Financière Africaine, a financial tool encouraging African countries to develop ongoing financial dependence on France (Taylor 1064).

While representation of other cultures is always a somewhat perilous activity, the shadow of colonialism and difficulties in engaging with postcolonialism make the establishment of a postcolonial museum in France a uniquely fraught undertaking. In the following chapters, we analyse the establishment of the MQB and Mucem to consider the limitations and possibilities associated with the postcolonial museums in France, and to consider the viability of the construct in the French context.

4-Postcolonialism at MQB

4.1-Origins of MQB

MQB, France's endeavour to create a postcolonial museum, has been an enduring popular success. Attracting over 1.15 million visitors, it ranked as 55th most visited museum globally in 2019 (Bin et al. 14).

MQB was the brainchild of President Chirac and his friend, art collector Jacques Kerchache, with whom Chirac shared a love of non-Western art (Amato 54). Kerchache had been petitioning since 1991 for the inclusion of non-Western art in the Louvre. This goal was facilitated with Chirac's presidency, and the Pavillon des Sessions was opened at the Louvre in 2000 to showcase arts from Africa, Asia, Americas and Oceania.

The Pavillon des Sessions was only the beginning. In 1996, Chirac had commissioned a group of scholars to assess the inclusion of non-Western arts into French museums (Amato 56). Their recommendation was to combine collections from the MNAAO and the Musée de l'Homme (MH) into a new institution (Amato 56).

Following these recommendations, MQB was commissioned, with the Louvre's Pavillon des Sessions becoming an outreach of MQB, renamed Musée du Quai Branly au Louvre. This resulted in the controversial closure of MNAAO and reduction

of MH, although both museums had long been considered underperforming (Amato 57).

While MQB displays works from across the globe, it is also part of a Parisian geographic and political context, and part of the French tradition of presidential *grands projets*, whereby French presidents commission significant construction projects in Paris as a testament to their legacy. With an eyewatering price tag and its nineteen-acre site next to the Eiffel Tower, the museum was a presidential project intended to garner attention.

France's renowned museums contribute to Paris's reputation as a cultural capital (McClellan 120). MQB continues aspects of this tradition. According to Chirac, the MQB au Louvre continues the Louvre's role in acting as a "dispensateur d'un prestige"[3] (Présidence de la République). At MQB's inauguration, Chirac declared that inclusion in the Louvre enables "les pays d'origine de voir leurs cultures reconnues, dignes d'être présentées dans ces murs…Le Louvre, emblème culturel, est bien le lieu d'une consécration symbolique"[4] (Présidence de la République).

4.2-Chirac's Humanist Vision for the MQB

As a presidential project, MQB is inescapably political. Indeed, Chirac was aware of museums' political power, labelling them "[political] actors in the heart of the city" (qtd. in Amato 63). At MQB au Louvre's opening, Chirac noted that museums are

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[3] Dispenser of prestige
[4] Countries of origine to see their cultures recognised, receiving the dignity of being presented inside these walls….The louvre, this culture emblem, is certainly the place of symbolic consecration.

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engaged with "la politique au sens propre...porteurs d'un ensemble de messages forts"[5] (Présidence de la République).

MQB's inaugration was a source of international political attention, attended by international dignitaries such as the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan (Demissie 204). An analysis of Chirac's speeches before these global dignitaries at the construction and inauguration of MQB and of MQB au Louvre illuminates Chirac's mission and elements of the museum's construction of self and other.

Chirac intended MQB to promote "un message de paix, de tolérance et de respect"[6] (Chirac 55), and "l'égale dignité des cultures"[7] (Chirac 52). MQB was to "rendre justice à l'infinie diversité des cultures,"[8] (Chirac 52) cultures who have experienced the injustice of being refused a history (Présidence de la République). Chirac proclaimed: "le Musée du Quai Branly porte loin le message humaniste du respect de la diversité et du dialogue des cultures"[9] (Elysée).

Chirac intended MQB to foster dialogue and improve international relations (Présidence de la République). The museum promotes:

> la rencontre, pacifique, enrichissante, avec l'Autre...Le musée sera l'un de ces lieux de passage, entre les cultures....il sera un forum ouvert et attentif, un magnifique écran pour de nouvelles relations.[10] (Elysée)

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[5] Politics in the formal sense…bearer of an set of strong messages.
[6] A message of peace, tolerance and respsect.
[7] The equal dignity of cultures
[8] Do justice to the infinite diversity of cultures
[9] The Musée du Quai Branly carries the message of respect for diversity and the dialogue among cultures.
[10] The peaceful and enriching encounter with the other…The museum will provide a passage between cultures…It will be an open and attentive forum, a magnificent screen for new relations.

Superficially, this rhetoric, embracing qualities of respect, equality and intercultural dialogue, appears highly compatible with a postcolonial, Third Space museum. The notion of a museum not simply as a collection space, but as a forum and a place of encounter is suggestive of Bhabha's call for "innovative sites of collaboration and contestation" (*Location* 12). However, deeper analysis reveals problematic limitations with the MQB's approach to postcolonialism.

Chirac's speeches are just as illuminating about the version of French identity he wanted MQB to project, as they are about other cultures. Chirac positioned France as able to restore "respect et reconnaissance" to other cultures, to provide a global "leçon d'humanité indisponible"[11] (Chirac 51) and a "message humaniste du respect de la diversité"[12] (Elysée). Ironically, there is a hierarchy implicit in Chirac's speeches, as France's capacity to act as validator of other countries implies French superiority. France's desire to provide enlightenment, bestow dignity, restore honour and safeguard other culture's treasures has overtones of a "postcolonial *mission civilisatrice"* (Thomas, "Quai Branly" 147). As Price notes, in creating such intercultural art centres, there is an unstated idea that Western countries are uniquely equipped for "enlightened appreciation of other cultures" and that demonstrating such appreciation suggests "commendable broadmindedness": as such, "Westerners…become the ones responsible for issuing the invitations to partake of the Brotherhood of Man" (*Primitive Art* 25).

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[11] Indispensible lesson of humanity
[12] A humanist message of diversity

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There are some similarities between this supposedly unique Western capacity for cultural appreciation and the concept of the "Eye", the European art collectors who rose to prominence off the back of the non-Western artworks they collected and whose names became the trusted source of provenance for artworks they acquired, effacing the original artists. In fact, the individuals who the museum most honours are not the artists themselves. Rather, MQB's naming honours the French elite who identified the value of the arts and of other cultures. As a presidential project, MQB is intended to attest to Chirac's legacy, and indeed, the building was later renamed Musée du Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac in his honour. The venues within are uniquely named after notable French figures: the art collector Kerchache, the anthropologist Lévi-Strauss and the curator Martine Aublet.

Chirac's speeches also celebrate France's humanist identity. Chirac praises France's ambition to create intercultural dialogue (Chirac 55), and notes that MQB acts as "un témoignage emblématique de notre tradition d'accueil, d'ouverture, de tolérance"[13] (Elysée). Chirac also presents France as a dutiful guardian of global patrimony, declaring France to be: "Gardienne vigilante de ces oeuvres...qui appartiennent au patrimoine de l'Humanité tout entière, la France est pleinement consciente de son immense responsabilité"[14] (Elysée). This presentation of France, as a validator and cultural guardian of non-Western countries' art, works against the museum's postcolonial ambitions. Spivak highlights the problem of loss of voice of colonial subjects ("Can the Subaltern"), and a problem postcolonial museums have attempted to remedy through engagement with represented cultures (Price, *Paris*

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[13] An emblematic testament of our tradition of welcoming, of openness and of tolerance.
[14] A vigilant guardian of these works, which form part of the patrimony of the entire world, France is strongly conscious of its immense responsibility.

Primitive 171) and through the encouragement of multiple interpretations (De Angelis et al. 1). However, the hierarchical relationship between France and the presented cultures implicit in MQB, ensures the dominance of the French voice and French interpretive authority within the museum.

Particularly significant was Chirac's lack of reference to France's colonial past. For example, Chirac explained:

> Il s'agissait pour la France de rendre l'hommage qui leur est dû à des peuples auxquels… l'histoire a trop souvent fait violence. Peuples brutalisés, exterminés par des conquérants…Peuples aujourd'hui souvent marginalisés, fragilisés, menacés par l'avancée inexorable de la modernité.[15] (Chirac 52)

It is interesting how Chirac's speech attributes blame and responsibility to abstract concepts. History created violence against these people, and modernity threatens them (Chirac 52). Similarly, by labelling the artefacts as belonging to humanity, Chirac avoided questions of repatriation and rightful ownership. While Chirac did mention colonialism at MQB au Louvre's inauguration, he positioned it as a European rather than French problem, explaining that "[Colonialism] fut pour l'Europe un temps de conquête"[16] (Chirac 108). Amato declares of this speech, that Chirac "swept the French colonial past into the historical dustbin" (48). Instead, he paints France as a model of enlightenment and humanity

4.3-Postcolonial Museum or New Colonial Museum?

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[15] France must give homage that is due to people to whom history has too often been violent. Peoples who have been brutalised, exterminated by conquerors…People who are today often marginalised, weakened, threatened by the inexorable advance of modernity.

[16] Colonialism was a time of conquest for Europe.

The colonial heritage of MQB's collection is, however, not so distant. MQB's predecessor institutions, the MNAAO and the MH, both obtained portions of their collections from former French colonies. Artefacts' colonial heritage creates ethical dilemmas for MQB. As Alrich notes, MQB provokes "questions muséologiques, politiques et morales qui entourent l'exposition d'œuvres d'art et d'artefacts non européens"[17] (qtd. in Shelton 148). While Nouvel's winning architectural submission euphemistically describes MQB as "an asylum for censored and cast off works from Australia and the Americas" (Nouvel), Lebovics notes that France's acquisition of these artefacts was not always benign. Rather, he finds that most were collected during the colonial period by navy officers, missionaries and anthropologists, and "like Napoleon's filling the Louvre with European and Middle Eastern war booty, [these artefacts] had come to France as a result of its role as imperial metropole" (Lebovics, "Will the Musée" 235).

