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From discovery to encounter: The new role of ethnographic museums.

The case study of the National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum ‘L. Pigorini’.

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Abstract

Since its creation, the ethnographic museums have aimed to represent the other cultures. The most recent trends in museology have encouraged the ethnographic museums to go beyond the discovery and to create a space of intercultural dialogue. This thesis analyses the impact of multiculturalism and postcolonialism on the temporary exhibitions organised at the National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum ‘L. Pigorini’. The study is conducted on the African heritage and in the selected period 1994-2014. The research is carried out pinpointing three main channels through which the two ideological orientations could penetrate in the museum practices. By the evaluation of the exhibitions, this study provides a new methodology for the understanding of the influences of the most recent trends in museology within the museum contexts.

Keywords: Ethnographic museum, postcolonialism, multiculturalism, African heritage, temporary exhibition, museum anthropology.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Preface

The city of Rome is a multicultural field where the inhabitants create a melting pot of cultures. The contemporary experiences of migration and postcolonialism impose a new way to communicate in the museums and a way to enrich the displayed objects with unique stories. Multiculturalism is an opportunity to expand cultural heritage and at the same time is a chance to increase the social inclusion of the migrant communities.

The ethnographic museums display and conserve items connected to different world and national cultures and their museum practices are divided mainly in permanent and temporary exhibitions. A permanent exhibition needs to have a lasting design and it consists in an installation that runs for a long and stable period. It is organised to last for an open-ended period. A temporary exhibition is organised for a limited and determined period.

This thesis analyses the temporary exhibitions engaged at the National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum ‘L. Pigorini’ from the opening of the “Africa” section in 1994 to 2014. Contemporary ethnographic museums have been affected by two main historical shifts: postcolonialism and multiculturalism. New theories ban the old-fashioned display where the objects re-create the power relationship of the colonial experience. This kind of exhibition exists even today in many European ethnographic museums but mainly for a widespread inertia or lack of funds. One example is definitely the “Africa” hall at the National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum ‘L. Pigorini’, that hasn’t undergone any fundamental re-stylings from its opening in 1994. For this reason, I concentrate my research on the temporary exhibitions to emphasise the contrast between the permanent exhibition and the dynamism of the temporary exhibitions in the same period.

The Museum Pigorini is divided in two main areas which, in line with the positivism era, collaborated for many years in parallel: the prehistoric and the ethnographic departments. My research focuses on the ethnographic area of the museum and specifically on the temporary exhibitions devoted to the African heritage. In the establishment of the museum, Luigi Pigorini wanted to go beyond the antiquarian trend and to create a space not just for collecting but a research laboratory. I analyse how this preliminary will of Pigorini has been transformed from a conception

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2 In this thesis I will use also the term “Museum Pigorini” to abbreviate “National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum ‘L. Pigorini’”.
of the museum as a space for the discovery of world cultures to a place of encounter among cultures. Especially from the opening of the “Africa” hall in the Palace of the Sciences to the most recent exhibitions, I show how the Museum Pigorini has tried to embrace the contemporary trends through the temporary exhibitions. In fact, compared to the old-fashioned permanent exhibition, the temporary exhibitions in the last three decades demonstrate a distinctive vividness. In my research, I analyse the temporary exhibitions organised at the Museum Pigorini, concerning the African heritage, in the frameworks of the new international trends in cultural heritage and museology and with a postcolonial and multicultural contextualisation.

This research is focused on the temporary exhibitions because of their dynamism and capacity to reach rapidly surrounding and hot issues. These ideas about the temporary exhibitions are confirmed by the several studies that I expose in the state of research and the theoretical framework. Moreover, the statics of the permanent exhibition of the Museum Pigorini pushes me to concentrate the research on the temporary exhibitions as a tool to introduce the new trends. For this reason, I highlight the role of the temporary exhibitions in the postcolonial and multicultural metamorphosis of the ethnographic museums. I argue that the case study of the Museum Pigorini is a valid example to analyse the application of the new trends because of its location in Rome, which is capital of an ex-colonial country and metropolis in the wider European Union. The Museum Pigorini is in the middle of multicultural and postcolonial waves that are actually flooding into Europe.

1.2 Objective and Research Questions

The objective of this thesis is to evaluate, in relation to the new postcolonial and multicultural trends in museology, the temporary exhibitions organised in the “Africa” section at the National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum ‘L. Pigorini’ from 1994 to 2014. This study will address the following research questions:

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Have the temporary exhibitions, relating to the African artefacts and organised from 1994 to 2014 at the Museum Pigorini, been influenced by the new museology trends? In particular, how has the museum reacted to multicultural and postcolonial influences?

What methodology should be applied to evaluate temporary exhibitions of ethnographic museums in a multicultural and postcolonial era?

1.3 State of Research

Robert Aldrich is an Australian historian who studied the role, in the colonial and postcolonial era, of some European colonial museums in Amsterdam, Brussels, Paris and London. The author asserts that these museums were expressly the signs of empire and that their aim was to promote colonialism. The museums have emphasised the stories of the colonisers and postcolonialism brought new questions in the minds of the curators: How should the objects from the colonies be represented? In which terms should the museum tell about the colonial past? Who had the right to speak about the museum practices? Aldrich underlines how these questions were resounding especially in the ex-colonial museums where the colonial past needs to reconcile itself through museum policies. The research of Aldrich focuses on the permanent exhibitions of those European colonial museums that tried to deal with the new sense of embarrassment toward the colonial past in the new era. I argue that the Museum Pigorini is an example of an ethnographic museum that could not be analysed with the methodological approach proposed by Aldrich. In fact, it is a problematic question to understand if the Museum Pigorini could be considered as an ex-colonial museum or not. Moreover, there hasn’t

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6 The Museum Pigorini was designed to give a National museum to the Italian kingdom and to celebrate Rome as its capital. The King Vittorio Emanuele II and Prince Umberto were present at the inauguration and Luigi Pigorini conceived the museum practices in line with the national narrative. The Museum Pigorini has been strictly connected to the history of the nation and, for this reason, also to the colonial experience entered in the museum through the objects. Despite of the patriotist approach behind its establishments, it had displayed objects from the different four continents, it has been also a research laboratory and it had inside the Paleontological Department. Moreover, from 1923 to 2011 in Rome there was the Roman Colonial Museum that collected the artefacts from the Italian colonies and that could be incorporated among the European colonial museums’ category built up by Aldrich. Lerario M. G. (2011). The National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography ‘Luigi Pigorini’ in Rome: the Nation on Display. *Eunamus*, 4, pp. 59-61. Rome 060608
been any postcolonial metamorphosis in the permanent exhibition. The aim of my research is to suggest a different method that turns its focus on the evaluation of the temporary exhibitions because of their more malleability and higher receptivity of the external influences than the permanent exhibitions. Furthermore, I consider multiculturalism as important as postcolonialism in the shape of the contemporary museum practices.

