

# Museology in Spain: From Museum Studies and Museology to Heritology

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## ABSTRACT

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century Spaniards had been studying museums with uneven zeal, somehow disconnected from the outburst of theoretical scholarship that was shaping a new academic discipline in other parts of the world after World War II. A period of political transition and growing internationalisation coincided with the tenure of Luis Monreal Tejada as Secretary-General of ICOM, from 1974 to 1985. However, only at the turn of the second millennium Museology boomed in the Spanish cultural context with numerous specialised publications and postgraduate courses, including the veteran M.A. in Museums Education and Communication of Saragossa University. Such academic blossom was in tune with the highest predicament worldwide of the *Nouvelle Muséologie*, which found a stronghold in Spain, emulating influential precedents in France and Latin America; then, Spanish universities were also an early cradle for the development in Europe of the so-called Critical Museology. Nowadays, despite some exceptions, such as the Study Programme in Critical Museology offered by the National Museum of Contemporary Art Reina Sofia in 2024, not only our training courses but also our book publishers are broadening their focus to encompass extra-museal or para-museal issues: Heritage Studies are proliferating in all our campuses. Are we experiencing the advent of a science to be called *Patrimoniología* or 'Heritology'?

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## About The Author

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## INTRODUCTION

In his introduction to the *Dictionary of Museology*, jointly published by Routledge and ICOM, François Mairesse has described the key moment of museology today emphasizing its growing heterogeneity and arguing the need for reconsiderations of its evolution in different cultural backgrounds. This article strives to offer a critical insight to its evolution in Spain.

### The Emergence of Spanish Museum Studies

Spain was one of the first countries in the world to offer professional training for heritage professionals since the establishment of the Escuela Superior de Diplomática in 1856, a school for future archivists, librarians, and other heritage experts. The ESD had a prestigious team of teaching staff and a well-assorted library with a treasure trove of publications, including works by pioneering museologists, such as Ceferino Araujo.<sup>1</sup> However, in 1900 that school was closed and its library moved to the Central University of Madrid (Romero, 2005), where the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters would supposedly take over. In fact, during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century only some unofficial teaching on these subjects were developed, taught by Professors Andrés Ovejero and Joaquín María Navascués.<sup>2</sup>

During the Cold War, Spain completely ignored the precedent set by the first Chairs and Departments of Museology founded in the universities of Brno and Zagreb. Indeed, the dichotomy between theoretical museology and professional museum training in Europe could be considered as one of the fronts of cultural divergence on each side of the Iron Curtain. Thanks to the mediation of UNESCO, some global intercultural dialogue persisted, ensuring a certain degree of interrelations in the conception of these studies all around the world. The Spanish government started in 1960 paying training grants offered by the Institute of Hispanic Culture to future museum curators from Latin America, who were placed in museums internships.<sup>3</sup> However, the Ministry of Education put off the proposed School of Museology, to be run in association with the Complutense University of Madrid, which designed in November 1967 a

Museology Course for future museum curators from Spain and Latin America.<sup>4</sup> Two years later, a School of Arts Applied to Restoration was inaugurated, but dependent on the Central Institute of Restoration and Conservation of Works and Objects of Art, Archaeology, and Ethnology. In its study program, a subject of Museology appeared in 1969, which later became mandatory. Equally oriented predominantly to the practical training of would-be museum professionals were the higher education courses existing at that time in several countries of Latin America. Only Argentina had promoted them in universities, but in any case, they were always focused on hands-on education.

Our museological culture was still so underdeveloped that even the best monographies on museums, like Juan Antonio Gaya Nuño's admirable *Historia y guía de los museos de España* (History and Guide of Spanish Museums) first published in 1955, or the book by Consuelo Sanz Pastor entitled *Museos y colecciones de España* (Museums and Collections of Spain) released in 1969, were both continuing the nineteenth-century tradition of guides for judgmental travelers or experts, offering curious readers a list of Spanish museums and their respective holdings. A new approach was offered by María Luisa Herrero, the Director of the Museum of the Spanish People, whose examples and references in her 1971 book *El museo en la educación* (The Museum in Education) resulted surprisingly abreast of international 20<sup>th</sup>-century trends considering museums as eminently educational centers. Furthermore, led by her admiration for the Parisian *École du Louvre*, she declared in her closing remarks the need of a similar school for museum curators in the Prado because, according to her, in our neighboring countries such studies always remained outside universities.