Transfer of the collections to this new institution enabled a distancing from the colonial past (Amato 48). Various critics, however, considered MQB a whitewashing exercise, lacking the radical transformation required to create a truly postcolonial museum. Critics have labelled MQB a reformulation of the colonial museum (Shelton 6), a "retour aux projets des années 1930" (L'Estoile "De l'Exposition") and "patronising and racist" (Bradbury, qtd. in Shelton 6). This refusal to engage with objects' history differs from the problematisation of objects' colonial history that is frequently found in colonial museums (Price, *Paris Primitive* 171). It is somewhat

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[17] The museological, political and moral questions that surround the exposition of works of non-European arts and architecture.

paradoxical that Chirac instrumentalised looted artefacts to develop a relationship

with the people from whom they had been looted.

4.4-Museum as Classification Tool

While the museum institution is a product of Western society, so too is the

construction of knowledge it communicates. Museums' floorplans, labels,

categorisations and taxonomies carve up the world into knowable relationships,

reflecting the era's *episteme*. As discussed, Anderson has argued for the significant

role museums played, in defining, classifying, labelling and therefore creating

colonies, peoples and geographies, in line with Western convenience or perception

(Anderson 166-7). Said has similarly identified museums' perpetuation of Orientalist

attitudes to serve Western objectives (*Orientalism* 11). Moreover, the museum

format can encourage visitors to take a surveying, proprietorial gaze over an

assemblage of cultural artefacts and claim to "know" the cultures ("The Exhibitionary

Complex" 436-439). The museum therefore presents inherent difficulties in cultural

representation.

Racist scales of human progress of museums of yesteryear may have lingered in the

minds of MQB's developers, as everyone was eager to highlight the museum's non-

hierarchical nature. Chirac declared at MQB's inauguration that "il n'existe pas plus

de hiérarchie entre les arts qu'il n'existe de hiérarchie entre les peuples"[18] (52).

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[18] There are no hierarchies among arts, just as there are no hierarchies between peoples.

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MQB's website highlights the egalitarianism in MQB's layout, writing: "Les quatre continents…sont rassemblés dans un seul et même territoire. Le cheminement parmi les espaces est libre, sans repère ni hiérarchie particulière"[19] (Musée du Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac).

Despite attempts to avoid hierarchy, there remains something rather concerning in the classification system implied by MQB's very nature. The Louvre focuses on Classical and European art, while Musée Guimet displays mainly courtly Asian art. That leaves MQB to display African, American, Oceanic and some Asiatic art. Thomas suggests that the division into cultural groups creates an implicit hierarchy among Parisian museums (*Africa* 34). Moreover, given the vast geographic and cultural diversity at MQB, how does it make sense to unite such different art traditions in a single building?

4.5-The Primitive Other at MQB

The answer is found in the discipline of art history, where the category of Primitivism once existed. Primitivist art, encompassing traditional art from Africa, Oceania and the Americas was "discovered" by Europeans in the early twentieth century (Flam xiii). It was valued for its perceived exoticism, freedom of expression and imagination (Connelly 21-3). Originally used to describe pre-Renaissance arts, by the 1920s the term was applied almost uniquely to describe art from so-called "primitive" societies, and often involved a blurring of divisions of arts and ethnographic artefacts (Torgovnick 19). Primitivism developed a particular association with France, where it

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[19] The four continents…are assembled in a single area. The pathways among the spaces are free, without markers nor particular hierarchies.

inspired artists such as Gauguin and the so-called Fauve cohort, including Matisse and Derain (Cohen 136).

In the colonial context in which primitive arts were popularised in the West, discussions of primitivism were laden with racial implications (Flam xiii). To use the category of Primitivism requires certain assumptions about cultural identities and cultures' artistic processes. Primitive artists were perceived to work in an unconscious, child-like way, creating unrestrained and pure expressions of human desire and creativity (Price, *Paris Primitive* 32-3).

MQB has attempted to distance itself from the term of primitivism; however, the grouping of these cultures ensures the substance of the concept remains. Critics were quick to criticise this grouping, with Clifford writing that "the class of objects and cultures is, in fact, incoherent" (8). As L'Estoile explains, the museum's classification is based on the outdated idea that so-called primitive societies had more in common with each other than with Western society, which is basically to say that Otherness is their defining characteristic (qtd. in Price, *Paris Primitive* 175).

The problematic nature of this grouping is reflected in the difficulties in naming the project. Chirac himself struggled to find an appropriate term for the art, calling it "un art qualifié tour à tour de "primitif", de "premier, de "primordial"… sans qu'aucun de ces termes approchent de sa vérité"[20] (Présidence de la République). With the original announcement of the MQB au Louvre, *Le Monde* observed that the Ministry

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[20] An art labelled variously primitive, first, primordal….without any of these terms approaching the truth.

of Culture used the term "arts primitifs",[21] while Kerchache used "arts premiers"[22] (de Roux "Jacques Chirac Veut Ouvrir"). By 1996, *Le Monde* was referring to the new museum of "arts "primatifs'" including distancing quotation marks, ("M. Chirac Annonce"), but by 1998, *Le Monde* had adopted the term "arts premiers" ("Musée des Arts Premiers"). The replacement of "premiers" for "primitive" did not solve much. Firstly, it is an obvious and "equally objectionable euphemism" (Lebovics, "Will the Musée" 151). Secondly, both "primitive" and "premier" imply a hierarchy. The term "primitive" implies there is something more advanced; the term "premier" implies a second. As Torgovnick writes, there is no word to replace primitive "since all its synonyms are either inexact or duplicate in various ways the problematics of the term primitive itself… tribal, third world, underdeveloped, developing, archaic...All take the West as the norm and define the rest as inferior, deviant" (21). The very decision to build a specialised museum for this category of art, then, is simply to reinforce old stereotypes and simplistic binary oppositions.

Naming difficulties also extended to the institution, highlighting confusion around its purpose. Amato (58) notes that suggestions ranged from arts-focused Musée des Arts Premiers to an ethnographic-focused Musée de l'Homme, des Arts et des Civilisations (58). Eventually, the museum took the least controversial route by naming itself after its location. Martin, director of MQB, felt that this non-prescriptive name avoided restricting the museum's scope (Naumann 123). More cynical voices wondered if the museum's location was simply serving as a "synecdoche- [a] literal placeholder for a project seeking its raison d'être" (Clifford 8).

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[21] Primitive art

[22] First arts

Even if the term "primitivism" is avoided, the application of this category at MQB constructs the knowledge about relations between cultures in a non-neutral way. The notion of primitivism is problematic in the stereotyping, mythologising and othering views it presents of certain cultures. The use of the category simply reinforces outworn classification systems, acting as a "taxonomic "catch all"" for a very broad range of cultures, rather than promoting nuanced investigation into various artistic traditions (Cohen 136).

As Foucault has discussed, there are indissociable links between knowledge and power, with the knowledge provided by surveillance creating a sense of control. Bennett develops this point, by arguing that exhibitions displaying the whole world provided the visitor with a sense of totalising knowledge, a "specular dominance over a totality" ("The Exhibitionary Complex" 418). A similar effect is achieved in using broad, stereotyping labels and categorisations. By flattening diverse cultures into the generic category of Primitivism, it is easier to display and survey the entirety, to gain a specular dominance, and to claim knowledge of the cultures. Primitivism causes other societies to be viewed "as a global whole - complete, knowable, definable" (Torgovnick 3). Torgovnick notes that popular titles about Primitivism such as *La Mentalité Primitive* present a single, universal and comprehensive truth about "primitive" people (3). Said identifies a similar, totalising perspective in Orientalism. Orientalism endowed Oriental people with a particular mentality, genealogy and atmosphere (Said, *Orientalism* 266). Essentialist views dominated the colonial powers' perceptions of Semitic people (Said, *Orientalism* 64).

This flattening representation of other cultures facilitates the presentation of so-called "Primitive" cultures as "the Other" standing in eternal opposition to "us". Torgovnick finds that the concept of primitivism contains "a cherished set of dichotomies", enabling "systems of us/them thinking…[which] structure all discourse about the civilised and the primitive (3-4). While Western civilisations occupy the highest extent of human development, the primitive is at the lowest (Torgovnick 8). Primitive people may possess qualities such as violence, irrationality, freedom, innocence and sexual liberty (Torrgovnick 8). While Western culture progresses, primitive culture is static, timeless and integrated with the natural world (Price *Paris Primitive* 177-8). Suppression of voice is also evident in primitivism. Western society is continually creating and re-creating the primitive, based on their own needs (Torgovnick 9). She explains: Voiceless, [the primitive] lets us speak for it...It tells us what we want it to…infinitely docile and malleable (Torgovnick 9-10).

The MQB perpetuates this us/them dichotomy and creates a "spectacle of aesthetic difference" (Levitz 603). Grouping cultures together in a separate museum bases on flattening and disempowering primitivist tropes reinforces outdated ideas. These philosophical problems undercut the very goals the project sets out to achieve. The essentialised notion of the static, primitive other is the opposite to Bhabha's understandings of the complexity of identity, which highlights the fluid, hybrid nature of identity; indeed, the Third Space is that liminal space between the polarised self/other identities (*Location* 13).

4.6-Architectural Messages at MQB

4.6.1-Exterior Architecture

MQB's architecture, designed by architect Jean Nouvel, communicates many of the project's key concepts and influences the interpretation of the collection. Nouvel wanted to create synergy between the collection and the architecture (Lacayo and Graff 2006). According to Martin, the architecture required "some visibility and splendour" to increase the profile of first arts (Naumann 120).