The contemporary era has brought new citizens that could became interlocutors in the updating of the ethnographic museums. There is a research on the dynamics of temporary exhibitions during a selected period about the “decolonisation of the collections” in the European museums. In the article “Decolonising National Museums of Ethnography in Europe: Exposing and Reshaping Colonial Heritage (2000-2012)”, the historian Felicity Bodenstein and the social psychologist Camilla Pagani analyse the Museum of Ethnography in Stockholm, the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) in Tervuren and the Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg. The authors highlight how from 2000 to 2012 in these ethnographic museums there were reinstallations and temporary exhibitions that try to overcome the “colonial scheme” of the displays. The research is based on a comparison among the different ways to achieve a modernisation of the ethnographic museums. For example, the latest installation of the Benin section at the Museum of Ethnography in Stockholm are compared with the process of modernisation at the RMCA. I argue that the comparison method could be a valid approach to deal with the changes occurred in the ethnographic museums. Moreover, I agree with Bodenstein and Pagani in highlighting the temporary exhibitions in this postcolonial and multicultural metamorphoses of the museums. Nevertheless, the point of view of the two authors is oriented toward the fields of social psychology and history. In my research, I prefer to involve an anthropological approach in evaluating the temporary exhibitions at the Museum Pigorini. Moreover, the two authors pinpoint the engagement of diaspora communities in museum policies as the proof of the modernisation, while I take in account a research method that demonstrates the reaction of the ethnographic museums to multiculturalism and postcolonialism through further channels.


Anna Maria Pecci, an Italian museum anthropologist, analyses two projects realised in Piemonte (Italy) in the essay “New citizens and ‘fearless’ museum: active interpreters and share spaces of cultural heritage”. The author argues that the museums involved in the projects aimed to create an active participation of the citizens through the engagement of some members of the migrant community in the projects. The projects have allowed the valorisation of several African artefacts with new autobiographical descriptions. Pecci highlights strengths and weakness about participation, availability and storytelling of these projects and her final message is oriented to suggest a deeper inclusion of the intercultural mediators in the cultural heritage’s institutions. The objectives of the projects consisted in developing a process of social inclusion and active citizenship toward the migrant communities of Piemonte region and to consider the museum as a place of encounter. At the end of her research, Anna Maria Pecci asserts that the intercultural dialogue has to be a daily practice. Pecci emphasises the cultural engagement of the diaspora communities as the main element in the shaping of the ethnographic museums. I aim to extend the analysis of the temporary exhibitions to further elements which include different methodological policies of the museums to reach the same objective: to be multicultural and postcolonial.

1.4 Limitations

I concentrate my research in the chronological period between the 1994 and the 2014 to narrow the analysis and to insert it within a contemporary framework. The 1994 is a key year for the National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum ‘L. Pigorini’ because the permanent “Africa” exhibition hall has been assembled and for the first time the African heritage had a section of its own in the

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9 In her research, Pecci developed a comparison between two projects: “Migrants and cultural heritage” (Migranti e patrimoni culturali) and “Language versus Language: a collaborative exhibition” (Lingua contro Lingua: una mostra collaborativa). The first project took place from 2005 to 2008 and ended with the development of temporary exhibitions in the Civic Museum of Ancient Art (Turin), Palazzo Madama (Turin), Museum of Waldesian History (Torre Pellice) and Museum of the Biella’s territory (Biella). The exhibition “Language versus Language: a collaborative exhibition” was organised from 2008 to 2009 at the Anthropological and Ethnographic Museum of the University of Turin. Centre for African Studies of Piemonte. (n.d.). Migranti e patrimoni culturali. [online] Available at: http://csapiemonte.it/it/progetti/migranti-e-patrimoni-culturali [Accessed 16 May 2018] and Mangiapane G. and Pecci A. M. (2011). Lingua contro Lingua. Una mostra collaborativa. Museologia Scientifica Memorie, 8, pp. 104-106

ethnographic area of the museum. In the same year, an important exhibition named “The wonder of the diversity: a travel to the roots of the racial discrimination” was organised and it analysed the theme of racism in the contemporary reality. In the general framework of the multicultural and postcolonial narratives applied to the ethnographic museums, the publication of “Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of museum display” has been a crucial point for the new museology. The book was edited by Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine during the early 1990s. I pinpoint the publication of this book as a fundamental moment for the diffusion of new practices in multicultural and postcolonial museology. Thanks to the spread of these new theories about museology, I argue that to set the 1994 as the starting point of my research, could be a valid way to evaluate the penetration of these new trends in the ethnographic museums. Furthermore, I have decided to carry on the research until 2014 which is the year of the last temporary exhibition (“Agenda Angola”) at the Museum Pigorini that involved African artefacts. The absence of temporary exhibitions, involving African heritage, after the 2014 does not lead to evaluate how the latest European project SWICH and the Year of European’s Refugee Crisis have been shaping factors of the Museum Pigorini policies.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

To reach the objective of my thesis, the theoretical framework is based on the contemporary ethnographic museology in relation with two main epochal shifts: postcolonialism and multiculturalism.