Apparently, she was not aware of the latest novelties in Italy, where Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti had founded in 1970 the Museology Centre at the Università Internazionale dell'Arte in Florence. Indeed, even in Spain the academic context was about to change, to the point that the most influential factor in the development of Museology during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century would be the inclusion of such studies in our universities

<sup>1</sup> Renowned for his 1875 book *Los Museos de España* (Museums of Spain) art critic Ceferino Araujo vindicated scholarly catalogues and well-chosen collections, systematically arranged and regularly open to the public (Layuno, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> Andrés Ovejero used to take his art history students to the Prado, where he would led free guided tours on Saturdays; his museological ruminations were condensed in a brief publication based on a speech he delivered in 1934 at the Academy of Fine Arts: *Concepto actual de museo artístico* (The current concept of art museum). Joaquín María de Navascués, whose 1949 book *Aportaciones a la Museografía Española* (Contributions to Spanish Museography) followed a triumphant career in various archaeological museums, crowned with the Complutense chair of Epigraphy and Numismatics since 1950.

<sup>3</sup> Brazilians Adolfo Cuadrado Muñiz and Lívio Xavier Júnior arrived in 1960, followed shortly after by Florisvaldo Dos Santos Trigueiros – then the president of ICOM-Brasil –with scholarships from the ICH for museological studies. In January 1961, the second wrote to the rector of the federal university of Ceará, disappointed to see that the training for which he had requested his scholarship was not offered, but everything was resolved to his satisfaction because he was able to follow Pilar Fernández Vega's courses in the National Museum of Decorative Arts and did internships in various museums (Ruoso, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> This Museology Course included a 9-hour weekly training devoted to the theoretical lessons of Art History, with special attention to Ibero-American art, and practical museography issues (Gómez, 2006: 287, footnote 112).



(Ballart 1998). Initially, it was not a substantial alteration, as the teaching programs related to museums remained in our campuses primarily focused on practical training for museum professionals. Museological theories were not their main concern. Obviously, the course syllabus usually started with some basic considerations about terminology, history and theory of museums; but it used to be a brief preamble, after which students would rush immediately to learn practical issues of conservation, documentation, communication or other museum tasks.

It is worth mentioning that in Spain, then as now, in order to work in public museums, one had to pass a public competition. At that time, the requirements to be admitted were a university degree plus a year of professional practice in museums that guaranteed specific training in curating. Since 1973, one of the requirements in that public contest was to write a 'Memoir on Museology,' which each participant would personally elaborate using the information available at that time. For instance, they could refer to the book intentionally published that year by the National Association of Librarians and Archivists: "Panorama de los museos españoles y cuestiones museológicas" (Panorama of Spanish Museums and Museological Issues). The author of this compendium, Gratiniano Nieto Gallo, was the Rector of the Autonomous University of Madrid at that time, where he gained the Chair of Archaeology after a successful career as a museum curator. Meanwhile, some introductory lessons on museum studies were given by Professor Martín Almagro at the Complutense University of Madrid and, with a different scope, short courses would be regularly run by related professional associations, whose journals, notably the *Boletín de la ANABAD*, occasionally featured some articles about museums.

This was the situation in 1974 when Professor Luis Monreal Tejada, who had hosted a meeting in Barcelona of the World Federation of Museum Friends organized by UNESCO, became Secretary-General of ICOM, succeeding Hugues de Varine-Bohan. It was a burgeoning period, marking a turning point in that organization and also in the history of Spain, yet despite his prominence in cultural diplomacy or as the author of many books, including seven volumes on paintings in great museums –written in collaboration with his son Luis Monreal Agustí since 1983– Prof. Monreal Tejada has not been recognized

by posterity as a Museology guru. Nevertheless, under his mandate in ICOM, which he held until 1985, numerous meetings of museum specialists took place in Spain, strengthening the participation and influence of Spanish representatives in ICOM, its publications and its committees.<sup>5</sup>

