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What is Sustainability in Modern Art Museums? Archétopy Art Museums and Shifting Paradigms of Knowledge

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Abstract: The paper analyzes the challenge of sustainability in modern art museums in the early 21st century society. It positions art museums within the cultural debate about sustainability and identifies missing frameworks in museology that would favor cultural policies based on this value. Though, art museums have looked at sustainability inasmuch industries or commercial businesses and have adopted 'sustainability charts' as a tool to green-wash their policies and try to provide a different cultural offer. Their approach has been 'three-bottom' and has focused on the economic, environmental and social aspects this value brings in management. However, art museums have left beside the analysis of sustainability in regards to their cultural policies and internal managerial organization. Though European museums have proposed sustainability strategies in the collection management (brand franchising, disposal of the collection, networks and partnerships with museums and business companies), they have not considered yet the chance to revise their bone structure inspired by sustainability principles and approaches. This shift in perspective may change the processes the artworks are documented and contextualized within the exhibition's narrative. Documentation processes and cultural policies based on sustainability values may assign different tasks and responsibilities to museum practitioners and may foster more democratic working environments. In a sustainable cultural policy, narratives as well as documentation processes may be effectively constructed through diegetic processes by all the museum workers. Such institutions embody a different museums model that I called 'archétopy'. Modern art museums may adopt it to open the access of narratives and documentation processes to wider segments of stakeholders.

Keywords: Sustainability, Cultural Policy; Documentation; Museum Narratives, Archétopy

Art Museums and the Culture of Sustainability

'(...) one holds on sustainability when nothing else holds any longer'.

Johachim Heinrich Campe, 1809, German Dictionary Edition¹

In the last ten years, sustainability has become a leitmotiv to emphasize that European Western styles of life, living conditions, business companies' management and development strategies were unsustainable in the long run (Worts, 2011). In times of economic, political and social instability as well as declining and marginal public funding, modern art museums have been assigned the role of forums for 'therapeutic conversations' (Silvermann, 2004; Koster, 2012) where to discuss issues that matter to contemporary society. They have developed complex models based on intelligent balance between core missions and economic constrains. More than other institutions, art museums have experienced the need of structural and administrative transformations to ensure their survival and sustainability in a future scenario that is constantly subject to changes. As acknowledged by Harold Skramstad during the Smithsonian Institute 150th anniversary, any institution that wants to survive in the future shall be judged for its distinctive ability to provide 'value for the society in a way that builds on unique institutional strengths and senses unique community needs' (Smithsonian Institute, 1997, 33-55). Particularly, modern art museums have modified their mission, perspectives and functions to face a more competitive cultural environment. Where do they find present and future challenges in relation to other cultural institutions, media and events that lay claim to people's attention? Today the modern art museum is assigned of a special role as a creator of aesthetic experiences, a space for critical reflections and an institution for collective and individual cultivation. However, how can

¹ Grober, Ulrich. 2012. *Sustainability. A Cultural History*, Devon, Green Books p. 9.