In this thesis the term “culture” is used to define the “general customs and beliefs of a particular group of people at a particular time”. Arjun Appadurai underlines the breakup of a hermetic conception of culture. In fact, due to globalisation, the borders between the different cultures are weaker. The “modernity at large” is made by cultures that don’t walk in parallel but meet themselves

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12 The project SWICH - Sharing a World of Inclusion, Creativity and Heritage - is still underway from 2014. It will end in December 2018.
in hybrid results. A cultural identity is fluid and in continuous motion.\textsuperscript{15} For the concept of multiculturalism, there are several and contrasting definitions. Generally, multiculturalism is defined as an ideology intended to the promotion of the recognition and respect of different cultures in the complex contemporary societies. The movement involves different fields as jurisprudence, education, health and so on.\textsuperscript{16} For the category of multicultural society, I borrow the concept from E. Colombo, who defines it as a status of the western modern societies characterised by the simultaneous existence of different groups that gather their members for their identity and orientation of their actions.\textsuperscript{17} It is not the point of this thesis to argue about the concept of multiculturalism and multicultural society and, in my research, I describe the city of Rome as a multicultural city because it “includes two or more cultural communities”\textsuperscript{18}. However, I would like to pinpoint the debate raised around the concept of multiculturalism by Davide Zoletto in “The misunderstandings about multiculturalism”. The author affirms that multiculturalism is based on a double error: the first one is that one person is completely determined by one unique culture and the second one is that our societies were monoculture before the arrival of the migrants.\textsuperscript{19} The fluid view, that concerns the culture as a hybrid construction, is extendable to the concept of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism has to be conceived from the simple cohabitation of different cultural communities to “a field of interspersion and crossover culture and the formation of new, mixed identities”.\textsuperscript{20}

The relationship between museums and multicultural and postcolonial influences has been analysed by J. Nederveen Pieterse. The author highlights the importance of the inclusion of the migrant communities in the national narratives expressed by the national museums. Pieterse asserts that museums have to reshape the displays to include the new citizens, looking at the reality of the multicultural contexts. In this era of globalisation and postcolonialism, Pieterse asserts that the museums need to develop new strategies. In my research, I use the concept of postcolonialism to indicate the ideological orientation rather than the historical period. The postcolonial studies investigate on the legacy of colonialism and imperialism on social, political and culture sectors. In the museum practices, a postcolonial approach analyses the cultural representation of the balance of power between representor and represented. In a particular way, the ethnographic museums that have

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\textsuperscript{20} Pieterse, Multiculturalism and Museums, p. 128.
displayed, more than the other museums, the ‘others’ narratives, are profoundly influenced by these two historical shifts: postcolonialism and multiculturalism. Moreover, to represent an uneven community with plural and contrast histories, Pieterse asserts that the postcolonial strategies have to shift on the hybridity. As the concept of culture, the museum policies have to accept the “fluidity of identities”. In this sense, the new theories of the contemporary museology have a multicultural and postcolonial approach because they push for a development of the interaction and communication with the other cultures and try to “decolonise” the display windows that show the national triumph in the colonies and the power of the European empires. I argue that multiculturalism and the new trends of museology have developed in parallel and, with my research, I evaluate if these elements are present in the temporary exhibitions at the National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum ‘L. Pigorini’.

In the following, I expose the most influential theories and strategies of the new museology policies. The theoretical framework on the latest trends has been fundamental to analyse the single temporary exhibitions of the case study and to develop my research method. I have found essential the researches edited by Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine in “Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of museum display”. Karp elucidates the double strategy that the contemporary museums have developed during the 1990s to deal with postcolonialism, globalisation and multiculturalism. This strategy consists in displaying both differences and similarities: “exhibiting strategies in which differences predominate I call ‘exoticizing’ and one that highlights similarities I call ‘assimilating’”.

Furthermore, Lavine and Karp argue that every temporary exhibition is a result of cultural practices of the organisers. There is always a dependence with the organisers’ point of view about what and how exhibits, but also what highlights and what hides in a temporary exhibition. The authors assert that behind the decisions and the requirements of these exhibitions there are a historic period, a culture, a social background and a location. In my research, I have employed this warning suggested by Karp and Lavine to relate the temporary exhibitions’ dynamics from 1994 to 2014 to the social and historic period that is underway in Europe and in Rome.

About new museology paradigms, in the book “The roots of the future”, De Varine argues that the museum has to be not anymore a place to collect objects but a tool for knowledge and local development. To obtain this different vision of the cultural heritage, the author suggests a new

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21 Ibid., pp. 123-126.
methodology connected with the active participation of the communities. The collective participation is an essential element in the new theory about museology expressed by De Varine. The museums of the 21st century have to involved the stakeholders in the protection, valorisation and communication of the cultural heritage. In this sense, I have found some connections with the organisation of the temporary exhibitions at the National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography ‘L. Pigorini’.

In the article “Anthropologists between museum and cultural heritage”, Pietro Clemente argues that the ethnographic museums have to handle with the rifts in the local contexts and to reconnect the local and global expressions. The museum is a “hyper place” with extremely important potentials in connecting people, memories and cultures. Clemente asserts that the museum has to overcome the idea of a close place intertwined with power relationships. The new museology looks at the future and serves the community. This utilitarian vision of the museum is the legacy of the new European trends that with De Varine, Karp and Lavine emphasise the active role of the museum in the social practices.

In the book “The Return of the Curiosity. What Museums are good for in the 21th century”, Nicholas Thomas analyses the role of the museum in the 21st century. The museums have to engage a cultural exchange with the audience and have “to be themselves”, it has to tell the history of the local contexts and communities. The museum of the 21st century has to perform the function of storytelling, giving the voice to the protagonist of the history showed in the display. Moreover, the contemporary museum has to be a “forum” in the idea expressed by Duncan Cameron in “The Museum: A Temple or the Forum”. The author asserts that the museums have to take the distance from the “temple” approach where the objects have a timeless and universal function and to reach a “forum” approach. The museum becomes a place for dialogue, debate and trial.