Imported influences were also raising during those agitated years of the return to democracy in Spain. The political impact of dialectical materialism became widespread in all intellectual spheres, when teaching manuals produced in socialist realms were quite popular at our universities. Typical of that left-wing approach is the handbook, full of quotations from Marx, produced in 1978 by Aurora León Alonso, *El museo: teoría, praxis y utopía* (The Museum: Theory, Practice and Utopia). All her career as university lecturer would be eclipsed by the success of that best-selling book, deservedly reprinted many times afterwards, since it is a well-argued and highly documented academic essay with copious bibliographical references. Its counterpart, in many ways, appeared in 1980 under the title *El museo, cultura para todos* (The Museum, Culture for All), a book by the military officer and journalist Fernando de Salas Lopez, whose most personal inputs were perhaps his twelve considerations on museums policies, the sixth of which proposed institutionalizing Museology studies in our Faculties of Philosophy and Letters, Pedagogy and Educational Sciences. The main virtue of that little-known essay, and at the same time its greatest fault, could be its amateurism, since the literature cited was chosen with rather personal criteria, and the information gathered about foreign museums came exclusively from those visited by the author or from data delivered by the cultural services of some embassies in Madrid, all member countries of NATO. Sadly, both books ignored the latest epistemological debates ignited by dissident theorists from communist countries, who were proposing new terminologies such as 'musealia' –a favourite term for Maroevic–, or 'museality' –coined by Stránský. Unfortunately, the original texts written mostly in Croatian or Czech by these museologists were not translated into Spanish or other Western languages, and would only be known through articles in ICOM publications of very limited reach.<sup>6</sup> Museum studies courses in Spanish universities were then starting to emerge, but as subsidiary practical in Departments of Art History or Prehistory.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> In the 1980s, Rosario Carrillo, a painter and art historian affiliated with the National Institute for Scientific Research, was twice elected to the board of directors of ICOFOM, a committee that included eighteen Spanish members. Domènec Miquel i Serra and Eulàlia Morral i Romeu, representing the 'Grup Tècnic de Museologia' formed within the Association of Museum Workers of Catalonia, actively participated in some ICOFOM meetings. They were later joined by Rosario Carrillo from Madrid and other compatriots, particularly Catalans such as Andrea García Sastre or Dolors Forrellad. During this period, Catalonia emerged as our most fertile ground for museology, evidenced by publications such as the *Revista de Museus*, a journal issued by the government of Barcelona Province between 1983 and 1987, and the magazine *De museus. Quaderns de*

*museologia y museografia*, initiated by the Generalitat of Catalonia in 1988 and active until approximately 1993.

<sup>6</sup> Expanding the notion of museum, to cover outdoors spaces, intangible heritage, and all sort of human production, these papers are all now easy to find in digital editions, but at that time the meetings of this committee and their outputs were only known by the respective participants, who used to ignore what had been discussed in the previous debates, making Museology a discipline under constant reinvention (Hernández & Lorente, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> The Department of Art History of the University of Santiago de Compostela incorporated some museum studies in the curricula during the



The influence of Eastern European theoretical museologists arrived in Spain only indirectly, through George-Henri Rivière: some bibliographic references to them featured in his *Cours de muséologie générale contemporaine (Course on General Contemporary Museology)*, which he taught from 1971 to 1982 on Saturday mornings at the Université de Paris I. This course was attended by many Spanish-speaking foreign students, especially Latin-Americans, who had been awarded UNESCO grants. It is not surprising that the volume compiling class notes taken by his students, published in 1989 as a posthumous tribute, *La muséologie selon Georges-Henri Rivière (Museology, according to GHR)*, became a great success when it was published in Spanish in 1993, reaching to thousands of readers on both sides of the Atlantic. The culmination of his lessons and the core of the book was a new concept: the ecomuseum. Soon this museum typology spread not only in France and the francophone countries, but also in Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula, to a great extent thanks to the international proselytism of a Canadian apostle, Pierre Mayrand, main figure of the *Mouvement International pour une Nouvelle Muséologie (MINOM)*. They advocated for a complete restart, disregarding the previous evolution of Museology before the emergence of the self-proclaimed New Museology. Perhaps 'New Adamism' would be a more fitting label!"