these characters survive or evolve in the museum of the future, and which strategies should be chosen to measure whether original intentions have been accomplished or not? It is currently debated whether modern art museums will maintain a leading role in cultural contexts as they did in the previous century. For this reason, it is fundamental for museums to study strategies that may ensure sustainability not only in their economic and social position, but mostly in their cultural policy. In this context, the word 'sustainability' has come to be used as synonymous for long-term cultural policy's strategies. The concept of sustainability implies the adaptive renewal of diverse eco-systems (nature, economy, society, organizations and institutions) (Worts, 2011), but definitions as well as measurable indicators are far from being clearly characterized yet. Where do modern art museums find present and future challenges in relation to other cultural institutions, media and events that lay claim to people's attention? Museum scholars such as Emlyn Koster have recognized that art museums may succeed in ensuring their long-term sustainability by pursuing relevancy. He argues that though relevancy came in use during 1960s in relation to social concerns, during the 1990s it was referred to museums due to the widespread belief that they exist to benefit, inspire and support the society (Koster, 2012, 205). Claiming that relevancy entails a comfort with controversy that, in turn, involves fostering an atmosphere where difficult questions can be broached and a variety of subjects analyzed, Koster presents the pursuit of relevancy as a strategy that can help museums achieving sustainability. Both these concepts embrace the complexity of museum's organization and are used to promote an atmosphere where questions about future development and improvement are broached and approached from holistic perspectives (Koster, 2012, 204-206). Concepts such as relevancy and sustainability come with instances likewise 'making the difference' or 'value-add' language. It is for this reason that in management terms, art museums are defined as 'effective' organizations (Griffin, Abraham, 2007), i. e. corporations or institutions whose aim is to positively affect stakeholders' lives. How modern art museums can make the difference within the current society? How can they ensure their own sustainability in the 21st century? The most common meaning of the word sustainability reflects upon behaviors that safeguard survival, life and well-being of both present and future generations. Since the 1970s, the term was used in connection to environmental issues, but people soon acknowledged that it could address even a wider cultural context where each institution and field of study in the society could proactively contribute. In past decades, modern art museums have grown in number broadening and enriching their cultural offer. However, their present survival is far from being guaranteed either economically or culturally. Though they receive money from public incomes or private sponsorships, they strive to promote a variety of activities that may compete with other cultural initiatives. As far as many have closed, other museums are struggling to survive and profound changes are afoot in the scale of interests, challenges and funding sources. As Koster acknowledges, pursuing relevancy in art museums supports sustainability in two ways (Koster, 2012, 205). On the one hand, sustainability has been extrinsically linked to art museums as much as these institutions operate for the sustainable common good of the community. But on the other hand, this concept holds intrinsic connections to art museums, which have approached it from the so-called 'three bottom' perspectives as much as any other corporation or enterprise. This approach demands preserving and improving social and environmental conditions while also safeguarding financial health. Among other reasons, the fact that both public and private funders seek for a demonstrable return on their investments is an important target. In a so called 'three-bottom' approach, museums' pursuit for sustainability is related to their eligibility for funding. Funding comes when stakeholders' preference in the art museums' offering depends on how attractive may be the brand image. Art museums shape distinctive brand images not only characterizing the architecture of their building but mostly developing attractive cultural policies, which stand as the institution' *carte de visité*. Even names are intended as brands- just think about MoMA, MACBA, ARoS, MAMBO or MAXXI – and serve as icons for strategic policies. In fact, modern art museums no longer offer just cultural initiatives, lectures, events or host gala dinners. Having

yoga classes within the museum spaces (for example at Brooklyn Museum, Princeton University Art Museum or AGO-Art Gallery of Ontario, just to mention some), holding aperitifs in the museum café and hosting private events likewise weddings or receptions either for industries and business companies or privates are becoming popular trends in modern art museums. These branding initiatives are strategic for institutions that want to outreach and not simply try to engage the community in what practitioners would like to do. The brand of sustainability has been used in this context to incite a deep thinking about internal organization and policy strategies of modern art museums as corporations. It has encouraged institutions to be flexible and able to adapt to new forms of communication, using new technologies and thinking about new categories for classification (Worts, 2011). Museum practitioners have acknowledged the need to propose innovative visions, narratives and methodologies that look at modern and contemporary art beyond historical perspectives and engage non-text based information and digital technologies (Cameron, 2009, 80-95). For the purposes of this research that analyzes management and policy challenges, modern art museums are presented as territories for experiments and innovative practices (Macleod, Hourston Hanks and Hale, 2012; Maricola, 2006). As opposed to historical galleries or universal museums, modern art museums are prompt for their nature to question normative and established exhibition canons, museological contents and museographical displays (Greenberg, Ferguson, Nairne, 1996, 175-190). Likewise profit-organizations and business companies, modern art museums foster sustainable cultural policies for the 21st century society branding ideas, activities and programs that create shared values and a vision for the future (Collins and Porras, 1994; 1996). Sustainability incites the adoption of a different value system which may allow museums' practitioners to accomplish the same activities, though with a different perspective. Art museums that shape cultural policies on the value of sustainability aim at fostering an intellectual appreciation of their subject but want to simultaneously encourage new behaviors in the visitors. For this reason, modern art museums have sought for new partnerships, while testing new entrepreneurial models and examining current trends and practices as well as revising traditional beliefs. Modern art museums such as London Tate Modern have proved to be social agents establishing productive 'business to business' collaborations with companies such as Unilever, Bloomberg, McKinsey or British Land. At the same time, an increasing number of European modern art museums have acknowledged that to make a relevant, positive difference in future museology, they must rethink about managerial strategies, documentation approaches, cultural policy and narrative making processes.

Why Addressing Sustainability in Museology?