De Varine, Karp, Levine and Cameron represent the basic theoretical framework of the current museology trends that has reached Europe. These theories seem to have in common an utilitarian vision of the museum. Nowadays the human sciences appear to be less “expendable” than the scientific sciences in several sectors. In 1939, in his brilliant Manifesto, Abraham Flexner emphasised the importance of the “spiritual and intellectual freedom” in the scientific discoveries: he

28 In Italy the sector of the cultural heritage is in a deep crisis for lack of investments: museums, archaeological sites and centres of research are far from obtain the right remuneration. Keeping in mind that Italy is one of the richest countries in the world in term of cultural heritage, this could be seen as a paradox.
declared “the usefulness of useless knowledge”. Flexner concluded his essay hoping that the useless knowledge like music, art and “untrammelled human spirit” could demonstrate their utility in the past and in the future. Then, even nowadays, the human sciences have to demonstrate their practical effects. I argue that what the European ethnographic museums are trying to do is to make the cultural heritage useful. For this reason, the contemporary ethnographic museum aims to donate its spaces to intercultural dialogues and to develop projects of social inclusion. Following the theories of the previous authors about the new museology, the museum has to become expendable and useful. The curiosity and the discovery of different cultures could not be the only objective of the ethnographic displays. The new theories are looking for the “usefulness” of the cultural heritage.

1.6 Research Method

The preliminary phase of my research has been based on the development of a theoretical background on European museology with a special focus on the ethnographic museums in the contemporaneity. Following, I have conducted a study of the historical background about the section “Africa” at National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography ‘L. Pigorini’ to contextualise the museum within the multicultural context of Rome and the latest museology trends. The multicultural feature of the city and the latest museology theories about ethnographic museums are the focal points of my analysis on the temporary exhibitions. The collection of the necessary source materials had lasted for two months with several visits at the Museum Pigorini. I visited for the first time the museum five years ago. I used to visit the permanent exhibition of the “Africa” section every time I went to the museum, even if I was there to meet the interviewer or to go to the library and archival offices. The more I went further with my research, the more the permanent exhibition reminded me the contrast between the dynamism of the temporary exhibitions and the static of the “Africa” hall. Once that I obtained all the available materials, I decided to contact Anna Maria Di Lella for a formal interview. Di Lella is an anthropologist and has worked in the National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography ‘L. Pigorini’ from 2004 as external counsellor and from 2016 as internal officer.

Continuing my research, I’ve come to the analysis of the temporary exhibitions. I have divided my analysis method in two phases. During the first phase, I evaluate the single temporary exhibitions. I have analysed the exhibitions with the lens of the most recent museology theories. I have pinpointed

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the main themes and the methodological organisations of the temporary exhibitions. Doing this, I have understood that it was possible to find similarities and differences in the museum policies behind the temporary exhibitions. For this reason, in the second phase, I have developed a research method that combines together the exhibitions in three different categorisations: thematic shifts, Western imaginary and contemporary art. The first group of temporary exhibitions were comparable for the thematic shifts. These exhibitions demonstrate a penetration of the museology trends that encourage the opening of the museum toward surrounding issues and a shift of themes and methodological approaches of the projects. From the thematic shift, new museum strategies could start, first and foremost the involvement of the diaspora communities in the projects has been suggested by several authors as previously described. I argue that a thematic shift in the exhibitions is necessary to react to multiculturalism and postcolonial influences. The second category is related to the understanding of the Western imaginary on Africa through the photographic exhibitions. This category of temporary exhibitions is important to determine if the ethnographic museum is changing the way to depict the African continent through the photos. In this category, it is important to look at the choices of the photographers behind the photos. I believe that, to satisfy the validity of this category, is fundamental to analyse the subjects of the photos and how the photographer decides to depict them. I argue that it is possible to make a successful analysis without going into technical details because the aim of the research is to understand how the ethnographic museums are reacting to postcolonial and multicultural waves. Of course the personal academic and professional background will shapes the results of the research, like in every analysis. The second category is useful to evaluate if multiculturalism and postcolonialism have introduced new way to represent the African countries and eventually how. Third and last category is related to the African contemporary art. One interesting strategy in the contemporary exhibitions is to treat the African “artefacts as fine art”. The exhibitions of the African contemporary art contrast the “anonymity and timelessness” that for centuries characterised these artefacts displayed in the museums. The introduction of the contemporary art in the ethnographic museums is way to contrast the anonymity and timelessness of the objects that were taken during the colonial experiences to show the cultural diversity and usually to emphasise the

30 The identification of the three “channels” is the result of the analysis of the museum practices suggested as necessary by the new museology and already elucidated in the theoretical framework chapter. I also look at various temporary exhibitions organised in 2018 in different European ethnographic museums to understand how the other museums are working with the new theories and to create a valid research method that could embrace different case studies.


“primitiveness” of that societies. In this sense, I argue that the exhibitions of contemporary art could be seen especially as a manifestation of postcolonialism.

Due to the lack of an inclusive methodology to evaluate the temporary exhibitions of the European ethnographic museums in relation to multiculturalism and postcolonialism, I argue that my research could be a step forward in the analysis of the new museum practices. Moreover, I find extremely interesting the case study of the Museum Pigorini because of the gap of external and in retrospect analyses on the temporary exhibitions. The focus on a case study is efficacious to understand the wider process, currently underway, in this reshaping of the ethnographic museums in Europe. If the museum became a “medium” for integration and dialogue among the different cultures in the urban contexts, I analyse the experience of the Museum Pigorini to understand the dynamics of this single case study in the wider context of the contemporary museology. The case study of the Museum Pigorini has been not only the empirical example that, together with a solid theoretical background, helps me to create the research method. It has also become in turn the case for testing the research method.

1.7 Source Materials

I found several sources on the National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum ‘L. Pigorini’ mainly written by directors, functionaries and collaborators of the museum and it has been difficult to find external points of view. For the description of the temporary exhibitions from 1994 to 2014, I use the books/catalogues of the exhibitions, interviews to some of the organisers and the Protocol archive of the Superintendence of the Museum Pigorini. I argue that one fundamental strength of my research method consists in the description of the exhibitions mainly through the opinions and descriptions derived from primary sources such as: administrative archives, catalogues and

33 The “Africa” section at National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum ‘L. Pigorini’ has been central in several researches done by internal functionaries, about the new role of the museum in the contemporaneity. The work of Vito Lattanzi, ex director of the Museum Pigorini, is relevant to collocate the museum in a European flux of ideas and new theories about contemporary museography. Nevertheless, there is not any evaluation from external scholars about the temporary exhibitions. There is not any research about the effects of the projects for example on the permanent exhibition of the museum or on the relationship between the museum and the migrant communities involved. The effects of a single project on the permanent exhibition could be a possible valid objective of an extension of this research in the future.
interviews. My research is the first analysis in retrospect that has been done about the temporary exhibitions at the Museum Pigorini in the selected period.

