

Museology

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Museology, from the Greek *μουσεῖον* = *museíon* ‘museum’, place of the muses, and *λόγος* = *logos*, reason. In some European languages the Latinised word is used: French – *muséologie*; English – *museology*, *museum studies* (the most frequently used term); Spanish – *museología*; Italian – *museologia*; German – *museologie*; *Museumswissenschaft*; *Museumskunde*.

This is a concept in permanent evolution anchored to a relatively recent science. Before 1945 “no definition or description of it appears neither in the dictionaries nor in the usual encyclopaedias.” (Fernández, 1999: 32). Georges Henri Rivière, first director of ICOM (International Council of Museums), defines in 1981 *Museology* as “an applied science, the science of the museum. *Museology* studies its history, its role in society, the specific forms of research and physical conservation, activities and dissemination, organization, and functioning, new or musealized architecture, sites that have been received or chosen, its typology and its deontology” (1993: 105). Definition very close to the one adopted by ICOM as early as 1970 and commonly used.

The perspectives of reflection and the valorization of *museology* broadened from the 1970s onwards. In 1976, the ICOFOM – ICOM International Committee for *Museology* was formed, becoming the “main place for the discussion of *museology*” (Poulot, 2009: 99). It articulates itself although not always in perfect harmony, as is natural, with other committees, affiliated to ICOM, which express similar concerns.

New *Museology* began to assert itself by highlighting the importance of social *museology*, the interdisciplinary nature of work in museums and new forms of interpretation and communication, in articulation with education. MINOM (International Movement for a New *Museology*) founded in 1985, Lisbon, brings together individuals concerned with social and cultural change who work mainly in ecomuseums, community museums, open air museums and cultural centres. “As opposed to a *museology* of collections, a *museology* of social concerns was taking shape” (Moutinho, 1995). The following year MINOM is recognized as an affiliate of ICOM. They consider that the idea of museum should

not be restricted to a space, collection and public, but to everything that is museumable in the relationship of man, inserted in the community. In this sense, museology, increasingly seen as an instrument of development, works with various areas of knowledge to understand man as a producer and user of knowledge. The consolidation of museological thought has always been based on reflections on new museological practices, many of them expressed in Declarations that have become unavoidable in museological ‘thinking’ and ‘acting’. The Declaration of Quebec, in 1984, by systematizing the basic principles of the New Museology, confronted “the museum community with a museological reality profoundly changed since 1972 [Declaration of Santiago de Chile], by practices that reveal an active museology, open to dialogue and endowed with a strong international autonomous structure” (Moutinho, 1995: 28), whose focus is increasingly on people, territorial development and the community, using heritage as a resource.

References

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 - [2] Moutinho, Mário (1995). “A Declaração do Québec de 1984”, in Araújo, Marcelo & Bruno, Maria Cristina (org.), *A memória do pensamento museológico contemporâneo (documentos e depoimentos)*. S. Paulo: Comitê Brasileiro do ICOM.
 - [3] Poulot, Dominique (2009). *Musée et muséologie*. Paris: Editions La Découverte.
 - [4] Rivière, Georges Henri (1993). “Museología”, in Rivière, Georges H, *La museología: Curso de museología – Textos y testimonios*. Madrid: Ed. Akal/Arte y Estética, pp. 105-106.

Further Readings

- MINOM – ICOM/Portugal, <https://www.minom-portugal.org/>
 Desvallés, André & Mairesse, François (dir.) (2011). *Dictionnaire encyclopédique de muséologie*. Paris: Armand Colin.
 Desvallés, André; Mairesse, François (ed). (2010). *Key Concepts of Museology*. Paris: Armand Colin/ICOM.
 Mairesse, François (org.). (2022). *Dictionnaire de Muséologie*. Paris: Armand Colin/ICOM.