Sustainability has become a recurrent point in industries', governments' and business corporations' agendas. In the two-year period 2011- 2012, the consultant society Brandlogic has produced a document entitled *Sustainability Leadership Report* to analyze and measure how business corporations such as Unilever, Bloomberg, McKinsey, GE, l'Oréal, Dell or Deutsche Bank have developed and adopted sustainable policies. Their 'sustainability charts' have aimed at 'green-washing' actions, procedures and mission, but also trying to do things differently. These businesses and their stakeholders have come to understand that sustainability does not only concern 'green' environmental practices. Rather, it is a combination of environmental stewardship, social responsibility and corporate governance - three factors that are often addressed as 'ESG' (Environmental, Social and Governance). In ESG matrixes, quantitative data accounting real sustainability performance are compared to qualitative information about the perception that stakeholders may have of it (Brandlogic, 2012, 1- 20). The ESG matrix shows comparisons that highlight the critical role of brand communications – especially to highly attentive audiences that make critical decisions based on how communicative the corporation's policies are. Nowadays, the linkage between sustainable practices, policies and corporate brands

is more relevant than ever. For this reason, in 2008, also the UK Museum Association (MA) has aligned its mission towards sustainability trends and has held a forum entitled ‘*Sustainability and Museums*’ to discuss the implications this concept had in relation to art and science museums. After the conclusion of the forum, MA published on-line a *Sustainability Checklist* as helpful handout for directors, staff and curators of national as well as international museums. The checklist encouraged practitioners to look at the importance of developing sustainability strategies within their internal management. Questions explored whether and to what extent museums staff members were required to account for sustainability in day-to-day decision making-processes, and if producing developments and monitoring progresses were a team or individual responsibility (Museum Association, 2008, 1-14). Besides suggestions which encouraged practitioners pursuing sustainable environmental practices such as reducing energy waste, recycling exhibition materials and improving environmental conditions, the list brought attention on the importance of building strong networks that would ensure the existence of museums even though funding would be diminished. However, the great innovation of the checklist was acknowledging the need of changes in attitudes and behaviors of staff members. The latter needed to feel bound to the mission of the museum in order to contribute in developing new managerial strategies, documentation procedures, and therefore, display contents and layout². The British case studies investigated by the UK MA in 2009 proved that such recommendations and action plans could lead to effective transformations³. However, other European art museums have considered sustainability from the so-called ‘three-bottom’ approach to measure efficiency and efficacy in collection management. They have adopted operational procedures and approaches inspired by those mentioned in commercial businesses’ and industries’ sustainability charts. Future studies that will analyze the art museums’ sustainability strategies may first aim at establishing matrixes and quality indicators that uncover risks and opportunities in relation to the museum sustainability governance, leadership and investment decisions in tandem. The connection between sustainability leadership both in governance and stakeholders’ perception is one that will continue to evolve. In these terms, it will be extremely useful to develop a sustainability real and perceived performance score matrix where to compare and measure the art museums sustainability final outcomes and their initial targets (See also: Weil, 1997).

European Art Museums’ Sustainability Practices

If sustainability is the instrument that permits systems to achieve long-term management strategies and therefore long-lasting organizational structures, art museums have to encompass benefits and risks of developing this value within their cultural policies. Though, the ‘inflated’ use of this term has made the public opinion skeptical about its potentialities in developing strategies of leadership, business companies’ sustainability brands have proved to strengthen relationships between stakeholders, customers and enterprises. While business companies have addressed their sustainability leadership in relation to more ecological and fair-trade manufacturing processes, art museums are still in need to define their profile within sustainability leadership. On the one hand, European art museums have striven to be environmentally sustainable reducing energy waste such as lighting galleries, air conditioning and recycling the exhibition material (Cassar, 1995). A perfect example was offered three years ago by a group of museums practitioners in the Netherlands, which launched a web project called *museumplaats* to

2 See the UK MA website: <<http://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/sustainability/principles-for-sustainable-museums>>

3 In the period 2008-2010, the UK MA encouraged several museums to apply principles of sustainability to their own working environment. All the case studies are listed on the MA website: <<http://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/sustainability/sustainability-case-studies>> These include the Gibson Mill, the Museum of East Anglian Life, Killhope Mining Museum, the National Maritime Museum “Your Ocean”, the Banbury Museum and the Manchester Museum.