The architecture, however, furthers problematic tropes about primitivism and the spectacle of difference. The building presents as a series of smaller facades, preventing a monolithic appearance (Shelton 2). Prolific vegetation hides the building (Naumann 123). As Nouvel explains, the design creates "the impression that the museum is a simple façade-less shelter in the middle of a wood" (Nouvel), while the museum's website describes the garden as a "chaos of exotic plant life" (Musée du Quai Branly - Jacques Chirac). The museum's exterior suggests primitivist tropes such as exoticism, statis and communion with nature. Its replication of the stereotype of "primitives in jungle huts" belies the significant differences in geography and lifestyles of the cultures on display.

While the represented cultures are shown in a state of nature, visitors seem to be positioned as colonial explorers, gazing voyeuristically on the other's exotic world. The MQB website reads: "shielded by dense vegetation…the museum is only gradually revealed to the visitor, who becomes a kind of explorer" (Musée du Quai Branly - Jacques Chirac). Martin explains that visitors must discover their own path through the garden, describing it as "a real journey to enter the building" (Naumann 123).

4.6.2-Interior Architecture

MQB's interior continues the integration of art and architecture. Murals by contemporary Indigenous Australian artists adorn the ceiling (Naumann 119). Furthering the "man in nature" theme, Nouvel created a meandering pathway through the museum, which he describes as both a snake and a river (Clifford 10). The interior utilises natural-looking materials, such as leather, adobe and tree decals (Clifford 10-11). The dark roof is studded with spotlights, perhaps suggesting the night sky.

The architecture's positioning of the displayed cultures as other is furthered through its cultivation of mystery and spirituality. Nouvel's use of a dark interior is intended to evoke mystery and spirituality (Lebovics, "Will the Musée " 237). Nouvel explains that a "rare ray of light" illuminates objects and "awaken[s] their spirituality" (Nouvel). Lebovics, however, compares the museum to "a primordial, dark, ghostly world" ("Will the Musée" 235). Nouvel writes that the museum is "haunted with dialogues between the ancestral spirits of men", and "inhabited...by obsessions of death and oblivion" (Nouvel). The garden contains "a mystery" (Naumann 120). This creation of the mysterious and haunted is effectively a type of exoticising and primitivizing, and so too is the assumption of spirituality in non-Western objects (Dias 304).

The architecture deliberately creates a spectacle of difference. The museum's director, Martin, indicated that museums are about "making theatre...not writing theory," suggesting a spectacular approach (Naumann 125). Various technologies were drawn from performing arts, including lighting, sound and curtains (Dias 304).

While the design's purpose is to valorise artefacts, critics have suggested that the architecture overpowers the collection (Clifford 10). Clifford compares MQB to a "magical theme park,", and is concerned that theatrical techniques impair objects' visibility; for example, some objects are lit eerily and inadequately from below (Clifford 13-5). Similarly, Kimmelman writes: "devised as a spooky jungle...the place is briefly thrilling as spectacle, but brow-slappingly wrongheaded…everything is meant to be foreign and exotic". He labels it a "new French brand of condescension" (Kimmelman). Harding complaints of kitschy design, including "grotto effects" and "Tarzan decor" (qtd. in Shelton 7).

Nouvel explains his intention in blurring boundaries between art and architecture, writing: "The resulting architecture has an unexpected character. Is it an archaic object? A regression? No, quite the contrary…to obtain this result the most advanced techniques are used" (Nouvel). Evidently, the visitor could, and is possibly expected to, find the building's appearance regressive. MQB's design therefore carries troubling implications. When contrasted with the sparse and light interior customary in modern galleries, MQB deliberately creates a mysterious and theatrical spectacle of difference. Design choices position visitors to interpret the collections through a Primitivist lens.

4.7-Arts versus Ethnography

While theatricality enhances the museum's entertainment value, it also serves a more profound purpose. It repositions displayed objects from the category of ethnographic objects to the category of artwork (Amato 54). Chirac's rationale for labelling these objects as art was to enhance the dignity of these pieces and their

creators (Présidence de la République), intending to show that art from non-Western countries "n'ont rien à envier aux plus belles productions de l'art occidental"[23] (Élysée). Ethnographic objects are generally viewed as the product of a culture, whereas art is considered a product of individual genius; therefore, to reclassify a society's objects from ethnographic to artistic means to define the society as capable of producing individuals of genius (Amato 54). As discussed, there is a tradition of galleries presenting art as evidence of the development of cultures. Therefore, Amato argues that, given museums' traditional use of art history to represent human development, with cultures containing individual genius at the summit, MQB suggests that societies once considered primitive can now be considered civilised (55).

This repositioning of ethnographic objects as artworks is also intended to distance MQB from former colonial museums. As Germain Viatte, an advisor at MQB explains, MQB was to be "absolutely contemporary, separated from our [French] colonial history" (qtd. in Conley 45). However, regardless of whether objects sit in one category or another, the fact that they are forced into classificatory groups based on Western disciplines, and shifted from one to another to serve various objectives, demonstrates how Western classification systems still speak for the objects they contain.

Visitors' interpretations are guided by the type and design of the museum in which objects are housed. This can position objects as, for example, historical evidence, artwork or ethnographic specimens. MQB's architecture supported an artistic

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[23] Need not envy the most beautiful pieces of western art.

treatment. The dramatic environment is intended to "evoke an emotional response to

the primary object...so we may enter into communion with [the sacred objects]"

(Nouvel). Emotion is typically how people respond to artistic works (Amato 54).

Martin also prioritised the aesthetic, displaying objects' purity without too much

distracting contextual information (Naumann 122). Elaborating on the prioritising of

aesthetics over information, he explained: "everything in a museum gets

beautiful…The priests of contextualisation…are poor museographers" (Naumann

122).

The choice to prioritise aesthetics received some criticism. Critics considered that

the lack of contextual information resulted in confusion and a wasted educational

opportunity (Price, *Paris Primitive* 177). While subsequent adjustments to the

museum have somewhat increased the amount of contextual information, it remains

limited ("Will the Musée" 237). On my own visit in 2019, it was clear that the

museum's design prioritised aesthetics; visitors concentrated on visual displays,

demonstrating limited engagement with tools such as information screens and audio-

guides. This mirrors Clifford's concerns that information was placed out of the way

(12). The onus is on the visitor to locate and assemble information snippets (Dias

306).

The lack of contextual information has unfortunate consequences. It results in the

suppression, or at least minimisation, of discussions of the colonial past (Clifford 15).

As Lebovics terms it, "we see objects from the South whose history begins only in

the West" ("Will the Musée" 237). Absent include the histories of cultures, objects

and collecting practices (Clifford 15). A specific example is the MQB's failure to

mention that objects from the Dakar Djibouti mission were acquired by theft by French explorers (Price, *Paris Primitive* 172-3). Without a wider socio-political context, it is impossible to understand objects within a historical framework (Thomas, "Quai Branly" 147-8).

Limited discussion of history erases significant information, rending invisible historical power relations (Dias 307). This erasure of history is particularly ironic given Chirac's declaration at the opening of the MQB au Louvre that "il n'y a pas de plus grande injustice que de refuser à un peuple le droit à l'histoire"[24] (Chirac 2007). MQB represents a wasted opportunity for discussion around colonialism, postcolonialism, globalisation and cultural diversity in contemporary France (Price, *Paris Primitive* 177). Architectural and collecting decisions further this neglect of history. The primordial aesthetic is reinforced by the decision to eschew the collection of contemporary art (except contemporary Aboriginal Australian art), suggesting the represented cultures sit outside time. As Clifford explains: "Chirac's aesthetic universalism and Nouvel's mystical/natural environment remain largely undisturbed by history, politics, or the arts and cultures of a contradictory (post)modernity" (14).

Moreover, Chirac's intentions to demonstrate cultures' worth and dignity through recognition of their artistry has concerning implications (Dias 305). Firstly, the pieces on display were not necessarily designed to be "art" in the Western sense; pieces such as dishes, clothes and musical instruments often had practical, cultural or spiritual functions. Secondly, Chirac's agenda implies that humanity's dignity and

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[24] There is no greater injustice than to refuse a people the right to their history.

potential is not inherent, but must be proved through recognition of artistic skills

(Dias 305). This implies that there are standards to judge another culture's worth;

however, as Taylor notes, these standards are presumably Western standards,

requiring non-Western cultures to be forced into Western categories (qtd. in Dias

306).

4.8-Representation of Self

While MQB presents a concept of the other, it necessarily also presents a concept of

self. Museums' message of a society's identity is two-fold. As we have discussed,

Chirac intends MQB to project a humanist, cultural and benevolent identity of France

to French society and the global community. Not only do museums project this

desired identity, however; they also mould a society's identity through shaping its

norms, behaviours and beliefs. They garner support for the state's values and aims,

incorporating people within the state's workings (Bennett, "The Exhibitionary

Complex" 439). Museums work to govern society through their perpetuation of norms

and values, drawing authority from the ethnographic and artistic knowledge upon

which they are based.

Indeed, Chirac's intention to use MQB as a tool to construct a particular French

identity and citizenship is clear. Such platforms for intercultural dialogue and cultural

recognition are important governance tools in contemporary multicultural societies

(Clifford 18). Chirac speaks of the museum as an "instrument d'une citoyenneté

renouvelée",[25] able to instil political and social values, such as hope, openness and

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[25] An instrument of renewed citizenship.

tolerance (Élysée). As such, the museum functions as a tool to promote political objectives in multicultural French society, instrumentalising artwork to that end.

In fact, the project reinforces core values of the traditional French republican model, and the traditional role of the French museum. Republican notions of citizenship are premised on the indivisibility of the state and the universality of values of liberté, égalité and fraternité.[26] Citizenship is viewed as a contract between the state and individual. Recognition of separate groups or communities within the state, based on identifiers such as religion, ethnicity or culture, is incompatible with this view of citizenship; assimilation rather than multiculturalism is the traditional French approach to cultural diversity (Bertaux 213). National museums such as the Louvre promote these values of indivisibility, universality and nationalism (Duncan and Wallach 463).