**The Coming of Age of Museology in Spain**

The neomuseological vogue immediately permeated many academic institutions, together with the influence of semiotics and structuralism, which were then prevalent in college campuses around Spain at a time when museum-related courses proliferated in higher education. The University Reform Act of 1984 increased autonomy, granting greater liberty to organize academic curricula, thus the optional subject of 'Museology' was created in many departments of Archaeology, Art History or Library and Documentation Sciences. Most importantly, the first postgraduate courses on Museum Studies emerged in 1989, the *annus mirabilis* marking the start of three academic titles: the Postgraduate Diploma for Museum Educators at the University of Saragossa in Huesca, the MA in Museology at the University of the Basque Country, and the Master in Museology at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, where five years later the Master in Museology and Exhibitions at the Faculty of Fine Arts was created. Apart from these higher degrees, other diplomas would be offered by private centers such as the Heritage School in Barcelona with courses to train museum professionals between 1991 and 1994, or the Antonio Camuñas Foundation in Madrid, providing a Master in Museology and Exhibition Techniques since 1992 (Folguera, 1995; Luque, Romero and Tassara, 1998; Ramírez *et al.*, 2000; Carrión, 2006; Lorente, 2010). Many students of these study programs developed successful careers in museums or other related institutions; they were about to constitute a growing

network of museologists throughout the country –our postmodern museological intelligentsia.

In the early years of the century, Museology reached maturity in Spanish universities, emerging as a popular specialization for postgraduate studies across multiple campuses. Particularly influential outside the classroom would be the Master of Museology led by Professor Francisca Hernandez at the Complutense University of Madrid, because in 1993 a group of her graduates founded the Spanish Association of Museologists. Some of its members ran the Master of Museology at the University of Valladolid, which was active from 2001 to 2006, with a massive participation of students from Latin America, thanks to the grants offered by the Carolina Foundation, the Regional Government of Castilla & León and the city of Valladolid. However, the most popular course then was the Master of Museology offered by the University of Granada from 2000, subsidized by the Government of Andalusia until 2016. Other campuses preferred to highlight a distinct specialization, often museum management, as at the University of San Pablo-CEU, the European University of Madrid, the University Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, or the Polytechnic University of Valencia; sometimes conservation, as at the University of Castilla-La Mancha; or exhibition curatorship as at Alicante or Santiago de Compostela; or museum education in the Universities of Barcelona, Murcia and Saragossa (Image 1).



**Image 1.** Publicity leaflet of the MA in Museum Education and Communication of Saragossa University in 2009

Similarly, as the twentieth century drew to a close, 'museologist' became a cherished buzzword heralded by

1977-1978 academic year. The following year the Department of Prehistory of the Complutense University introduced this subject, which was

launched at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the same campus during the 1982-1983 academic year (Hernández, 2013: 347).



rivalling professional groups. First of all, by the Spanish Association of Museologists, publishing since 1994 the *Revista de Museología* (Journal of Museology) still released roughly every four months. However, other curators launched the Professional Association of Spanish Museologists in 1994, which kept publishing once a year the journal *Museo* from 1996 to 2011 – a critical moment for the association which was dissolved ten years later. Furthermore, other instances competed then to produce their specialized journals; unfortunately, some soon faced fatal problems, such as *Mus-A Magazine* published from just 2003 to 2007 by the Government of Andalusia, printed in full-color on glossy paper; or the journal *Museos.es*, published by the Spanish Ministry of Culture since 2004 in a dazzling paper edition every year until 2010, when it became exclusively available on the Internet in open access version, with irregular endurance (Lorente, 2013).

Museology also became a prominent issue in Spanish book production at the turn of the century. Some academics led the way with diachronically structured essays which were reedited to become reference books years later, like the 1990 semiotic analysis by Santos Zunzunegui, *Metamorfosis de la mirada: El museo como espacio del sentido* (*Metamorphosis of the Gaze: The Museum as Space of Sense*), revised and expanded in 2003 under a new subtitle, *Museo y semiótica* (*Museum and Semiotics*); or the excellent historical account entitled *Historia de los museos en España*, published in 1997 by María Bolaños, revised and expanded in 2008. More naturally, the greatest museological best-sellers responded to growing market demands for compendiums in the form of teaching manuals, starting in 1993 with Luis Alonso's handbook entitled *Museología. Introducción a la teoría y práctica del museo* (*Museology. Introduction to the Theory and Practice of the Museum*) reedited in 1999, followed by the *Manual de Museología* (*Manual of Museology*) by Francisca Hernandez in 1994, while that same year *Miscelánea museológica* (*Museological Miscellany*) came out edited by Iñaki Díaz Balardi of the University of the Basque Country. Meanwhile, a groundbreaking book in Catalan came to the fore in 1994, *Els gabinets del món: Antropologia, museus i museologies* (*Cabinets of the world: Anthropology, museums and museologies*), written by Monserrat Iniesta.