About the interviews, I have conducted one successful semi-structured interview with Rosa Anna Di Lella, who has worked in the Museum Pigorini since 2004. This interview was very important for my research and has aroused many interesting points. She told me about her work for the temporary exhibitions and the role of the African associations’ members who have been involved in some of the temporary exhibition. From the interview, different problematics about the museum politics were highlighted. I met Filippo Maria Gambari during a conference at the Museum Pigorini and from 2017 he is the Director of the Museo delle Civiltà. I have met the ex-curator of the Africa section Egidio Cossa and the new curator Gaia Delpino during my visits at the offices and library of the museum. What comes out from the informal meetings with Cossa and Delpino was the difficulty to set a formal interview. Gaia Deplino asserted that, because she has been employed in the museum just few months ago, she could not be useful to obtain information about the temporary exhibitions. Egidio Cossa, who worked for the museum for several years and now is retired, seems not be available for a meeting. I have tried unsuccessfully to contact the two members of the African diaspora associations involved in one of the temporary exhibition: Godefroy Sankara and Ndjock Nganatel. Nevertheless, I assert that even if these interviews could be useful for the description of the temporary exhibitions, this does not prejudice the success of my research.34

The exhibition’s catalogues were fundamental to understand the thematic and methodological approach of the exhibitions, but not every temporary exhibition has its own catalogue. In this last case, I have used interviews, protocols and articles. The catalogue of “The wonder of the diversity: a travel to the roots of the racial discrimination” has been published in 1994 by a roman press called “La goliardica” and was available at the library of the museum. This book is more a collection of essays written by different authors about the themes of the exhibition than a catalogue’s exhibition. I also use the article “Lo stupore della diversità. Viaggio alle radici della discriminazione razziale, una mostra e un convegno al museo ‘Pigorini’ (19 Aprile – 15 Ottobre 1994)” written by Carlo Nobili, in which there is a general description of the visual elements of the exhibit. About “In Mozambique: notes from two insiders. Photos by Paolo Messeca, texts by the Mozambican writer Mia Couto” and “Gaze and soul, the African poetics of Paolo Bocci” exhibitions, I use their respective catalogues. I had the opportunity to exchange some messages with Paolo Messeca to clarify some aspects about the exhibition that were not clear in the catalogue. Both the catalogues were printed in the same years of the exhibitions and were predominantly photographic catalogues. They include the photos

34 All the informants of this thesis have been briefed about the aim of my research, their voluntary participation, the use of the source materials and the chance to look thorough the results.
displayed during the exhibitions and were supported by interviews to the authors and introductive chapters by internal functionaries of the museum. The catalogues of “The mountain speaks…poem-paintings in Mali” and “[S]oggetti migranti: People Behind the Things” were the most complete. They have inside the voices of the organisers and the authors, the introductions of the functionaries of the museum and images and photos of the exhibitions. “Agenda Angola” catalogue collected all the works displayed during the exhibition and brief introduction written by the Italian Ambassador of Angola and the organiser. For the reconstruction of “Mari Capable. Africa. The textiles speak” and “Traces. Ethnographic collections from Morocco” exhibitions, I use interviews, protocols and further information from web site because there aren’t any printed catalogues.

After one month of requests and meetings, on 27th April 2018 I was able to obtain access to the administrative archive of the Museum Pigorini which contains the protocols of the exhibitions and useful information about projects, organisational planning, financial data and further material about the temporary exhibitions. The archives were a tangle of information where in some cases it was impossible to understand if an exhibition took place or not.35

Before I have gone deeper with my research, I expected a homogeneous team behind the exhibitions of the section “Africa” where at least the curator of this museum’s area had always been involved, even if the exhibitions started from an external input or/and funds. Differently, I noticed that the team behind the exhibitions often changed and I argue that this has limited the work of the team in maintaining the development of new strategies in the museum and the share of good and bad practices to apply in the next exhibitions. During the early months of 2018, several functionaries of Museum Pigorini retired and it is not still clear who will replace that positions because any new public examination has been announced. Moreover, I argue that this vacuum has created a lack of knowledge about the temporary exhibitions among the new functionaries of the museums and, for this reason, I was addressed to talk with the retired curators and retired counsellors about the exhibitions, subject of my research. From non-formal talks with internal functionaries, I notice that there are complex politics behind the exhibitions at the Museum Pigorini. In different occasions, there were discussions and contrasts about the development of several projects. I also notice a strong “closure” toward the external scholars. This my statement comes from my personal experience and it has been confirmed by Pietro Clemente during the Conference about Lamberto Loria at the Museum Pigorini on 6 April 2018. For example, the internal deposit of the museum is described as the “greasy pole” where a huge number of objects from around the world are preserved by the usury. However, the deposit is also

35 For example the folder of the exhibition “South Africa Movento ’04. Contemporary creations” (Sudafrica MOVENTO ’04. Creazioni Contemporanee) contained a rich messages exchange between the organiser and the Superintendence of the museum, there are also the dates of the exhibitions, but there is not a final agreement.
jealously protected from external eyes that could find innovative objectives for their researches, “stealing” the possibilities to the internal functionaries. I consider this complexity and heterogeneity of the museum politics behind the exhibitions as a probable criticism in my research.

