

PANEL «MUSEALIZATION OF DESIGN», ROUND TABLE AT THE CLOSING SESSION OF THE CONGRESS *DESIGN OBJECTS: MUSEALIZATION, DOCUMENTATION AND INTERPRETATION*, WITH THE GUESTS BÁRBARA COUTINHO (MUDE) AND JOSÉ BÁRTOLO (CASA DO DESIGN), MODERATED BY FRANCISCO PROVIDÊNCIA (ID+/UA)

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Abstract: *Bárbara Coutinho, director of Mude, Museu do Design e da Moda, under the responsibility of Lisbon City Council, and José Bártolo, director of Casa do Design, under the responsibility of Matosinhos City Council, both with significant experience concerning research and curatorship in Design exhibitions, agreed to participate in a round table moderated by Francisco Providência, designer with museographic experience and investigator at ID+ Instituto de Investigação em Design, Media e Cultura, to discuss the theme of Design Musealization, that has been attracting growing public interest. Given the impossibility to be present, Bárbara Coutinho was represented by a text reflecting on the subject, initiating the session with the commented presentation of several research and exhibiting projects from José Bártolo. In the closing session of the congress, guests converged into a critical model that, starting from material collections, expresses an intention mostly of political and social projection, according to Bárbara, while mostly historical and social, to Bártolo.*

Keywords: *museology; museography; design; Casa do Design; MUDE.*

Resumo: *Bárbara Coutinho, diretora do MUDE, Museu do Design e da Moda, sob a responsabilidade da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, e José Bártolo, diretor da Casa do Design, sob a responsabilidade da Câmara Municipal de Matosinhos, ambos com experiência significativa em matéria de investigação e curadoria em exposições de design, concordaram em participar numa mesa redonda moderada por Francisco Providência, designer com experiência museográfica e investigador do ID+ Instituto de Investigação em Design, Media e Cultura, para discutir o tema da Musealização do Design, que tem vindo a atrair um interesse público crescente. Dada a impossibilidade de estar presente, Bárbara Coutinho foi representada por um texto de reflexão sobre o tema, iniciando a sessão com a apresentação comentada de vários projetos de investigação e exposição de José Bártolo. Na sessão de encerramento do congresso, os convidados convergiram para um modelo crítico que, partindo de coleções materiais, exprime uma intenção maioritariamente de projeção política e social, segundo Bárbara, enquanto maioritariamente histórica e social, para Bártolo.*

Palavras-chave: *museologia; museografia; design; Casa do Design; MUDE.*

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PARTICIPANTS

José Bártolo, having dedicated his work to research in Design and Art, is also Scientific Director of *esad*—*idea*, member of Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Linguagem da Universidade Nova de Lisboa, editor of the magazine «Pli Arte & Design», author of several articles and books related to history and critics of design, having lectured at the doctorate programme at Faculdade de Arquitectura (University of Porto) and at ESAD. Curator of many national and international Design exhibitions, he directs the agenda of Casa do Design, in Matosinhos, and is the Chief Curator of Porto Design Biennale.

Bárbara Coutinho, doctoral student in museology investigating the «Espaço expositivo nos museus do séc. XXI», is the founding director and programmer of Mude – Museu do Design e da Moda, Francisco Capelo Collection (since 2006). Professor at Instituto Superior Técnico (University of Lisbon), where she teaches Art Theory and History, she devotes her time to research, curatorship, teaching, editing and writing. Member of Docomomo International. Between 1998 and 2006 she conceived and directed the Educational Department and the programme of Art, Design and Architecture courses at the Exhibition Centre of Centro Cultural de Belém Foundation.

INTRODUCTION

In order to overcome the inability to be physically present, Bárbara Coutinho¹ was represented by her text, previously shared, reflecting on Design Museums (still recent in the history of museography), questioning their role and contribution to the history, practice, critics and teaching of Design, revealing the way Design has been perceived over time and its influences on society and mentalities. In that sense, the author acknowledges to the museum and the exhibitions a sociocultural political and ideological role, beyond the conservative, artistic or curatorial dimension.

For these reasons, Bárbara Coutinho questions herself about the need of rethinking the place and role of the museum:

How can the Design Museum contribute to a reflection on the material culture?

Which social pact should it promote, which relationship with things should it support, and which relevance should be assigned to them?

Will the awareness of everyone to the real importance of design allow to transform society? Guaranteeing sustainability to its development?

Will the museum promote the sharing of information and intergenerational knowledge?

¹ Due to the physical absence of Bárbara Coutinho, for reasons of force majeure, we present a brief framework of her positions based on a statement written and sent by the author.

Will the museum occupy the place of interpretation and experience to the transformation and social and human knowledge?

Moving apart from entertainment, may it provide the approach between aesthetics and politics? Approaching creativity to life?

And which may be the consequences of these reconfigurations into the internal functioning own order of museums and their teams?