Despite this bibliographic boom in Spain, we must admit the scarcity of proper Museology volumes: original essays theorizing museums would remain quite rare, as the majority of university lecturers usually produced books offering a didactic overview of influential international currents. The most prolific and copiously quoted authors were the above-mentioned founders of the rival Museology post-graduate programs established at the Complutense University of Madrid: Francisca Hernández and Luis Alonso Fernández. The latter published his most outstanding book *Introducción a la nueva museología*

(Introduction to the New Museology) in 1999, which was reedited in 2003 under the title *Nueva Museología* (*New Museology*), while Prof. Hernandez produced in 1998 her excellent essay *El museo como espacio de comunicación* (*The Museum as a Space for Communication*) that culminated in devote exaltation of ecomuseum. Furthermore, the proliferation of Museology courses at various universities in those years encouraged the emergence of many other general publications aimed at students and, more generally, at all sort of professionals preparing exams to become civil servants in charge of public museums. Catering for their needs, Francisco Javier Zubiaur Carreño wrote a thorough handbook titled *Curso de museología* (*Museology Course*), resulting from his career as museum curator lecturing at the University of Navarra between 1991 and 2004. Another significant contribution was the *Manual de museos* (*Manual of Museums*) published in 2007 by Josep Ballart, a Professor at the University of Barcelona. However, the market for general surveys was approaching saturation in the Spanish publishing industry, while more specialized literature gained traction with the support of public institutions and the dedication of certain university presses or private publishers. Above all, Editorial Trea became a global leader in Spanish-language publications on heritage and cultural management, printing both foreign books translated from other languages and original Spanish studies. Its catalogue of volumes on museums eventually surpassed one hundred titles, distributed in the finest bookstores in Spain and Latin America. Particularly worth mentioning as a pioneer contribution could be the praiseworthy anthology compiled by María Bolaños, lecturer at the University of Valladolid, who ambitiously entitled it *La memoria del mundo. Cien años de museología, 1900-2000* (*The Memory of the World. One Hundred Years of Museology, 1900-2000*): a sort of reader's digest gathering texts on museums written throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in many cases translated for the first time into Spanish, when the book was published in 2002. The same applies to the 2006 compendium by Francisca Hernandez *Planteamientos teóricos de la museología* (*Theoretical Approaches to Museology*), offering, for the first time in Spanish, an elaborate summary of the main theories by Eastern-European scholars and other museologists active in ICOM, particularly in the International Committee for Museology, ICOFOM. It was followed by an even wider and more personal survey of Museology signed also in 2006 by Javier Gómez Martínez, Professor of Art History at the University of Cantabria, who presented a deeply critical essay on the historical division between Anglophones and Francophiles from the Enlightenment to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, under the title *Dos museologías. Las tradiciones anglosajona y mediterránea: diferencias y contactos* (*Two Museologies. The Anglo-Saxon and Mediterranean Traditions: Differences and Contacts*).<sup>8</sup> His timely postmodern reappraisal culminated, appropriately, in some remarks on Critical Museology.

<sup>8</sup> Given the success of this book, Prof. Gomez Martínez expanded into a trilogy. Ten years later, he released a sequel titled *Museografía al filo del milenio. Tendencias y recurrencias* (*Museography at the edge of the millennium. Trends and recurrences*), concluding the trilogy in 2023 with

*Museografía comparada* (*Comparative Museography*). All these volumes were published by Ediciones Trea.