2. Background to the National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum ‘L. Pigorini’ and the city of Rome

2.1 From the Roman College to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism

In Europe, the first historic anthropological departments were introduced within the museums of natural sciences.\textsuperscript{36} The connection between ethnography and natural sciences were solid throughout the Darwinist determinism. The book “On the Origin of Species” was published in 1859 and translated in Italian in 1964. In 1871 the evolutionist theories were applied at the early anthropology by Edward Brunett Tylor inside his book “Primitive Culture”. The connection between archaeological discoveries of the Prehistoric period and everyday objects of what were defined “primitive” societies, was the decisive starting point for the durable parallelism between the ethnographic and the prehistorical departments in the European museums. In Italy, this strong collaboration ended formally in 1911 with the “First Congress of Italian Ethnography”, where the detachment of the anthropology was declared.\textsuperscript{37}

The establishment of the Museum of Prehistory in the Roman College\textsuperscript{38} was the outcome of the new ferment in the Italian palaeontological studies around the 1860s. The embryonic project of the Palaeontological Museum was clear: to collect the main Italian prehistorical cultures in a chronological order and to create an ethnographic section for the customs of the indigenous people around the world. The ethnographic section had followed a geographic order. On 17\textsuperscript{th} March 1876, the National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum ‘L. Pigorini’ opened and during the first months, the ethnographic collections was wider than the prehistoric one. The artefacts documented the


\textsuperscript{38} The Roman College was established between the 1581 and the 1584 and was the principal seat of the Society of Jesus. In 1870 the structure became state-owned and different national cultural institutions opened inside it, as for example the junior high school “Ennio Quirino Visconti”, the Museum of Education and the Italian Geographic Society.
indigenous cultures before the arrival of the missionaries in the four continents. For many years, several objects were not accompanied by correct and precise data: it was the period of the armchair anthropologists, when a great part of important characteristics about the objects had been lost.39

From the 1877, the eleven rooms of the Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum were not anymore able to host the increasing numbers of objects. Pigorini asked for more spaces and in the 1895, the Museum occupied sixty-nine rooms. After the 1911, the ethnographic department distanced itself from the physic anthropological and the prehistorical departments. This event caused a margination and a setback of the ethnographic area at the Museum Pigorini. In 1925, year of the death of Luigi Pigorini, the Museum became part of the “Superintendence of the Roman Antiquities” (Sovraintendenza alle Antichità di Roma). During Fascism, the racist ideology took advantage from the Darwinist theories and, on the other side, the Italian folklore was used to reinforce the national identity.40 Between the 1975 and the 1977, the Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum was transferred to the Palace of the sciences (Palazzo delle Scienze) in the Eur district, which is its current location.41

Luigi La Rocca, ex Superintendent of the Museum Pigorini, argued that the relocation caused the loss of the original identity of the Museum as had been devised by Luigi Pigorini. La Rocca asserts that, after the relocation, a laborious task to re-set up the collections was necessary. Nevertheless, the Museum has continued to be an important hub for prehistoric and ethnographic researches. Moreover, the ethnographic collections of the museum have been internationally recognised for its value and in the last decades many collaborations were instituted with European museums.42 The museum’s relocation was defined as a traumatic event in the existence of this institution by Giovanni Scichilone, ex Director of the Museum Pigorini, who wrote: “[the museum was] Isolated from its city in the spectral absurdity of that architectures, then suffocated by business traffic […], forgotten by everyone even in the hours’ rest of that busy city which is flanking it”43. The Eur district and the Palace of the Sciences were built up during the 1930s for the Universal Exposition (which never held)44. Carlo

39 Nobili, Per una storia degli studi di antropologia museale, p. 331.
40 Nobili, Per una storia degli studi di antropologia museale, pp. 339-340.
42 La Rocca L, Tra meraviglia e ricerca scientifica.
44 The establishing of the Eur district was wanted by Benito Mussolini to celebrate the anniversary of the march on Rome. The ratio of this architecture, projected by Macello Piacentini, was inspired by the Roman classical town planning with further influences from the Italian Rationalism. The structures are based on squared and massive buildings and are mainly
Nobili, official at the Museum Pigorini, argued that the Palace of the Sciences has never been suitable for the Museum Pigorini and now, even after some decades, the museum still has not found a correct permanent exhibition of the objects, an exhibition that offers to the visitors an adequate observation and knowledge of the displayed objects. After the relocation, the Museum Pigorini has been outside the touristic flux of the central area of Rome and has lost its central position. In fact, the museum is situated in the business district of the Italian capital and outside the historical centre.

From September 2016, the Museum Pigorini has been merged in the new institution “Museo delle civiltà”, together with the Museum of the popular arts and traditions, the Museum of the Early Middle Ages and the Museum of the oriental art ‘Giuseppe Tucci’. The idea behind the foundation of the “Museo delle civiltà” was to encourage a collaboration and sharing of the common spaces as library, laboratories and bookstore, among the four museums.

The permanent exhibition of the “Africa” section at the National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum ‘L. Pigorini’ appears to the visitor as organised in dark shrines, many without operating lights and covered with dust. There are few panels that try to mend the spatial and chronological coordinates of the objects. Every objects have a short description about material, date and origin place. Some have also few words about the utilisation of that object, as for example the funeral sculptures. The fil rouge of the “Africa” hall is traced by the history of the Italian explorations in the African continent from the Renaissance to the XIX century and the discovery of the Negro-art and its influences on the Western aesthetic categories in the early 1900s.

Made by white marble and travertine. It would be interesting to understand, in a future research, how this massive structure planning in the Eur district and the Fascism legacy are perceived by the migrant visitors of the museum.

Nobili asserts that, of course, is not only the location that undermines the activities of the museum but several administrative and financing difficulties. Nobili, Per una storia degli studi di antropologia museale, p. 353.


2.2 The museum and the multicultural city of Rome

In Italy the immigration is relatively a recent phenomenon because it reached high dimension only during the 1970s. Before that years, in fact, the Italian peninsula had been conceived rather as an emigrant country. From the statistic made by Istat (National Institute of Statistics, “Istituto Nazionale di Statistica”), the current migrant population in Rome represents the 13% of the residents and, pinpointing the 2015 as the Year of the Refugee crisis in Europe, the number of migrants in Rome has increased from 344244 in 2012 to 544956 in 2017. The larger target of the migrant population in Italy is constituted by Albanians, Moroccans and Chinese, while in the city of Rome by Romanians, Filipinos and Bangladeshis. Nonetheless, the Italian Institute of Statistics in 2016 counted 184 different nationalities. For this reason, I argue that the city of Rome is a multicultural context and, consequently, its ethnographic museum, should try to mirror this phenomenon, since its aim is to reflect the cultural diversity. Sebastiano Ceschi, an Italian cultural anthropologist, pinpointed three generations of Africans in Italy. The first Africans came during the 1970s and they represented the “sons” of the years of the African Independence. The next generation of African migrants, who arrived in Italy from the 1980s to the 2000s, decided to leave their countries for individual choices and not for National or Pan Africanist programs. The third flow of African migrants is currently underway from the 2010.