MUDE's proposal is to reflect through its museum practice, reaffirming in its own brand the imperative for change. MUDE, aiming to contribute «to the cultural, cognitive and emotional development of each individual, in a perspective of an active citizenship education, in order to change the attitude facing material culture and life itself», overcomes, by the desire of social activation, the practice of museological preservation.

It is, therefore, in MUDE, a clear purpose of politicisation of Design and of social politicisation through Design, so that its exhibition becomes ethical, that is to say, an objective programme that will functionally superimpose itself to the own culture of Design, allocating it to the critical exercise.

Politicised museum, indeed, once all the museums, as social institutions for the accreditation of cultural and artistic value, constitute a political intentionality; but also political as an ideological vehicle to social revolution.

José Bártolo starts by presenting a communication² where he also reflects on the museology of Design, to which he recognises a projectual relevance, beyond its curatorial role. In line with Bárbara Coutinho, José Bártolo advocates for the right and duty of disciplinary discursification of Design (Portuguese), under the double condition of curatorship while conceiving as the *Exhibition of Design* as sometimes *orienting the exhibiting Design*. Observing the History of Design exhibitions in Portugal, between the first half of the 20th century and the 21st century, he will conclude with the presentation of the strategy of Casa do Design programming which he is responsible for in Matosinhos.

If Bárbara Coutinho anchors her communication on the inquiring role of the museum, as a platform from which audiences might question the world, José Bártolo also states that but reveals a more historical accuracy, leaning on his practice as a researcher of Design History, collector and gatherer of documentation, supported by the archaeology of studies that he develops based on his own collections, as well as

² *Exposições de Design e Design expositivo: a curadoria como discursificação disciplinar do design português* by José Bártolo. The communication focuses its attention on the Design exhibitions developed in Portugal between 1960 and nowadays to analyse, from this *corpus* on, the importance of exhibitions as a space for project in Design and to reflect about the relevance of the curatorial dimension to the subject consolidation of Portuguese Design from the second half of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st century. The communication ends with a more specific framework of the programming strategy of Casa do Design de Matosinhos.

by the research about designers that are authors of several exhibitivie manifestations of Design and its intentions.

Bártolo, using documental examples to support his research, discloses a genuine interest in objects, in their materiality and conservation, in production techniques, in authors, in the fights they contain and reveal, in the stories associated with their accomplishment and, naturally, in the contribution given while agents of the history of the subject, the culture and the country.

More conservative than speculator, Bártolo reserves the judgement of his curatorial conclusions to the interpretation of the collected, studied and exhibited pieces, though seeming to assume a scientific performance as a Design historian.

DESIGN MUSEOLOGY

Museology, in its very long social mission, reveals a self-history on conservation, exhibition, contextualisation, transference and production of ideas through objects, alternative to other structures of teaching and learning. The technical solutions for its implementation, declined from the interpretation of a body of functional intentions, from the set of material constraints, constructive opportunities and technological availabilities, also characterise in the morphology, symbolic intentions that result from the endogenous interpretation of the museum, of its (philosophical) intent — «The form is a content of truth of masterpieces»³.

Design, a subject instituted from the creative practice of drawing, has a body of knowledge, history and culture of its own, distinguished by the practice of cultural mediation between organisations and individuals, technologies and performances, individuals and their own bodies, aiming the transformation of preserved data into information of audiences and the information of audiences into productive knowledge applied to their own existences. By recognising Design as *a subject of mediation*, the Design Museum will be a tautology (a mediation of a mediation), if not a metamediation. Assuming its endeavour of *metamediation*, the Design Museum cannot renounce to the ideological responsibility for its form, but taking innovation as a goal, it should focus on the competence to *question in a better way*, in a mediation for the doubt that will oppose it to the performance of a myth making machine.

Although recognised by the contributions on the functionalist drawing of products (since the industrial revolution), Design presents itself more and more socially present, by the contribution to the communication of appropriate contents, transferred by its own shape. The communication dimension of Design not only applies to its condition of vehicle, but also to the shape while information in itself — though Design seems

³ ADORNO, 1981.

nowadays to withdraw itself from its industrial and communication past to state itself through services, in a more social, political and activist way.

In a conference lectured at Galeria Paulo Figueiredo and transcribed by Gabriel Borba, Vilém Flusser⁴ attempts to explain Art (and therefore all the artefacts) from the phenomena of *reprocessing and transference* of information — these two «problems characterise all the production and, with specific features, also the production called “art”»⁵. The processing from which new information results is known as «creativity»; the expression-impression from which the «work of art» results is known as «productivity». Therefore, the problem of the museology of Design should focus on creativity and productivity, on the contribution to human innovation and on its material communication. But looking towards Design singularity, diverse, as a subject, from other close areas such as art, engineering and management, we cannot help considering an ontology based on dimensions such as authorship, construction and programme, that is to say, on the author (designer), the constructor (maker) and the user (user), categories that the Design Museum, in London, adopted for the structure of its permanent exhibition, in Kensington.