Despite the cultural diversity it presents, MQB continues this tradition of universality. Chirac's insistence on cultural equality and the universality of art leads to a negation of cultural difference (Guichard-Marneur 117). Cohesion and integration in increasingly multicultural France are ongoing topics of contention, as France has traditionally been suspicious of public displays of ethnic, cultural and religious difference (Guichard-Marneur 119-120). Guichard-Marneur notes that Chirac's rhetoric of diversity belies MQB's broadbrushing approach to cultural representation which is "more about homogeneity" (124). Guichard-Marneur explains: "Cultural diversity has been translated into the absence of differences by taking for granted and combining the Western concepts of the essence of humanity and the universality

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[26] Liberty, equality and fraternity.

of art" (125). Applying Western disciplinary categories such as art or ethnography to objects necessarily groups together, minimises differences and encourages viewers to identify similarities. Conley's suggests that postcolonial museums should demonstrate a self-reflexive awareness regarding the values systems upon which they are based; however, this is not evident at MQB (37).

MQB also preferences European, particularly French, voices. Information is generally provided by French scholars, with much less prominence given to voices from cultures on display (*Paris Primitive* 172). The museum's intention to celebrate equality and diversity, then, is at odds with the authority given to European interpretation and scholarship (*Paris Primitive* 172)

Unwillingness to open interpretation to multiple cultural voices reflects traditional assimilationist approaches to cultural diversity within France, where there remains a French culture and common voice. In fact, Guichard-Marneur argues that art is used at MQB to erase cultural difference and provide a "sanitised, glossy euphemism for a Western audience", enabling French visitors to avoid facing up to France's multicultural reality (120). MQB's embrace of universalist values poses problems in its delivery of a postcolonial message. According to Bhabha, while there is value in exploring true cultural difference, such difference does not sit comfortably within a universalist framework (Rutherford 209).

The museum's hesitancy to engage with French colonial history mirrors the wider discomfort in France with this subject. Erasing objects' colonial history projects an image of France as cultural capital, protector of universal heritage and generous host

to a museum of enlightened humanist values. MQB, therefore, reinforces rather than challenges traditional French conceptions of identity. It presents an image of French identity that espouses universalism, assimilationist values and seeks a disassociation from the colonial past.

4.9-Effectiveness of MQB as a Postcolonial Museum

Despite efforts at innovation and distancing from former colonial museums, MQB has been hampered in its delivery of a message of equality, dignity and cultural diversity by regressive understandings of cultural identities and relationships, and an outdated understanding of museology.

The decision to utilise the museum format to celebrate cultural diversity creates several underlying conceptual difficulties. Museums' Western-centric approach to knowledge and their association with nationalism create inherent tensions with the MQB's goals. Moreover, museums' association with colonialism makes the use of the museum as a tool to honour non-Western cultures rather paradoxical.

Firstly, the classification system underpinning the conception of MQB makes a concerningly regressive statement about perceptions of relationships and hierarchies among cultures. MQB groups together artefacts from extremely diverse cultures and regions, based on the category of primitivism.

There has been an attempt to distinguish MQB's postcolonial approach from former colonial museums by the application of a highly aesthetic museological approach. This approach affirms the artistic genius of all peoples, enabling the museum to

claim that it celebrates cultural equality and diversity. However, the aesthetic focus creates more issues than it resolves. To encourage this artistic reading of what were, in many cases, previously considered ethnographic artefacts, a highly evocative design was employed, incorporating elements such as jungles, darkness and earthiness. This setting, however, creates an exoticised spectacle of otherness, perpetuating primitivist stereotypes and failing to provide an adequately informative educational opportunity.

As discussed, the identities of self and other are necessarily intertwined, presenting images of France as much as it presents images of other cultures. This image of France is partially deliberately constructed and partially unintentional, a response to France's international reputation as well as its domestic political issues. MQB continues the image of France as international cultural capital and beacon of humanist values. However, the museum is equally as revealing of France's difficulties in facing its colonial past and engaging with its postcolonial present, and is suggestive of a renewed sort of *mission civilisatrice*.

Museums also shape identity through shaping citizens' norms, values and behaviours. MQB disseminates the values that shape France and French citizenship, perpetuating traditional republican values such as universalism and assimilation, which sit ill with the museum's multicultural and postcolonial mission.

MQB certainly demonstrates some attempts to engage with postcolonial ideas. Chirac's speech drew attention to the need for dialogue, interaction and experiential engagement with the collection, which are typically encouraged in postcolonial

museums (Vergès 25). While the permanent exhibitions do not provide significant opportunities for this, the museum does include a library, cinema, lecture theatre and programming, which do permit opportunities for dialogue and exchange.

Nevertheless, MQB's attempt at creating a postcolonial museum is ultimately thwarted by both its conceptual underpinnings and controversial outworking. Its construction of regressive identities of self and other reinforce conservative French political values, France's traditional international image and primitivist stereotypes of other cultures. The MQB project has resulted in the instrumentalisation of former colonial artefacts to speak for non-Western cultures and to present a message of French identity, both domestically and internationally.

5-Postcolonialism at Mucem

5.1-Beginnings

Not too far away from Paris, in France's second largest city Marseille, another museum was in the pipeline while MQB was under construction. This too was a project bound up in questions of identity, with both institutions engaged with the "re-lecture des collections" in a postcolonial context (Eidelman 82). The answers arrived at, although distinctly different, are a product of each institution's context, and both reflect aspects of France's political and social identity. While Mucem has never declared itself a postcolonial museum, the fact it treats Mediterranean relationships, which of course includes France and its former northern African colonies, necessitates a consideration of colonialism and postcolonialism. Moreover, several scholars have identified Mucem as a postcolonial museum (eg. Boursiquot 63; Gueydan-Turek 92).

Opened on the 7th of June 2013, Mucem aims to explore Mediterranean cultures from the Neolithic to present. It also considers wider Europe, insofar as Europe impacts on the Mediterranean (Godfrin-Guidicelli 13). As the first national museum

outside of Paris, Mucem is part of a growing movement to decentralise France's cultural institutions (Perrin 51).

Initial discussions around the creation of a new museum began in the early 1990s as a result of concerns with the Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires (NMATP). The NMATP, an ethnographic museum opened in 1937, was now considered outdated, with its display of French folklore and popular culture considered overly nationalistic (Bodenstein and Poulot 27). Visitor numbers had dropped over 60% between 1982 and 1992 (Viaut 8). In 2000, it was decided to close the NMATP and open a new museum in Marseille, where the collections could be reframed. Consequently, some 250,000 artefacts were transferred from the NMATP to Marseille, joined by some 20,000 artefacts from MH (Godfrin-Guidicelli 13).

While Mucem is a significant part of France's national museum landscape, it is also firmly situated in Marseille's urban and political context. Since 1995, Marseille has been the site of a large urban regeneration campaign labelled Euroméditerranée, intended to transform the city's economy, reputation and tourism industry. Integral to the Euroméditerranée project was Marseille-Provence's hosting of the 2013 European Capital of Culture (ECOC), with Mucem's opening being the flagship project of the ECoC agenda. Since ECoC, Mucem has continued to function as a significant icon of Marseille. Occupying a visible waterfront location, its distinctive architecture has been labelled an "emblematic place of culture in the city" by Mucem's Head of Public Department (Schoubert). At a cost of €191 million, drawn

from public and private funds, it also represented a significant investment

(Bodenstein and Poulot 27).

The museum was an immediate success with critics and the public alike. In the first

year, the 650,000 visitors significantly exceeded the projected figure of 350,000

visitors (Schoubert). Mucem's popularity has continued, attracting just over 1.2

million visitors in 2019, making it the world's 58th most popular museum (Bin et al.

15). The museum has also received critical acclaim. It was awarded the Council of

Europe's Museum Prize for 2015, for its "new and innovative concept, in a

breathtaking site with outstanding architecture" (Council of Europe).

Unlike the significant and often critical media coverage of MQB, press coverage of

Mucem has been largely positive, although less prevalent. Coverage focused on the

museum's architecture, visitor numbers and economic impact. Article titles in *Le

Monde* in its opening year included "Le Mucem Dope Marseille"[27], highlighting its

benefits to Marseille's tourism industry, "Le Mucem, un Phare dans

l'Euroméditerranée"[28] (Evin and Edelmann) praising its architecture, and "Plus de

60,000 Visiteurs pour l'Ouverture du Mucem de Marseille"[29], focused on visitor

numbers. In the English-speaking press, the British newspaper *The Guardian's*

article "Mediterranean Civilisations Museum Feted as Turning Point for Marseille"

discussed Mucem's role in urban transformation (Chrisafis), while the *New York

Times'* article "Ground Breaker" praised Mucem's architecture, suggesting it "may be

the sexiest structure Marseille will ever lay eyes on" (Goodman).

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[27] Mucem dopes Marseille
[28] Mucem, a Beacon in the Mediterranean.
[29] More than 60,000 visitors for the opening of Mucem in Marseille.

MQB's blurring of disciplinary boundaries initially resulted in impassioned media debate pitting art against ethnography. Mucem's reception was much less polarising, despite similar attempts to reframe ethnographic objects and create a pluridisciplinary museum. Perhaps the innovations at MQB had paved the way for Mucem, or perhaps the interest in its Marseillais location overshadowed other concerns.

5.2-An Innovative Museum

Mucem's innovative approach has received acclaimed from museum professionals. Many aspects of Mucem are strongly compatible with a Third Space approach to museum construction.