53 Many of them came in Italy as students thanks to national scholarships. The aim was that, once the students completed their studies, they would come back in their countries to use the achieved knowledge to help the development of African countries. However, these students felt doubly betrayed first from the home countries, because there were not optimistic prospective after their return, and second from the Italian society that developed a sense of “closure” and criminalisation toward the immigration especially during the 1990s.
During the 1980s, there was the rising of the first African associations in Italy, driven by the post *Legge Martelli*\(^54\) enthusiasm, which encouraged the establishment of migrant associationism.\(^55\) In some of the exhibition’s projects that I analyse later on in my thesis, these associations enter in the museum’s policies. Of course, the migrant communities in Rome represent new challenges in terms of social inclusion. Nevertheless, the museums have the opportunity to create new dialogues between cultures and forms of social integration. The ethnographic museum could be a valid spatial dimension for this encounter among old and new generations of citizens in multicultural contexts.

3. Poetics of the temporary exhibitions at the National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum ‘L. Pigorini’ (1994-2014)

Francesco Antinucci, expert in communication and researcher in Mali and Somalia during the 1980s, argues that an ordinary object becomes a work of art when it communicates something. Usually it is thanks to the temporary exhibitions that the objects found their communicability and their “artistic identity”. Antinucci asserts that the primary objective of an exposition has to be the communication because it is the reason why that object is exposed in the shrine.\(^56\) In the ethnographic museums, some of the African artifacts displayed have lost their communicability due to their spatial disconnection and the lack of coherent information. One example is the permanent exhibition at the National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum ‘L. Pigorini’. The fact that, history and history of art are the main themes behind the exhibition, reinforces the idea that there is not enough space for the ethnography in this museum. What the “Africa” section communicates is the story of Italian explorers and, in the words of the American anthropologist Sally Pierce, the exhibition of “primitive art in civilised places”\(^57\). The displayed artefacts are accompanied with a text of one or two sentences specifying date, origin place and material. I argue that the communicability of the African objects definitely does not match their potential. Behind any artefacts there are stories, biographies, anecdotes, traditions, values and customs. As far as I could see from my visits to the “Africa”

\(^{54}\) “Legge Martelli” is a law that outlined for the first time the status of the refugees in Italy. UNHCR (n.d.). *La ‘Legge Martelli’*. [online] Available at: https://www.unhcr.it/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Legge_Martelli.pdf [Accessed 27 April 2018].


\(^{57}\) Price S., *I primitivi traditi.*
permanent exhibition, the objects don’t tell anything about any of this. I agree with Mario Turci, Italian expert in museology, that the museums have to “exhibit ethnographies”\(^58\). In contrast with the immobility of the permanent exhibition, the temporary exhibitions are more involved in the contemporary museology. The museum demonstrates a marked sensibility to look at the surrounding contemporaneity but this does not reach the permanent exhibition. The relationship between the temporary and the permanent exhibitions at the Museum Pigorini is strongly contrasting. The temporary exhibitions act in a limited time and seem to be only pure symbolic actions to demonstrate the use of contemporary museum practices. In fact, the permanent exhibition remains almost completely intact and the contemporary poetics does not penetrate in the daily structure of the museum. Jean Muteba Rahier, who studied the relationship between the permanent and the temporary exhibitions at the Belgian Royal Museum of Central Africa (RMCA), described those temporary exhibitions as a form of tokenism, useful only to “deflect the criticism of the permanent exhibition”.\(^59\)

In many cases, that I analyse further in the chapter, the ethnographic researches and the voices of the “betrayed primitives”\(^60\) enter in the Museum Pigorini thanks to the temporary exhibitions. What the temporary exhibitions, organised at the Museum Pigorini, have tried to do is to give voice to silent objects. In the following analysis I combine the temporary exhibitions following three topics that I consider significative in relation with the new museological trends and that I previously explained in the methodology paragraph.

### 3.1 From Fascism to migration

#### 3.1.1 The wonder of the diversity: a travel to the roots of the racial discrimination

This temporary exhibition was launched on 19\(^{th}\) April 1994 at the Museum Pigorini during the fourth Week of the Scientific Culture (18-24 April 1994) with the collaboration of Maria Grazia

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\(^{59}\) Rahier asserts that the permanent exhibition at the RMCA “reproduces the typical European narrative of national history and national/imperial identity in terms of white supremacy, and scientific racism” and for this reason the ghost of Leopold II reverbs around the halls. Following this line of reasoning, I could say that the permanent exhibition of the Museum Pigorini is haunted by the spectrum of the founder Luigi Pigorini and the 1800s museology. Rahier J. M. (2003). The Ghost of Leopold II: The Belgian Royal Museum of Central Africa and Its Dusty Colonialist Exhibition, *Research in African Literatures*, 34 (1), pp. 74-77.