But will the ontological foundation constitute a Design epistemology that its museography should observe?

By relating Museology to Design we will start to find the demonstrations of museography in a prodigious history of forms that will be, in themselves, expressions of knowledge, that Derrick de Kerckhove⁶ presents under the diachronic vision of the history of museology, shaped by three archetypes: the *showcase museum* (in the historical and documental tradition of conservation of distinguished objects), the *ideological museum* (with the appearance of the curator, using collections for the construction of speeches) and the *accelerator museum* (digital, experiential and interactive, able to provide answers to the visitor in a useful time to apply them to his own life)⁷. In that sense, the designer, while drawer of the museum mediation, will be implicitly a curator, once he conditions the exhibited contents with the exhibiting shape.

⁴ FLUSSER, Vilém (1981). *Como explicar a arte*. Lecture that took place at Galeria Paulo Figueiredo and transcribed by Gabriel Borba. [Consult. 27 Dec. 2012]. Available at <<https://www.flusserstudies.net/sites/www.flusserstudies.net/files/media/attachments/flusser-explicar-a-producao.pdf>>.

⁵ FLUSSER, Vilém (1981). *Como explicar a arte*. Lecture that took place at Galeria Paulo Figueiredo and transcribed by Gabriel Borba. [Consult. 27 Dec. 2012]. Available at <<https://www.flusserstudies.net/sites/www.flusserstudies.net/files/media/attachments/flusser-explicar-a-producao.pdf>>.

⁶ KERCKHOVE, 1998.

⁷ KERCKHOVE, 1998:175-187.

DESIGN MUSEOGRAPHY

In museography, the way objects present themselves (museographic rhetoric) will participate in the construction of what they represent and, therefore, a Museum of Design will be also a modeller of Design.

The project Cides.pt⁸, Centro de Interpretação do Design Português, besides aiming to stop the forgetfulness and anonymity of Portuguese Design, intended to «develop and evaluate new approaches to museology and museography of Design», restoring symbolic and creative value to Portuguese artefacts, through their «inverted engineering» and with the multidisciplinary support from Museology, History, Interaction, Philosophy and Aesthetics.

Considering the museological investigation by Inês Ferreira⁹, centred on the mediation through and of creativity (proposing in the 21st century the *creative service*, likewise the educational service in the 20th century), the museum (and the Museum of Design) should offer, nowadays, the support service to the expressive production of its visitor, allowing him to evolve from consumer to producer or from receiver to issuer. But will the visitor be able to go beyond the alienating manipulation of playful, immersive, technically mediated experience to incorporate it as knowledge, as an increase to his critical skill?

The museology of Design will imply a historical, social and cultural perspective on Design. Several examples have been arising in that direction, disseminated by exhibitions and museums that privilege the exhibition of the artefact under its morphological, stylistic and historical (contextualising the evolution of shapes), social (evaluating its functional impact on life and accessibility of people), technological (proposing new means of energy and production to sustainability) and cultural (testifying copyright and ideological purposes gathered into the production of new meanings) dimensions.

The Design Museum will constitute an instrument of transference and production of knowledge, but epistemologically hostage of its own nature of *cultural mediator*. What subsists to the explosion of forms and new domains of contemporary Design is the common denominator of (cultural) mediator and, therefore, of an operational connector, of a translator. But, in the impossibility of its neutrality, its amorphous condition, the mediation has form and, therefore, intrinsic or aesthetical value.

One of the main contradictions of the museography of Design is that, in contrast to art, Design implies a practical knowledge, a usage, an experimentation that the

⁸ CIDES.PT, Centro de Interpretação do Design Português, ref.: PTDC/CPC-DES/4754/2012, project type I&DT, financed by FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (national level), applied by ID+ (Universities of Aveiro and Porto), beginning on 1 Jun. 2013 and concluded on 31 Oct. 2015. [Consult. Sep. 2019]. Available at <https://sigarra.up.pt/flup/pt/projectos_geral.mostra_projecto?p_id=65741>.

⁹ FERREIRA, 2016.

museum, in the name of preserving the object, cannot tolerate. But in the several usages assumed by Design, we acknowledge both as practical as symbolic functions, that will imply the coexistence with objects, providing the production of innumerable layers of meaning.

Hypothetically the best *design museum* would be constituted by the projection of information on the objects with which we coexist in daily life, attributing to them layers of meaning, from their author, their manufacturer, other users and thinkers, recreating at each moment a landscape of knowledge and collective meaning. The museum shall be the place of privileged observation over the phenomenon of Design, questioning it so that, by losing opacity, it becomes comprehensible as far as possible, thus fulfilling its role of knowledge producer.

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