The focus on connection, encounter and exchange are central to the notion of the Third Space, and are prioritised at Mucem. Unlike most museums, and certainly unlike MQB, collections are not Mucem's core priority. Rather, these are secondary to Mucem's role as a forum for dialogue (Bodenstein and Poulot 27). Programming and events feature significantly in Mucem's offerings. Exhibitions and spaces to discuss sensitive topics are central to a postcolonial museum (Bodenstein and Pagani 46). Mucem has willingly engaged in sensitive topics. For example, the temporary exhibition *Au Bazar du Genre* considers the social construction of gender and relationship norms, a topic that can generate controversy. As Boursiquot explains in discussing the postcolonial museum:

> Dealing with questions of society and putting the public instead of its collections at its centre, the museum of society opens the door to a new role for the museum: reflexivity and critique". (70)

Mucem's architecture creates an inviting public space, even for those who are not visiting the exhibitions. The roof deck and some other facilities are freely accessible to the public, which facilitates connections to the people of Marseille, and echoes Gravano's notion of a postcolonial museum that diffuses throughout the city spaces (111).

The museographic program emphasises the notion of connection. Indeed, one of the two main exhibitions is entitled *Connectivitiés* and discusses the Mediterranean region's centuries of enrichment through its internal connections. The agricultural display explores how common regional food staples have been changed and shaped in the various parts of the Mediterranean.

Establishing connections is also a mission of Mucem, as appropriate for a postcolonial museum. This is evident in its undertaking cooperative projects with national and international groups (Gameiro 167), adopting a collection development policy that emphasises borrowing from other institutions (Bodenstein and Poulot 29), and uniting academic disciplines such as archaeology, history, geography and ethnography (Viaut 11).

The notion of fluidity is a key component of the Third Space, so the stasis and totalising vision often associated with museum collections is not appropriate for a postcolonial museum. The use of temporary exhibits helps break down the authority and stasis of the museum (Bodenstein and Pagani 46). Numerous temporary exhibitions are the focus at Mucem, and even permanent exhibitions have only a

five-year lifespan. There is no attempt to provide an overview of the entire

Mediterranean; rather, temporary and permanent exhibitions examine specific

aspects of the region.

As discussed, the notion of who is speaking and for whom is an important question

in the postcolonial movement (Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"). Postcolonial

museums are making an increasing effort to engage to give represented cultures a

voice within the museum. My visit did not uncover overwhelming evidence of this;

however, an effective use of presumably candid and minimally edited video footage

provided a rather authentic glimpse into the world of the people displayed. Films

included Marseillais strolling through their area, Cairo rubbish dump workers and

citizens of Algiers relaxing in the streets. Throughout the presentation of the

collection, there was not a strong, authoritative voice guiding the interpretation of the

collection, so visitors could draw their own conclusions. This opportunity for multiple

interpretations is compatible with a postcolonial approach (De Angelis 1).

Mucem successfully engages with many aspects of a postcolonial museum. It also,

however, experiences significant limitations in outworking its postcolonial agenda. It

remains hampered by some traditional roles of a state museum, such as prestige

and instrumentalised identity creation. These we will explore next.

5.3-A Tool of Urban Regeneration

Mucem's story is strongly linked to its Marseillais location. Although not common, it is illuminating to read the museum inside its city context (Mah 88-91). The relevance of local context to Mucem makes this contextual reading particularly relevant.

While MQB was primarily a product of Chirac's vision, Mucem was part of a long-term strategy for Marseille. A key appeal was Mucem's integration into a larger project for urban regeneration in Marseille, the Euroméditerranée project, ongoing since 1995. Since the 1950s, Marseille has suffered from economic and urban decline due to de-industrialisation (Mah 55). The Euroméditerranée project, touted as Europe's largest urban regeneration project, attempts to address these concerns by regenerating 480 hectares in central Marseille at a cost of €7 billion (Mah 55). While Mucem has been a central component of Euroméditerranée, the project also incorporates other various infrastructure developments, including housing, offices and cultural facilities (Euroméditerranée, "All Projects"). The project has focused on the creation of a renewed business district and waterfront in Marseille's centre (Gasquet-Cyrus 87). While Marseille has traditionally been divided into two distinct areas, a northern and southern area, Euroméditerranée's focus on the centre has effectively created a third distinct, regenerated area (Buslacchi 64).

5.4-Mucem and the European Capital of Culture

The European Capital of Culture (ECoC) is a title awarded to a select few European cities each year, based on a competitive process. These cultural capitals then put on a programme to showcase their cultural wealth, attracting tourism and media attention. Marseille-Provence's successful bid for the 2013 ECoC title (ECoC MP2013) was a key component of Marseille's Euroméditerranée regeneration

strategy, as the ECoC was painted as something of an "economic catalyst" for

Marseille (Andres, "Marseille" 67). ECoC's cornerstone event was Mucem's opening.

The ECoC title's appeal to host cities lies in its capacity to enhance a city's

reputation and economy, a concept based on Richard Florida's work on urban-led

cultural regeneration. While studies of international competition generally focus on

nations, Florida turned the lens towards cities, arguing that big cities are also key

international economic actors, and compete for wealth, industry and talent ("Rise of

the Creative Class" 272). Florida emphasized the role of creativity to a city's

competitivity, arguing that the so-called "creative class" create competitive urban

environments ("Rise of the Creative Class: Revisited" vii). Through entrepreneurship

and innovation, the creative class stimulates the city's economy in high value sectors

such as startups and creative industries (Florida, "Rise of the Creative Class" 201-2).

The creative class's interest in innovation and arts promotes a vibrant urban

environment which increases the city's value as a residential address and tourist

destination (Florida, "Rise of the Creative Class: Revisited" xxii). Cities, desiring to

attract the creative types, require a creative reputation, a unique identity and an

iconic image; arts and cultures venues foster this image (Landry xviii). Therefore,

cities effectively brand themselves, instrumentalising their identity, heritage and

cultural institutions (Richards 1230)

While initially the ECoC was held in established cultural centres such as Paris and

Florence, it has been associated with urban-led cultural regeneration schemes since

Glasglow illustrated the ECoC's potential to stimulate regeneration in a city

associated with crime and poverty in 1990. The European Commission has noted

the ECoC's potential as an urban regeneration tool, but cautions against the loss of its European integration objectives (6). Schmidt, more bluntly, suggests that the ECoC has become a "PR and marketing show" for host cities (2018). Certainly, the economic was firmly in focus at Marseille's ECoC year, with the port authority and Marseille Chamber of Commerce being stakeholders and the economic benefits being anticipated by stakeholders (Mah 72-77).

5.5-Marseille′s Identity: A Space of Contradiction and Instrumentalisation

Culture-led urban regeneration is fundamentally premised on identity. To enhance a city's creative appeal and attract accompanying economic benefits, a desirable and unique identity is required. The Euroméditerranée project is designed to turn Marseille into an "international" city, attractive to tourists, investors and well-heeled residents by creating a fresh, more sanitised identity, with Mucem functioning as tool to convey these messages (Gasquet-Cyrus 86). This identity creation has worked on two levels in Marseille. Firstly, it has aimed to change external perceptions of Marseille, and secondly, it has sought to alter Marseille's very essence. Following Mah, this paper explores three core messages of Marseille identity carried through the EuroMéditerranée Project, MP ECoC 2013 and Mucem: Marseille as cosmopolitan, working-class city; Reconnection of Marseille to the Sea and Marseille as a Great Port (71-2). These various identity goals function in ways that are sometimes complimentary and sometimes contradictory. As Mucem is a central component of the Euroméditerranée project, projecting a particular Marseillais

identity is a core goal of this museum. In this way, Mucem retains this traditional role of the museum, similar to the Louvre's projection of French identity.

5.5.1-Marseille as Cosmopolitan, Working-class City

Marseille's identity is strongly informed by its port location. During the colonial era, the port provided entry for people and goods from across the empire, and increased Marseille's importance within France (Gasquet-Cyrus 87). It remains France's largest port (Mah 75). The port has always lent Marseille an industrial character, with a strong working class and migrant culture (Buslacchi 58). However, with the economic decline from the 1950s onwards, Marseille has experienced unemployment and a population exodus, particularly of the middle classes (Andres, "Alternative" 799). Consequently, the city has become viewed as impoverished, corrupt and crime-ridden (Andres, "Alternative" 799).

Nevertheless, Marseille has a fiercely defended local identity. Due to its port, Marseille prides itself on its cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism (Gasquet-Cyrus 82). Marseille celebrates its ethnic diversity and integration, cultivating an identity of tolerance and harmony (Mah 19). At the same time, however, Marseille considers itself as exceptional and marginalised, in opposition to the rest of France, and particularly Paris (Mah 31). The city cherishes an image of rebellion, radicality and non-conformity in relation to centralising state power dictated from Paris (Gasquet-Cyrus 93). The Marseillais identity is also considered under threaten by growing numbers of settlers from elsewhere in France, who are accused of attempting to "sanitise" Marseille (Gasquet-Cyrus 98).

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These cosmopolitan and tolerant images are not necessarily borne out in Marseille's reality. Lyon and Paris, for example, have over twice the number of foreign-born residents (Andres, "Marseille 2013" 62), and Marseille has long-term issues with social marginalisation and racial tension (Mah 39). Nevertheless, this cosmopolitan and tolerant identity is the one that the ECoC campaign marketed, with the then mayor labelling Marseille a cultural hub for Mediterranean countries (Gaudin 5) and the ECoC website proclaiming Marseille as "a city open to the world" (qtd. in Mah 94).

Ironically, while celebrating Marseille's cosmopolitan and inclusive identity, the Euroméditerranée gentrification project, including the ECoC and Mucem, jeopardise these very qualities they promote. Euroméditerranée engages in exclusionary and preferential pratices (Andres, "Marseille 2013" 62). Gentrification is a deliberate objective of Euroméditerranée, as it attempts to attract middle class residents (Gasquet-Cyrus 88). For example, the Euroméditerranée website boasts about specific numbers of graduates and managerial staff that the project will draw to Marseille, suggesting some groups are more welcome than others (Euroméditerranée, "La ville"). Le Dantec suggests that Euroméditerranée and its flagship project Mucem, aims to attract tourists to "civiliser l'indigène"[30] (78). Moreover, many residents viewed ECoC events as part of a neoliberal, discriminatory political agenda, disengaged with local culture (Gasquet-Cyrus 97).