encourage the staff of Dutch museums in buying past exhibition equipment on eBay-like auctions⁴. This sustainable management of collections works particularly well in countries such as Great Britain, the Netherlands, Denmark and the USA. It is emblematic the case of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, which loaned the most famous pieces of its collection to national museums during the time of its restoration while its building was impracticable (Petterson, Hagedorn-Saupe, Jyrkkio, Weijd 2005). On the other hand, sustainability has fostered alternative collection management practices based on principles of disposal and flexibility. Decentralizing portions of the collection from central museums to suburban branches has served to exploit at best the collection stored in the depositories. Moreover, it has also revitalized geographical areas bringing tourism and spurring shops' commercial activities. Such strategy followed the so called "Bilbao assumption" that 'if you build it, visitors will come' (Janes, 2009). The principle of collection's disposal and flexibility is also connected to the phenomenon of setting franchised museum branches as an offshoot of some major museums. Big museums such as the Louvre, the Guggenheim, the Centre du Pompidou and Tate Gallery have embarked in brand-franchising policies either in all the four corners of the earth (such as the case of the Guggenheim museums) or within national borders (likewise the Tate Galleries, the Centre du Pompidou and the Louvre). However, this collection strategy is controversial. While it allows frequent and non-frequent visitors to see artworks that were previously hidden to the public view, it also mines the objects' preservation due to periodic travels and changes of display environments and climate conditions. For some economists and politicians, this strategy is a social opportunity to valorize underused collections (Levy, Jouyet, 2006). These collection strategies encourage mobility and incite museums in establishing networks and partnerships to agree on loan conditions, exhibitions organization and personnel exchange. Despite rhetoric, European art museums as well as international associations (AAC, ICOM) have dynamically explored the opportunities provided by networking with other museums, cultural institutions and commercial businesses (Petterson, Hagedorn-Saupe, Jyrkkio, Weijd, 2005; *Tate Modern Vision for 2015*, <http://www.tate.org.uk/about/our-work/tate-research/research-centres/art-museum-and-its-future>). These pioneering attempts to create forums for discussion and ideas exchange brought to draft reports such as *Collections for the Future* (Museum Association, 2005) and guides for the collection planning. The increasing diffusion of the Internet has given these collaborations a tremendous boost. Other partnerships between European art museums such as *Collection Mobility*, NEMO (Network of European Museum Organization) or the European Registrars Group have contributed in setting standards for the conduction of daily operations in museums (Petterson, Hagedorn-Saupe, Jyrkkio, Weijd, 2005). They have encouraged cooperation between different and heterogeneous institutions in whole Europe, and have enhanced trust and reliability among the staff working within these institutions (de Leeuw, Acidini, Berg, 2005).

The Art Museum Culture as the 'Fourth Pillar' of Sustainability

Art museums have not explored yet sustainability in their cultural policies; these particularly affect mission, philosophy and leadership. Certainly, as cultural institutions, art museums have the potential to foster a culture of sustainability. As Jon Hawkes recognized in the 2001 report he wrote for the Cultural Development Network in Victoria (Australia), culture and therefore museums represent '*The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability*'- as declared by the title of his book (Hawkes, 2001). Hawkes linked culture to sustainability claiming that the former may be defined

4 Some years ago, a group of museum professionals in the Netherlands noticed that many materials were being used only once and decided to react. Up until then, display cabinets and exhibition frames were thrown away after exhibitions. In reaction to this, they created a website where all Dutch museums can log on and present surplus material and objects. The website functions similarly to eBay and operates quite successfully. From the start, the Netherlands Museums Association has recommended the online platform to its members (www.museumplaats.nl), and it recently received a grant to further develop this museumplaats.