The designation had already been featured in the title of a collective book, *Museología crítica y arte contemporáneo* (Critical Museology and Contemporary Art), published by the University of Saragossa in 2003. Some of the authors represented there, as Carla Padró, J. Pedro Lorente, María Teresa Marín Torres, Javier Gómez, or María Angeles Layuno, have further articulated in papers for other publications their particular interpretations of this new international trend, which was also invoked in the title of the 2006 book *Museología crítica* (Critical Museology), by Joan Santacana Mestre and Francesc Xavier Hernandez Cardona, both professors at the University of Barcelona. Thus, Spain produced enthusiastic adherents to this label very soon, although everyone was using it in his or her own way and nobody really knew how to differentiate it from New Museology, which continued to have many supporters. In June 2011, the First International Symposium on Critical Museology was held at the Museum of Municipal Heritage in Malaga, whose journal *Museo y Territorio* edited a selection of papers a year later, under the direction of Teresa Sauret, Professor at the University of Malaga. The institution that ensured the survival of this scholarly journal, published between 2008 and 2011. No agreement was reached on the definition of critical museology. However, the event marked a milestone, by bringing Spanish museologists into contact with key-note speakers from the Americas, including Anthony Shelton, a Professor at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Luis Gerardo Morales Moreno, a Professor at UNAM in Morelos (Mexico) and Oscar Navarro Rojas, a Lecturer at UNA in Heredia (Costa Rica). These speakers had already participated in the session on Critical Museology and Collecting at the First Permanent Seminar on Museology in Latin America organized in Mexico City on 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> November 2008 by the National School of Conservation, Restoration and Museology (ENCRyM).<sup>9</sup>

Paving the way for such international collaborations were some actions programming courses on museums and heritage, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Culture together with the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development, or some bilateral and multilateral initiatives with Latin American states. Thus, the Spanish Aid Program for Cooperation with Latin America awarded scholarships for foreign museum curators to expand their training in Spain participating in teaching activities organized by our Ministry of Culture like the course titled 'Museum, cultural heritage and tourism development', which held its thirteenth (and last) edition in 2007.<sup>10</sup> In the meantime, both the Ministry of Culture and the Trustees of the Prado Museum discarded the idea of creating the

Spanish equivalent of the Parisian Ecole du Louvre, as no formal education degrees were offered by the Centro de Estudios del Museo Nacional del Prado, founded in 2009, programming series of lectures on art delivered each year by some prestigious scholars and research grants and seminars.

### Triumphant Moment of Heritology in Critical Times

Thankfully, Museology has become firmly established in Spain; however, we may still face challenges in terms of articulation. The Spanish Committee of ICOM organized several international meetings of museography from 2005 to 2012, with proceedings available on its website, where the on-line journal *ICOM-CE Digital* can be found since 2010, as well as some information about museum studies in Spain. However, we do not have the equivalent of the Regional Subcommittee for Museology of Latin America and the Caribbean (ICOFOM LAM), which hosts a vast array of downloadable publications resulting from various museological conferences on its websites. Unfortunately, the proceedings from the four International Seminars of Research in Museology (SIAM) organized between 2009 and 2012 are scattered across different Internet sites, as are those from the Museology Iberian Forum organized since 2017. Their outputs have seen the light of day mainly through the publication services of some universities, which are the natural channel through which we can transfer to the rest of society the fruits of our doctoral theses, research projects, seminar proceedings, summer courses and other leading initiatives on Spanish campuses. However, it is noteworthy that in Spain, there is not yet a single university dedicated to publishing an editorial series specifically focused on books about museums. As for academic journals in this field, the most established is *Hermus: Heritage & Museography*, which has been published since 2009 by Editorial Trea with technical and financial support from a Catalan research group. Additionally, since 2016, it has been complemented by *Diferents*, the journal of the Museum of Contemporary Art of Vilafamés published by the University Jaume I. Both are open-access periodicals addressed to a broad, growing readership and yearning for higher impact factors, which could assure them better international rankings, if only we would have a tougher rhizomatic network of museologists, linking museums and universities.