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[30] Civilise the Indigenous.

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This cultivation of demographic change can be considered an intentional modification of Marseille's identity. Gasquet-Cyrus notes that this urban transformation is intended to "modifier le tissu social de la ville"[31] (87). Gentrification of the centre has resulted in rent increases, forcing out long-time residents, often migrants or the socially marginalised (Buslacchi 65-66). An article in *L'Humanité* in 2000 quoted a councillor as saying "pour que les gens soient mélangés, il faut que certains partent"[32] (qtd. in Gasquet-Cyrus 88). According to a 2003 article in *Le Figaro*, mayor Claude Valette phrased this concept even more clearly, proclaiming: "il faut nous débarrasser de la moitié des habitants…Le Marseille populaire, ce n'est pas le Marseille maghrébin…Le centre a été envahi par la population étrangère...je fais revenir des habitants qui payent des impôts"[33] (qtd. in Le Dantec 74). As Le Dantec observes, official discussions of Marseille's regeneration often employ a militaristic frame, speaking of the "reconquête du centre-ville"[34] (74) and the desire to "rendre le littoral aux Marseillais"[35] (79).

Therefore, while ECoC MP2013 and Mucem celebrate images of a tolerant, working-class and multicultural Marseille, they are working within an agenda of gentrification and "sanitation" which threatens these same qualities they celebrate and instrumentalise. This agenda exacerbates existing tensions and exclusions (Gasquet-Cyrus 97).

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[31] Modify the social tissue of the city

[32] To ensure that we have a blend of people, we need some to leave.

[33] We need to get rid of half the inhabitants…the Marseille of the people, it's not Maghrebi Marseilles…the centre has been invaded by a foreign population…I want to bring back the residents who pay the taxes.

[34] Reconquering of the city.

[35] Return the coast to the Marseillais.

5.5.2-Reconnecting Marseille to the Sea

A further focus of Euroméditerranée's identity-shaping agenda is the sea, with the ECoC and Mucum contributing to this agenda. The Euroméditerranée aims to reconnect the people of Marseille to their maritime environment, in a way that is symbolic rather than physical, as the city is rather detached from the port geographically (Mah 73). It was hoped that an increased connection between the port and the residents would benefit Marseille's image and economy (Andres, "Alternative" 800).

This focus on maritime reconnection has been prompted by the difficult relationship that the residents of Marseille have with the port, due to its decline and the economic impacts on the city (Mah 72). However, the Deputy International Relations Coordinator for MP13 notes that it is important to change this mentality to enhance the city's economic potential; an image of strong connection between port and town increases the port's economic potential and promotes investment (Mah 72).

Certainly, the port featured very prominently in the ECoC MP13 festivities (Mah 72). Mucem reinforces this maritime connection through its location, architecture and museography. The museum consists of two contrasting structures, the modern, cubist J4 building and the historic twelfth century Fort Saint-Jean. The J4 building provides impressive views of the port. The main access ramp connecting different floors is exterior to the building, requiring visitors to engage with the outside coastal environment when moving between floors. To move from J4 to Fort Saint-Jean, visitors traverse a long, thin oversea bridge, which continues the immersive maritime

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experience. Fort Saint-Jean, a piece of Marseille's maritime history, has been repaired and rendered publicly accessible, creating another opportunity for visitors to connect with to Marseille's maritime heritage.

5.5.3-Marseille's Aspirations to Greatness

Marseille's aspirations towards greatness are a further key narrative in Euroméditerranée and in Mucem (Mah 61). According to Mah, Euroméditerranée aims to turn Marseille into the central economic hub connecting Europe and the Mediterranean (71). This aspiration to be a "great port" looks partly to Marseille's past as a centre of empire and trade during the colonial period, and partly towards the future in promoting an improved cultural and economic agenda (Mah 86).

Mucem strongly contributes to this great port identity through its architecture and museography. Mucem's role in displaying a great port identity for Marseille is suggested in the speech of Gaudin, the mayor of Marseille, who proclaimed: "Le Mucem…affirme le positionnement de Marseille comme grande métropole culturelle Euroméditerranéenne" [36](Gaudin 5). As a prominent and prestigious structure by the acclaimed architect Riciotti, Mucem's architecture speaks of grandeur, and has become a visual icon in Marseille's skyline (Gameiro 165). According to Filippetti, the Minister of Culture and Communication, Mucem's buildings provide "des architectures emblématiques qui deviennent symbole de l'identité d'une région"[37] (Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, "Dossier de Presse 2013" 3). Moreover, Mucem's exhibitions contribute to Marseille's great port identity,

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[36] Mucem affirms Marseille's position as the grand cultural metropolis of the Euromediterrean.
[37] Emblematic architrecture, which become a symbol of the region's identity.

positioning Marseille among great Mediterranean ports such as Genoa, Barcelona and Tangiers.

The Euroméditerranée project, and particularly Mucem, aim to establish a fresh image of Marseille in the eyes of greater France and the world, as well as to alter the city's essence, seeking to modify the social fabric of Marseille and to alter residents' relationship to their environment. Identity messages around multicultural and working-class culture, maritime connection and great port status are firmly connected to Marseille's gentrification and economic goals. Ironically, these goals sometimes also jeopardise the same identities that they exploit. In the context of these complex urban identity narratives, this paper now turns to an analysis of Mucem's museography to consider how identity messages of self and other are established in its museal narratives.

5.6-A Museographic Narrative of Marseille's Identity

Both Mucem and MQB re-frame ethnographic objects to create their identity narratives. Unlike MQB's aesthetic presentation with minimal context, Mucem retains the ethnographic focus of displayed artefacts, incorporating artwork into the ethnographic and historical narrative. Mediterranean civilisations are, of course, Mucem's focus. As Gameiro explains, in Mucem "society and civilisational diversity [are] …the main protagonist of its narratives" (165). Mucem, however, also presents clear identity messages about Marseille, furthering messages evident in the Euroméditerranée project. Moreover, Mucem presents messages about French identity, despite the museum's avoidance of the nation as an organising construct.

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At the time of my visit in December 2019, the permanent exhibitions comprised of two separate exhibitions, *Ruralités* and *Connectivités. Ruralités* explores the region's agriculture from prehistory to the present. *Connectivités*, the larger and more frequented exhibition, consists of two components. One component considers Mediterranean history in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The second component considers contemporary urban life in the Mediterranean in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. While Gameiro finds that the exhibition considers cultures" 'uniqueness as well as their commonalities," my visit found an overwhelming focus on similarities, at the expense of a consideration of diversity (167-7).

5.6.1-*Connectivités*

Connectivités' focus on cities rather than nations is an interesting and significant choice. On the one hand, Mucem has deliberately emphasised its connection to the local Marseille context; on the other hand, the museum also clearly has a strong emphasis on the regional, in terms of the Mediterranean region. This dual focus on the local and the regional has the effect of downplaying the role of the nation-state. According to a press release 2006, Mucem "seek[s] to break with the national frame of the national museum" (qtd. in Bodenstein and Poulot 29). This is a deliberate break from the goals of Mucem's predecessor, the NMATP, whose focus on French folklore carried the assumption that "a singular national frame contained these local forms of expression" (Ingram 284). Mucem's transnational approach, by contrast, suggests the importance of broader regional connections (Ingram 284). In some

ways, then, despite Mucem's status as a national museum, it challenges the

traditional relationship between museum and state, with its identity messages being

constructed in relation to the local and regional. Nevertheless, underneath this, the

power of the nation state and its identity narrative is still discernible.

Use of countries and continents as classification tools by colonisers to organise and

classify people has shaped our knowledge of the world (Anderson 166-7). Mucem is,

however, a museum that challenges this construction of the world. Rather than

replicating existing geographic and territorial divisions, it challenges our way of

thinking about the world by focusing on a region that does not correspond neatly to

continental, national or cultural divisions. Unlike MQB's display of extremely diverse,

and arguably incoherent, regions and cultures, the application of the Mediterranean

as an organising construct has geographic and historic coherence. However, that

does not mean it is an entirely neutral construct. Rather, in its presentation of the

Mediterranean, Mucem argues for the existence of a coherent and specific regional

identity.

Mucem's construct of the Mediterranean is based on the scholarship of French

historian Braudel. An unmissably large screen at the exhibition's entry provides an

outline of Braudel's views which underpin the exhibition. Braudel's writings position

the Mediterranean as a single entity and as a unified actor on the basis of its

geography (Bicchi 330). Of course, Braudel's views are not the only possible views

on the Mediterranean; Huntington, by contrast, positions the Mediterranean as an

area of continual conflict and inherent disunity, while Bicchi finds the concept of the

Medterranean to be of decreasing relevance in light of increasing divisions between

Europe and North Africa (Bicchi 331). Braudel also views the Mediterranean as the

"cradle of civilisations." This is reflected in the museum's goal to explore the

Mediterranean's role as the source of many civilisations, which gives the

Mediterranean a special and uniquely influential role in world history. The use of

Braudel's writing as a lens through which to understand the Mediterranean,

therefore, positions the viewer to perceive the Mediterranean as a meaningful and

unified construct, justifying it as a topic of exploration.

Presenting Mediterranean as the cradle of civilisations creates an image of the

Mediterranean as a rich and culturally significant area. However, not all historical

interactions in the Mediterranean have been positive. Both the geographic and

historical parameters chosen for Mucem's permanent exhibitions ensure that

exhibitions are de-politicised, or at least selectively politicised, silencing certain

unsavoury historical connections. Given the ongoing impacts of French colonisation

in North Africa, it is difficult to speak about French-North African relations without

considering the colonial period. Yet Mucem is strangely mute on this subject.