as ‘sustainable’ when it engenders in social and cultural debates that establish collective meanings and improve the vitality and the wellbeing of the community (Hawkes, 2001, 11). However, his definition of sustainability did not clarify or explain which cultural indicators were appropriate to measure ‘the vitality and wellbeing of the community’. Certainly, Hawkes’ reflections re-framed the discussion about the limits of the so called ‘three-bottom’ approach to sustainability. The connection between sustainability and culture is one that also supports the link between culture and nature. In 1973, Gregory Bateson admitted the existence of similar connections in his publication, *Steps to an ecology of mind* (Bateson, 2000 2nd ed.). Likewise nature, culture is an ecosystem made of living organisms interacting with non-living components. As an ecosystem, culture and its subsets (theatres, museums, cultural institutions) are capable to be potentially ‘sustainable’, i. e. to regenerate constantly their components and contents updating purposes and goals, as well as means to approach them (Bateson, 2000; Parr, 2009). In recent years, scholars such as Adrian Parr (Parr, 2009) and Yuha Jung (Jung, 2011, 321-338) have researched on this aspect, comparing the ecology of art museums to nature. Jung, for example, has based her theories on Bateson’s idea of the ‘ecology of mind’ (Jung, 2011, 322-323), claiming that when systems such as nature, human beings, organizations, businesses and societies are self-organizational and self-corrective, they are suited to be considered ‘eco-systems’ (Bateson, 2000, 493). These eco-systems ensure their own sustainability shaping a profile by generating energy through production, distribution and consumption of intellectual and material resources (Jung, 2011, 327). Similarly, art museums shape their mission, goals and policies producing programs, exhibitions and events by means of human and non-human resources. Producing conservational and educational activities values the cultural policy art museums promote, and stakeholders experience this by visiting displays, attending workshops and lectures and participating in tours. In sustainable art museums, the audience’s feedbacks are used by staff members to improve, self-correct and re-organize the museums cultural strategies, policies and daily practices. However, when these cycles of activities are not interdependent and interrelated one to the other, the system becomes ‘unsustainable’ and threatens its long-term existence. Jung defines ‘mechanical’ this unsustainable museum model which locates the collection at the center of its practice and divides practitioners’ tasks and responsibility into separate departments, mainly curatorial, registration and education (Jung, 2011, 328-329). Claiming that in a mechanical model there are few chances for collaboration among departments, Jung adds that mission, vision and cultural policy tend to function as strict regulations or rules, resistant to inputs and transformations. People in each department use to work separately: while some conceive the structure and display of the exhibition, others write catalogues, update the press and communication, or arrange lectures and workshops as well as educational programs up to satisfy a diverse public (Jung, 2011, 330). The mechanical model finds its roots in Alfred H. Barr’s idea of the ‘departmental’ structure of the modern art museum that he promoted since the early 1930s. This model has characterized the organization and structure of modern art museums all over the world further on. In departmental museums contents, messages and meanings are transmitted to the public in a hierarchical system and they are one-way communicated through exhibitions. This form of communication has enforced the general perception that modern art museums are *heterótopoi*, i. e. alternative (*héteros*) spaces (*tópoi*) that present art as an alternative realm from reality (Foucault, 1973; 1975; 1984). Mechanical museum models have diffused the conviction that the internal organization of modern art museums should function like a corporation. Usually, in these museums, a lone director is in charge of major decision-making and the curatorial departments hold major resolutions on top of the educational ones. This hierarchical-mechanical model prevents feedback and diverse perspectives from being reflected in the museum practices. Despite outputs, this model does not sow the seeds for modern art museums’ sustainability reducing the potential holds by these institutions. To contrast this model, Jung has proposed the ecological paradigm as a valid alternative. This type of art museum is not structured into separate departments, but rather it consists in a single education/exhibition/registration team that invites

all staff members in major decision-making processes (Jung, 2011, 331-332). While Jung presents this ecological model as one that has no hierarchy, it is hard to imagine whether and how people in huge institutions like the MoMA, the MACBA, the Centre du Pompidou or the Tate Galleries may work together sharing all the same tasks and responsibilities. This structure might function in smaller but efficient institutions such as Louisiana Museum in Humlebæk or Bojman van Beuningen in Rotterdam. Nevertheless, the ecological model possesses some characteristics that make it relevant in a sustainability culture. Ecological museum model promises that if documentation processes are revised and rethought from different managerial and organizational perspectives, art museums can ensure their long-term sustainability as ecosystems. If modern art museums are subject to external changes that constantly modify their internal organization, the greatest challenge for practitioners is to position their work within such ambivalent and changing scenario.

Archétopy: Attempts to a Sustainable Art Museum Model

Art museums that found cultural policies and management on sustainability ideas step over the educational model embodied by art museums and strive to incite different attitudes towards learning. These kinds of art museums go beyond mechanical models that foster *heterótopoi* atmospheres. On the contrary, they adapt and adjust their organization according to the ecological model and encourage long-term sustainable cultural policies. These policies shall open the early stages of narratives, exhibitions and mission making-processes to all staff members and practitioners, so that these will result as diegetic structures open to criticism. Instead of fostering experiences detached from reality, modern art museums can be also potential spaces where to break the barriers of interpretation and rethink about documentation processes. This ‘ecological’ museum model fosters the creation of working environments, where practices are effectively shared by several stakeholders and are subject to frequent transformations. These ecological museums shall rather be seen as *archétopoi*. The word *arché* emphasizes that narratives, meanings and exhibitions contents – which stand as the museum cultural policy- are questioned and re-conducted to the early (*arché*) stages of the creation processes. So to say, the display is constructed in a way that favors the beholder to encounter the artwork within a framework that keeps open various interpretations starting from the first approach. *Archétopy* art museums constantly question their approaches to their strategies and to artistic, political and social issues, in order to create displays that are also open to disruptions. They challenge beholders with an active learning and destabilize the acquisition processes of linear knowledge. From a managerial perspective, narratives in *archétopy* art museums result from team-working among all staff members and practitioners, who operate in non-hierarchical organizations exploiting alternative documentation processes. *Archétopy* encourages stakeholders to refuse being passive observers of practices and incites beholders to ask themselves what kind of experience the museum staff has designed for them and how they interact with it. Besides the fact that some museums practitioners would argue that not all the visitors’ segments would be interested in exploring the art museums’ opportunities and heterogeneous perspectives, there is a general feeling among curators and staff members that art museums do not offer a real possibility to visitors and non-visitors to be effectively a constituent part of the museum cultural production.