As the 21<sup>st</sup> century progresses, the division between museums and academia in Spain is diminishing although there is still much progress to be made (Urpí, 2015). The Spanish Association of Museologists was a pioneer in training partnerships, co-managing with the University of Valladolid the extinct Master of Museology, and then with the Complutense

<sup>9</sup> This seminar has met many times afterwards, but only in 2016 would a selection of papers be gathered in a collective book, *Tendencias de la Museología en América Latina. Articulaciones, horizontes* (Museology Tendencies in Latin America. Articulations, Horizons, Disseminations) in which some Spaniards are represented. Drawing on such antecedents, I have offered my own definition and explanation in 2022 with the book

*Reflexiones sobre museología crítica* (Reflections on Critical Museology, published in English by Routledge).

<sup>10</sup> Followed from 2008 to 2011 by three sessions of another course entitled 'Museum diversity in Latin America'. In ensuing times of scarcity, such initiatives would give less attention to museological theories, focusing more on practical issues, such as conservation/restoration, visitor studies, and training of museum professionals.



University of Madrid a Museology Diploma, now succeeded by an on-line MA at the International University of Valencia. The Catalan Association of Museologists used to offer a Diploma for Museum Educators at the University of Gerona (Alcalde, 2002). Now the National Museum of Art of Catalonia operates a postgraduate diploma on museological-museographical projects through an agreement with the University Pompeu Fabra; similarly, the Master in Museum Education run by the Thyssen Museum is a degree bestowed by the University of Alcalá. Several master's degrees have flourished at the National Museum Reina Sofía, by agreement with the Autonomous University of Madrid and the University of Castilla-La Mancha. These joint ventures are excellent solutions not only for the financial burden of our postgraduate studies, but also for building further bridges between Spanish universities and museums. Despite being educational centers by definition, and despite having many skilled professionals who are willing and able to personally contribute to the education of our students, Spanish museums and their staff encounter significant difficulties in providing formal advanced studies. This is due to factors such as the need for payment of overtime wages, bureaucratic complexities, and other challenges that ultimately become overwhelming obstacles. Things may be considerably easier in the special case of university museums, which typically have the infrastructure and staff to offer postgraduate Museum Studies programs in other countries. However, in Spain, this museum type is quite underdeveloped (Marín Torres, 2018; Nava Rodríguez & Pazos-López, 2020). A rare example was the Museum of the University of Alicante, which created in 2004 a diploma specializing in Museology of Contemporary Art, now extinct, while the University of Navarra has been offering a Master program in Curatorial Studies since 2018.

Another key to success in the education area is nowadays online training. A forerunner in Spain was the Liceus group, created in 2001, offering the broadest range of distance-learning courses in collaboration with many Spanish universities, and also publishing manuals corresponding to its courses in the Social Sciences, Languages and Humanities, including therewith heritage and museums. Its main rival has become the so-called Ibero-American Institute of Museology, a Spanish company founded in 2012 with branches in Portugal and some countries of Latin America: under the title Ibero-American Network of Museum Workers. It promotes fairs and meetings and acts as a publishing company, but its core activity is providing an online degree in Museology and Heritage Management. Indeed, this seems to be the prevailing tendency, combining both in-person with remote participation. Such hybrid courses can also be a social policy favored by some powerful institutions that can afford programming high-level museological courses on their own, even free of charge; the most exceptional case is the Prado Museum, whose Centre of Studies offers a wide range of conferences, seminars and summer courses, issuing a diploma of its own. The same solution is usually implemented by the Reina Sofia Museum of Contemporary Art although a person-to-person teaching in situ has prevailed for its 2024 Study Program in Critical Museology (Image 2).



Home / Study Centre

## Connective Tissue

### The Museo Reina Sofía's Study Programme in Critical Museology, Artistic Research Practices and Cultural Studies



L. Segal (central Goddardist). Retículas (instalación): Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas, 1989. Photograph: Pedro Gasparini, Fundación Segal Archive © Fundación Segal

#### Presentation

The second edition of Connective Tissue, the Museo Reina Sofía's Study Programme in Critical Museology, Artistic Research Practices and Cultural Studies, curated by Germán Labrador Méndez, will be held in 2024. The course aims to set out an advanced and experimental study plan, which runs for a year and culminates in students obtaining an Independent Qualification. Enrolment is free and the Programme is aimed at people with far-reaching interests in museology, artistic practice, humanities, critical theory, cultural management and political imagination. Through immersion in an educational research environment, it looks to strengthen multi-disciplinarity, commitment to research, procedural learning and didactic autonomy.