Selectivity of time and place facilitates the omission of colonialism. The focus on

cities ahead of nations contributes to this omission. Political decisions are made at

the national level. Marseille itself did not instigate colonial policy. This city-to-city lens

therefore facilitates the disappearance of the colonial. Instead, it presents an image

of similarity and equality; the cities presented face similar environmental, social and

urban challenges. This focus on similarities enables the avoidance of discussion

around historical and ongoing hierarchical structures created through the existence

of colonial relationships.

The appearance of equality masks the past and present inequalities resulting from the previous colonial relations between France and the northern African countries on display, including Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco and Algeria. Similarly, the selectivity of the timeframe assists in hiding colonial history. The *Connectivités* exhibition focuses on two time periods: the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the twenty and twenty-first centuries. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when colonialism was at its peak, are bypassed.

Selective presentation of the political also hides colonialism. The twentieth and twenty-first century component of the exhibition, examining the challenges of urban life, discusses local politics rather than international politics. For example, Mucem presents a film in which Cairo residents complain that political decisions favour businesses over residents. Rather than explicitly comparing cities, connections are implied from the similar challenges facing each city. By contrast, the exhibitions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries considered international political events with the Mediterranean, such as the Ottoman-Habsburg wars. However, this narrative of centuries of various wars and colonial conquests situates the Mediterranean in a backdrop of ongoing fighting and conquest. This implicitly downplays colonial conquests by suggesting that these were simply part and parcel of centuries of conquests within the region.

Interestingly, the cities chosen for exhibition in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries component of *Connectivités*, Algers, Cairo, Istanbul, Casablanca and Marseille, represent a selective vision of the Mediterranean. Of these cities, four of

the five are outside Europe. Rather than drawing explicit comparison between cities, connections are implied from each city's similar urban issues. Each has problems with overcrowding, poverty and substandard buildings. Wealthy European Mediterranean cities such as Cannes, Nice, Monte Carlo and Venice are excluded from the portrayal of the contemporary Mediterranean. Marseille's grouping with these non-European cities suggests that the exhibition is categorising and framing Marseille in a specific manner. In contrast to the glamorous lifestyles associated with many other European Mediterranean cities, Marseille is highlighting its poverty, urban challenges and multiculturality. This selectivity creates an impression of Marseille that is grittier, less sanitised and arguably more "authentically Mediterranean" than neighbouring European cities. Images chosen to represent Marseille support this narrative. For example, a film celebrating urban walks in Marseille does not show the city's landmarks; rather, visitors see a drab and depressing urban landscape including highways and unappealing concrete paths.

Through its urban challenges, Marseille highlights its similarities to these northern African countries and minimises its differences, creating a rather assimilating vision. Marseille, it seems, can connect with the opposite shore and understand the broader region in a way that other European cities cannot. However, this assimilating image also hides the colonial past. If Marseille is classified with its northern African neighbours in a relationship of equality and comparability rather than hierarchy, this hides the former hierarchical structures that characterised the relationship between France and northern Africa during the colonial period, and their ongoing ramifications.

Therefore, alongside presenting messages about the Mediterranean, Mucem's combination of city and regional lenses conveys a construct of Marsaillais identity as authentically Mediterranean. Moreover, by positioning Marseille in the company of other well-known Mediterranean port cities, Mucem constructs Marseille's identity as a great port among other great ports (Mah 86). As discussed, this maritime heritage contributes to a Marseillais identity built on separatism, cosmopolitanism, migration and working-class culture. Marseille is distinct from the rest of France, but most particularly, it is different from Paris. This focus on Marseille within the Mediterranean region demonstrates Marseille's uniqueness within France and distinctiveness in relation to Paris. By shifting the frame of reference from the national to the regional, Marseille becomes a key player within its own distinct region outside of Paris' experience. It emphasises Marseille's uniqueness, being part of a Mediterranean community inaccessible to other French cities. It is a distinction Mucem seems unwilling to share with other French towns. In the *Connectivités* exhibition, two Italian towns, Venice and Genoa, as well as two Spanish towns, Seville and Valencia, are presented; however, Marseille is the only French Mediterranean town presented.

Selectivity, then, is used to downplay or silence colonial histories. Mucem celebrates Marseille's maritime engagement and legacy, highlighting the positives of the past like immigration and cosmopolitanism, while avoiding less attractive mentions of the past. As Mah notes about the treatment of colonial legacies in Marseille in general, they sit uncomfortably with desired narratives of urban identity and the marketed images of Marseille (114). For example, plans to construct Le Mémorial National de la France d'Outre-Mer in Marseille, a museum telling the story of colonisation, set to

open in 2007, was relinquished due to opposition (Mah 104). Interestingly, Mah, although writing about an earlier exhibition at Mucem, identifies a similar reticence to discuss colonialism, finding that the exhibition she saw provides "a sanitized account of colonialism" which "avoided engaging in controversial debates about decolonisation" (28).

In fact, Mucem even more than MQB employs the instrumentalisation of artefacts of other cultures, including artefacts with colonial histories, to construct a story of French identity. Mucem's presentation of French (in this case Marseillais) identity is, however, much more overt than MQB's presentation of French identity, as Marseille's economic, urban and identity agendas have been the driving force of the project.

5.6.2-Ruralités

The *Ruralités* section of the permanent exhibition further develops images of similarity of agricultural experience across the region. Naturally, there are elements of agricultural work that are quite constant, such as engagement with sun, earth and water. Across the Mediterranean there are also regional similarities of climate and landscape. The exhibition also creates a particular image of agricultural work, including concepts such as simplicity, wholesomeness and repository of age-old traditions. The exhibition opens with a digital artwork by Vincent Chevillon, "In Arcadia", setting an image of a timeless, idyllic and abundant rural landscape. *Ruralité's* starts with the birth of civilisation in the Mediterranean by examining the emergence of hunter-gatherer cultures approximately 30,000 years ago and moves through to the present.

Contemporary rural life is displayed selectively, strongly focusing on the traditional and seemingly timeless aspects of rural life, while largely ignoring recent agricultural developments. Displayed contemporary artefacts demonstrate longstanding traditions. These include a traditional Greek pottery jar from 2003 and a communion bread from 2014. Reference to environmental concerns is limited to a single sentence regarding concerns about over-fishing, while the development of highly industrialised farming methods goes unmentioned, which is strange in an exhibition portraying agricultural development. However, the emphasis on the traditional reinforces messages of commonality across the region. The industralisation of farming differs from country to country, based on aspects such as each country's economic situation, availability of capital and agricultural research. This would likely highlight economic differences between the Southern and Northern shores of the Mediterranean. The focus on traditional farming and the exclusion of recent agricultural technology minimises the presentation of differences within the region.

Through this presentation of rural life, *Ruralités* contributes to the exhibition's key messages. Marseille is a part of a unique region, distinct from the rest of France, with its own particular landscapes, food and agricultural traditions shared with other Mediterranean areas. *Ruralités'* focus on the everyday, simple and traditional emphasises similarities and removes the political. While some commentators suggest that Mucem celebrates the uniqueness of different Mediterranean cultures and civilisations, my reading indicates that in both *Ruralités* and in *Connectivités*, any messages of diversity are largely overshadowed by the overwhelming insistence on similarities (Gameiro 166-7).

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5.7-Mucem and French Identity

Aspects of Mucem challenge the traditional relationship between the nation-state and the museum; both MQB and Mucem "seek to break with the national frame of the national museum" (Bodenstein and Poulot 29). This is part of the movement in France towards decentralising arts (Ingram 282). In many ways, Mucem challenges traditional French republican values and the concept of the nation state; at the same time, however, the museum continues to perform the traditional role of conveying French values and political ideals.

According to a 2004 speech by the Minister of Culture, Mucem's focus on ongoing exchange, mobility and diversity is intended to challenge the myth of the nation-state being based on a "pure" racial, ethnic or cultural origin (Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, "Discours de Frédéric Mitterrand" 4). However, he went on to explain that "même si l'on peut légitimement penser que toutes les formes culturelles ne sont pas également acceptables d'un point de vue moral…la juste appréciation de leur importance historique …[est] la seule voie praticable vers une compréhension en retour, donc à l'instauration d'un dialogue"[38] (5). As Bodenstein and Poulet suggest, this speech "is a tightrope balancing act that is the rejection of cultural relativism, whilst inviting open exchange," suggesting that Mucem, while intended to celebrate cultural diversity and awareness, also sits within a typically French universalist worldview (28).

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[38] Even if it is not possible to legitimately consider all cultural forms as equally acceptable from a moral perspective…the appropriate appreciation of their historic importance…is the only practical way towards a mutual comprehension, and consequently, establishing dialogue.

Although Mucem establishes Marseille's identity in contrast to the rest of France, and Mediterranean identity in contrast to the nation-state, the museum simultaneously manages to convey traditional French political values. As Ingram notes of projects in the Euromediterranée, "these artists are redefining civic Republican ideals for a new era of globalisation and Europeanisation" and that the values expressed in Euroméditerranée also reframe republican universalist ideals through a distinctively Marseillais lens (284-6).

As with MQB, Mucem's message is ultimately universalist and assimilationist, in line with France's political values. Mucem focuses on connections and similarities, while minimising variety and diversity (165). This insistence on commonality is highlighted in a speech by the Minister of Culture, as he explains that the museum provides a new way of understanding "our common history, of constructing our memory" (Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, "Discours de Frédéric Mitterrand" 29). This leads to a rather flat, broadbrushing portrayal, focused on fundamental and common human experiences such as urban or rural living. This insistence on commonality is a manifestation of a universalist belief in human values. Indeed, Guerini, the President of the General Council of Bouches-du-Rhones finds that "[Mucem] s'intègre parfaitement à la politique culturelle départementale, fondée sur des valeurs d'humanisme et d'universalité." (9)

Moreover, Western ideas of civilisation seem to be privileged throughout Mucem. As with MQB, there is an explicit intention to reject hierarchy. Suzzarelli explains that Mucem "veut se garder de toute idée de hiérarchie"[39] (Godfrin-Guidicelli 13) and also

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[39] Avoid all sense of hierarchy.

that "il a la volonté de ne pas avoir un regard européocentré"[40] (Godfrin-Guidicelli

13). However, a Eurocentric view was not entirely unavoidable. For example,

Ruralités touches upon the birth and development of religion. However, only

Christianity is specifically mentioned, in relation to the traditions of wine and

communion bread. Mah, discussing an earlier temporary exhibition, found: "the

exhibition was underpinned by a Western idea of civilisation as a positive and

inevitable force of human history and progress" (28). The sense of progress that Mah

identified is also evident in the permanent exhibitions, most specifically in the

Ruralités exhibition, whose depiction of agriculture celebrates the progress of

civilisation and technology, with minimal consideration of associated environmental

issues.