Modern Art Museums and Sustainability Leadership

Modern art museums long-term sustainability does not rely so much upon updating displays, creating alternative narratives, ‘green-washing’ environmental practices or proving accountability in economic outcomes- which are indeed good and remarkable purposes. On the contrary, their greatest challenge is to rather develop alternative practices for the creation that may fulfill the gap between museums’ practices and museological theories. Modern art

museums' sustainability consists in acting as 'effective' organizations transporting meanings by means of educational activities, artistic exhibitions and cultural events, but also transforming social behaviors (Latour, 2005). To generate effective changes in the museological perspective, modern art museums should approach interpretation and documentation of artworks and artistic phenomena using alternative methodologies, research perspectives and classification categories. Thus, how can we get collections documentation up to speed with current thinking bearing in mind the potentials offered by new managerial models, leadership strategies and also digital technologies? Here, modern art museums are confronted with the most difficult challenge. Modern art museums shall continue transmitting authoritative information but they also need to acknowledge the fragmentary, arbitrary and plural nature of object interpretation. As recognized by the Australian scholar Fiona Cameron (Cameron, 2009), this process admits shifts in relationships between museums and users (see also: Bradburne, 2001) and allows great interpretative freedom in documentary practice (Cameron, 2009). However, such attitude may also change the image of the art museum from scholarly learning environments into spaces reflecting the vulnerability of the present society. Art museums' audience continues to be primarily made by curators, collection managers and directors (Cameron, 2009). However, importing sustainability principles in museum management may involve educators and non-specialist users in collaborating to improve cultural policies but also narratives making-processes. Besides acknowledging that artworks are polysemic entities which hold plural, cross disciplinary and sometimes conflicting meanings, modern art museums shall exhibit that meanings in narratives and classification systems are products of cultural and curatorial opinions (Cameron, 2009). Furthermore, in the current context where institutions have lost their previous authority, documentation processes have strengthened on the role of users (in the case of museums, the stakeholders) in the knowledge making. This implies not only the necessity to maximize and possibly enrich existing data, but mostly to go beyond formal descriptions or historical contextualizations, addressing collections as evolving bodies of knowledge rather than sets of facts. If art museums start to be conceived as *archétopy*, i.e. spaces where information are not presented as fixed but as temporary situated expert opinions, even perception of knowledge may be transformed. In *archétopy* museums, practitioners may want to expose the epistemological frameworks through which they interpreted the objects. This may demonstrate that interpretations change and should be no longer intended as definite accounts carrying the ultimate authority. The *archétopy* model aims at expanding nomenclatures, thesauri and glossaries which are necessary for the documentation. Though, new words might also create new languages; and new languages may foster new creation processes and involve curators and collection managers embracing new roles and embarking new tasks. There is no doubt that users will continue to look at curators and collection managers as those in charge to provide authoritative scholarly information in the forms of authoritarian statements, narrations or chronological frameworks. However, the transformation of databases and documentation practices to meet new needs and also digital potentialities is part of the on-going institutional reframing process that may grant the sustainability of museums. Opening modern art museums' documentation, interpretation and narrative-making processes since the early stage fosters *archétopy* as a museum model. Fiona Cameron concludes that among the fundamental strategies for the future, stands 'the need to convince the internal management structure of the epistemological, educational, marketing and cultural value of such re-organization' and consequently, commit substantial resources to it (Cameron, 2009). To summarize, the re-organization in modern art museums' internal management as well as the revision of documentation processes and practices of interpretation offer to museums staff members the chance to leave traditional beliefs. Only under these conditions, practitioners can embrace a more entrepreneurial, innovative and democratic vision to develop new procedures and values that characterize the sustainability of modern art museums in the 21st century.

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