Organised by:  
Museo Reina Sofía

Time frame:  
January - October 2024

Enrolment:  
Until 15 December 2023, via the following link:

Contact:  
tejidosconjuntivos@museoreinasofia.es

Course type:  
In-person



#### Presentation

Programme Structure and Requirements  
Final Research Project and Successfully Completing the Programme  
Enrolment Procedure, Required Documentation and Admission Dates  
Times, Spaces and Commitment  
Description of the Study Centre's Research Master, 2023-2024

**Image 2.** Information about the Study Program in Critical Museology on the website of the Reina Sofía National Museum of Contemporary Art

Unfortunately, such a high degree of specialization is becoming rare, as the number of postgraduate courses dedicated to Museology has declined in favor of Heritage Studies. This is the option taken since 2010 by Pablo de Olavide University in Seville, in the Master of Arts, Museums and Management of Historical Heritage, or the Master in Museology and Cultural Management at the University of La Laguna and so on. These more generalist master's degrees are now ubiquitous. There is virtually no Spanish campus without its own master's degree in Heritage Management enabling students to study not only in museums or exhibition centers, but also in archives, libraries, theatres and other cultural institutions. Indeed, this trend poses a threat to the survival of specialized postgraduate degrees in Museology, which are increasingly overshadowed by the success of more interdisciplinary studies (Díaz Balerdi, 2010). The crux of the matter is the changing definition of university education and its role. Should universities remain primarily repositories of knowledge or should they focus more on professional training? Recently in Spain, as in the rest of the world, we have greatly augmented the number of universities, public and private, thus we are beginning to experience a lack of balance between supply and demand. Therefore, and in order to implement the Bologna Treaty for a European Higher Education Area, our campuses are experiencing hard times with challenges and uncertainties. A similar phenomenon is observed in neighboring countries, where questions regarding the model of university demanded by contemporary society are also arising. There is a growing emphasis on interdisciplinary training and research with social impact.

'Museología y patrimonio cultural' is the revealing new title adopted by Editorial Trea since 2018 for its renowned series of yellow-covered books, which are increasingly dedicated to



cultural heritage. Museums are indeed heritage institutions, and the study of them must necessarily encompass their social environments, as compellingly argued by Óscar Navajas in his 2020 book *Nueva museología y museología social: Una historia narrada desde la experiencia Española* (New museology and social museology: A history narrated from the Spanish experience). Museum studies are losing prominence not only in our postgraduate courses but also in our recent bibliographical production, as attention shifts towards the broader field of Heritage Studies. The term *patrimoniología* would be the Spanish equivalent although it is not yet widely used. However, it may be only a matter of time before it becomes established in academic discourse, following the trend in other languages. The term 'Heritology', coined in English during the eighties by art historian and museologist Tomislav Šola, never gained significant traction. However, in France *patrimoniologie* has become a widely used label, championed by leading experts like Loïc Vadelorge in his introduction to the 2003 book entitled 'Pour une histoire des politiques du patrimoine' (For a History of Heritage Policies). Even in Russia, many universities have introduced *наследиеведение*, the Russian term for heritage studies. This scientific field encompasses contributions from various disciplines such as anthropology, archaeology, gastronomy, geography, art history, museology, musicology, and political science among others around the broad concept of heritage. Nowadays, numerous young Spanish scholars are members of an international society founded in 2011 with a particular focus on human rights, postcolonial perspectives, questions of self-representation, institutional narratives, and more: it is called the Association of Critical Heritage Studies. 'Critical' is a very appropriate term to describe our times, in Spain and all over the world.

### CONCLUSION

Museum Studies began in Spain during the 19th century, but the development of Museology as a scientific discipline occurred over a long process, culminating at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the new millennium, Heritage Studies have emerged with new terms such as *patromoniología* and *heritology* being advocated to emphasize a theoretical stance. Indeed, self-reflexivity could be considered the intellectual paradigm of our time, applicable not only to critical studies of museums and heritage, but also to reflections on our own museological background. This article offers such reflections from an inevitably subjective viewpoint, with the hope that other authors will contribute their own assessments of their respective epistemological heritage.

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