Mucem also creates a special role for France in the Mediterranean, via Marseille. As

the Minister of Culture notes: "S'il est un pays qui, à lui seul, représente un abrégé

de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée, c'est bien le nôtre"[41] (Ministère de la Culture et de

la Communication, "Concours International" 4). This suggests that France is uniquely

positioned to be the "natural" bridge between both shores of the Mediterranean.

Mucem reflects France's claim to a unique geographical and political role. In fact,

Mucem promotes French political priorities within the Mediterranean.

Progress with Mucem, which had been floundering, was accelerated with President

Sarkozy's election in 2007 (Lebovics, "Rashomon" 170). As Lebovics notes, Sarkozy

was interested in enhancing French influence in the Mediterranean, proposing the

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[40] There is a desire to avoid a Eurocentric view.
[41] If there is a single country that can represent a compendium of Europe and the Mediterranean, it is certainly our country.

creation of a Mediterranean union for nations bordering the Mediterranean with common institutions and judicial agreements, and which would been led by France; Lebovics considers this a French version of "Mare Nostrum", or an "imperial revival" ("Rashomon" 157-168). Mucem was the "cultural face of [Sarkozy's] plan for the French-led Mediterranean Union" (Lebovics, "Rashomon" 170).

Pressure from the EU ultimately blocked Sarkozy's plans; instead, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) was created in 2008, which included the entire EU and fifteen other Mediterranean countries, and was designed to promote development, peace, prosperity and integration in the region (Bodenstein and Poulot 29). France continued to demonstrate leadership within the UfM, hosting the initial summit in Paris in 2008, holding the first co-presidency role alongside Egypt, and to date hosting more UfM ministerial meetings than any other country except Belgium. Sarkozy's goal for using Mucem to "increase[e] France's cultural capital in the Mediterranean world" was significantly redirected with the victory of the Socialist Party in 2012, who gave the project a greater focus on mutual respect and cultural circulation (Lebovics," Rashomon" 174); nevertheless, Sarkozy's influence has marked the museum. For example, Bodenstein and Poulot note that the area chosen for representation in Mucem corresponds to the UfM (29). Mazé et al. also note that the museum was expected to contribute to the political goals of the UfM (41). In creating Mucem, France is, in a way, acting as a spokesperson for the Mediterranean, reinforcing its definitions of what is included and excluded in the region and its identity.

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Marseille's strategy of playing up its similarity to Northern Africa while obviously remaining a key member of the EU emphasises Marseille's desired role as a bridge across the Mediterranean, a role supported by France's prominence in the UfM. As Gaudin, the Mayor of Marseille, explains, Mucem is "un pôle de coopération artistique et culturelle entre l'Europe et tous les pays de la Méditerranée"[42] (5). Mah even suggests that Marseille's ambition is to become the central economic hub connecting Europe and the Mediterranean (71). The final exhibit in *Connectivités*, a map of undersea telecommunications cables which demonstrates Marseille's role as regional infrastructural hub of telecommunications, is presumably a demonstration of Marseille's aspirations to be this central connection point. There is a hint of desire for ownership or control expressed in the 2013 press release's confident proclamation: "La Méditerranée a une adresse : le MuCEM"[43] (Mucem 19).

5.8-Effectiveness of Mucem as Postcolonial Institution

Mucem presents some innovative approaches to museography that are highly appropriate to a postcolonial museum. Innovatively, Mucem views its priority as a forum, creating events that encourage debate, and placing the creation of dialogue as a higher priority than the displaying of artefacts. The museum avoids the binary us/them approach criticised by Said and Fanon. Instead, it focuses on the centuries of exchange between the different cultures within the region, which evokes Bhabha's ideas on hybridity. Aspects of Mucem can therefore be considered to function as a Third Space.

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[42] A centre of artistic and cultural cooperation between Europe and all the Mediterranean countries.
[43] The Mediterranean has an address: Mucem

However, Mucem's underlying premises and ambitions are in many ways antithetical to a postcolonial institution. Mucem's construction has been as much about presenting a particular Marseillais identity for economic purposes, as it has been about cultural exchange. Marseille's gentrification agenda, of which Mucem is a part, ironically contributes to the disenfranchisement of the poorest residents of the town, many of whom are migrants from elsewhere in the Mediterranean.

The geographic, historical and political lenses chosen for presentation at Mucem are also highly selective. While Mucem avoids the us/them dichotomy present at MQB, it falls into the opposite trap of an assimilating vision. It downplays differences within the region and omits aspects of the region's history. Employing Braudel's work to underpin the exhibitions presents an image of a region with a rich history of trade, exchange and cooperation. The omission of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from the permanent exhibition means that the colonial period is hardly broached, while the focus on cities rather than nations serves to depoliticise.

This assimilating vision is evident in the presentation of rural life across the Mediterranean as idyllic, unified and unhampered by modernity. It also extends to the presentation of Marseille among Northern African cities, highlighting similarities and suggesting that Marseille has a unique capacity to connect with cities across the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, Mucem conveys traditional French political values such as universality and humanism, despite its intention for open-minded cultural exchange.

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Moreover, despite the museum's assimilating vision and stated avoidance of hierarchy, it contributes towards a French agenda to demonstrate leadership, if not a level of control, within the region. Mucem gives France a means to control a presentation of Mediterranean identity, and contributes to France's plans to make Marseille an economic and infrastructural hub for the Mediterranean.

6-Conclusion

Representation of other cultures is a fraught area, particularly so when a colonial relationship existed between the cultures. This research has aimed to trace the possibilities of the creation of a postcolonial museum in France. The first chapter provided a theoretical and historical context, aiming to identify what a postcolonial museum is, and what its possibilities and limitations are. Drawing on the work of Spivak and Bhabha, it argues for the creation of museums that incorporate the voice of the other, seek to create respectful dialogue between self and other, and that present nuanced, fluid non-binary understandings of culture and identity in the hope of acting as a "Third Space" for cultural exchange. However, it notes that the creation of a postcolonial museum is also somewhat paradoxical, and is limited by historical and conceptual factors. Specifically, the modern museum is a Western institution constructed upon a Western construction of knowledge. Moreover, it has historically been associated with a history of nationalism, including the display of colonial power.

Evidently, the creation of a postcolonial museum is not straightforward, and the second chapter argued that it is particularly difficult in the French context. Museums have played an especially significant role in France's history. They have been associated with national identity since their origin, and continue to be viewed as vehicles for the dissemination of French citizenship, political norms and republican values. This agenda can conflict with the sensitive and accurate representation of other cultures. Moreover, certainly values and norms, such as universalism, prove

somewhat at odds with postcolonialism, and indeed France has traditionally been suspicious of the postcolonial movement.

In chapters three and four, the two case studies of MQB and Mucem are presented to investigate how these tensions resolved, or failed to resolve, in recently constructed postcolonial museums. Although the museums differ significantly, both are largely unsuccessful at their postcolonial mission, despite moments of success. As Karp notes, museums engaged in cultural representation face the danger of falling into one of two opposite extremes of either exoticising or assimilating (10). Mucem and Branly illustrate these two opposite positions. MQB creates a spectacular, exotic other, while Mucem flattens difference to better integrate its host city, Marseille, into the broader Mediterranean landscape.

Ultimately both museums suffer from similar shortcomings, although these are outworked differently in the different contexts. The postcolonial agenda in both institutions is compromised by competing political goals and the desire to portray particular images of French national or regional identity. This is more overt in the case of Mucem, where Marseille's desire to instrumentalise Mucem to enhance its identity and economy has openly been a core driver of the project. In the case of MQB, the desire to present a particular image of France as a cultural ambassador to the nations is more implicit, most visible in Chirac's speeches.

Moreover, both museums are hampered in their postcolonial mission to embrace other perspectives by their simultaneous presentation of a typically French worldview. For example, the museums convey French republican values, such as

universalism and anti-communitarianism, even though these values are not shared by all cultures represented, and are at odds with postcolonialism. This highlights the difficulty of moving beyond one's own situation, values and worldviews.

Indeed, it can be argued that in both institutions there is almost something neo-colonial about the way in which France presents itself as a leader among other nations, often former colonies, implying a certain hierarchy. Through the MQB, France is able to bestow recognition on others and present itself as a global cultural centre, while at Mucem, Marseille seems to be attempting to cast itself as the Mediterranean regional leader and infrastructural hub. This attempted positioning is particularly precarious for Marseille, given France's colonial engagements in North Africa. Moreover, both museums instrumentalise artefacts from other countries, including France's former colonies, to create these images of France. In this way, they continue the same tradition of the Louvre, which effectively instrumentalises artefacts from other countries to construct a French identity.

Nevertheless, although neither institution is the successful embodiment of a postcolonial museum, both institutions are engaged in making the museum space vibrant, dynamic and appealing for new audiences. The lively media debate around appropriate cultural representation within the museum space upon the announcement of the MQB indicates that there is, at least, significant concern about these questions in French society. In reviewing the evolution of the former colonial institutions to their current successors at MQB and Mucem, it is evident that consideration is being given to treating these questions, and some progress has

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been made. Although there are certainly further possible improvements, this

trajectory gives hope for the future.

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