\(^{60}\) Pierce S., *I primitivi traditi*. 
Favara, Professor of applied statistical economics, Alfonso M. Di Nola, anthropologist and scholar of religions, the cultural association *Contemporanea* and the *Osservatorio sul Razzismo* (“monitoring centre on racism”), which is an organisation of the Department of Education sciences within the Third University of Rome. The exhibition ended on 15\textsuperscript{th} October 1994 and, because it lasted for over six months, it was one of the longest exposition that took place at the Museum Pigorini.\textsuperscript{61}

*The wonder of the diversity: a travel to the roots of the racial discrimination* (“Lo stupore della diversità: viaggio alle radici della discriminazione razziale”) was organised not only to underline the exclusionary social assets of the contemporary societies but also to create a connection between racism and modern issues. The exhibition was accompanied by conferences and three main topics stand out: Nazism, racial determinism and ethnocide.\textsuperscript{62} This exhibition was a chance to discuss about these themes, protagonists of the 1990s debates. As far as I can understand from the discussion about the exhibition, the urgent matter in those years was to talk about racism in contemporary societies.\textsuperscript{63}

The exhibition was structured to demonstrate that the critical exclusions and the most dramatic tragedies of the history had ideological and functional roots, even if supported by the scientists of that periods. In the exhibition were showed Fascist and Nazi propagandist pictures, photos and postcards to demonstrate the sense of concern and strangeness that could occurred in the encounter among different cultures. Several pluralities shared the racial sentence: Jews, Africans and gipsy people. The main objectives of the exhibition and of the conferences were to shed light on racism in contemporary societies and to publicise the scientific evidences about the non-existence of the genetic race’s distinction. The exhibition emphasises the newest genetic researches made by the Professor Luigi Cavalli-Sforza at the Stanford University, California, who declared that the racial theories had never had a scientific base.\textsuperscript{64} I argue that the significative role of the exhibition “The wonder of the diversity” was to highlight the real issues behind the contemporary marginalisation and hate against different cultural identities. The politics, the power’s structures and ideologies are the “puppet masters” of the contemporary societies, where the multicultural actors see the diversity as a threat.


\textsuperscript{63} Nobili, *Lo stupore della diversità*, p. 397.

\textsuperscript{64} *Lo stupore della diversità* (1994), p. 7
3.1.2 Traces. Ethnographic collections from Morocco

This temporary exhibition was organised at the Museum Pigorini from 11th December 2005 to 2th February 2006. *Traces. Ethnographic collections from Morocco* (“Tracce. Raccolte etnografiche dal Marocco”) started with the cataloguing of the Moroccan objects located in the deposit of the Museum Pigorini by Rosa Anna Di Lella, anthropologist and collaborator at the project. The Moroccan objects were numerous and were collected during the late XIX century and early XX century by explorers, missionaries and militaries. The second step for the implementation of the exhibition was the invitation of a Moroccan woman65 to enter in the deposit to identify some objects that could stimulate personal memories. The then Superintendent of the museum, Vito Lattanzi, was the curator of the exhibition and, together with the Moroccan woman, created a multivocal description of the selected objects. The displayed objects were crafts made, clothes and furniture and they were described following a double narrative: historical and personal. The historical background of the objects was given by the collaborators of the museum as Edoardo Cossa, Vito Lattanzi and Rosa Anna Di Lella; it told the key figures behind the obtaining of the objects, the common use and the archival data (material, date and place). The personal description was given by the Moroccan woman who, for any exposed object, told a personal story. In my interview with Di Lella, she told me an anecdote behind the choice of the objects for the exhibition. There were in the deposit several wooden spoons and both Lattanzi and Di Lella never thought to exhibit them because of the low visual impact and significance. The role of the Moroccan woman was fundamental in this case, because she told the story behind that apparently insignificant spoons. Those wooden spoons were used to eat the soup during the Ramadan.66 An object, considered insignificant by expert employers of the museum, found a story to tell, thanks to the personal contribution of the woman.

Often it seems that, what is chosen for the ethnographic museums, are objects not of “Western common use”. The Museum Pigorini displayed objects that could create in the visitors a sense of wonder and I assert that the permanent exhibition of the “Africa” section is not so far from the mirabilia museums of centuries ago. It seems difficult to exhibit common use objects and this underlines the constant necessity to find something unconventional and “diverse” in the African art. I argue that, with an exposition that highlights fetishes or masks, the museum is bound to emphasise the “diversity” between the selves and the others. In the “Africa” hall there is no mention on the contemporary concept of hybridity. Every displayed artefact is closed in its unidirectional culture. There is not a fair exchange between the authors of the objects and the outside world. But, on the

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65 Unfortunately, during the interview with Rosa Anna Di Lella, the name of the Moroccan woman has been overlooked.

other side, there is a recognition of an artistic exchange, where the Europeans discovered the African art and created hybrid works of art thanks to that. At the Museum Pigorini, the permanent exhibition displayed the African artefacts as located in historical and cultural enclaves.

3.1.3 Eritrea: colours, portraits, emotions

Eritrea: colours, portraits, emotions (“Eritrea: colori, ritratti, emozioni”) exhibition was organised from 23th February to 23th March 2006 at the Museum Pigorini by the Embassy of Eritrea in Rome with the supervision of Egidio Cossa. The objectives of the exhibition were: to provide a better understanding of this African country and to enforce the relation between Italy and Eritrea. The exhibition was divided in three photographic sections and one exhibit dedicated to musical instruments and curated by the Professor Marianna Valentini. The photos were taken by Maurizio Frullani, Giuseppe De Marchi and Fulvio Magurno. The section dedicated to the Eritrean people was based on Frullani’s photos (Fig. 1), while Magurno’s photos portrayed city contexts in Asmara, Massawa, Keren and Agorat. De Marchi photographed natural landscape of the Dahalak islands.

Unfortunately, it has been difficult to find the photos chosen for the exhibition because there is not any printed catalogue. The exhibition was for most based once again on black and white photos, to encourage the audience to discover the real colours visiting Eritrea. Nevertheless, for the photos about the Dahalak islands, the colours are described as vivid and protagonists.

I find very significative the request for the free admission of the Eritrean habitants in Rome at the exhibition. In the messages exchange between the Eritrean Embassy of Rome and the Superintendence of the Museum Pigorini, the request for the free admission has been motivated as a way to involve the Eritrean people living in Rome, in the museum. This way to engage a diasporic community in the museum arena is positive to undermine the idea of a museum as a temple. Even if only as “spectators”, a diaspora community had a facilitation to enter in the museum. The museum

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could be seen as a place of encounter and intercultural dialogue. This exhibition was definitely a way to publicise the Museum Pigorini in the Eritrean community of Rome.

3.1.4 [S]oggetti migranti: People Behind the Things

The exhibition [S]oggetti migranti. People Behind the Things was a temporary exhibition organised at the Museum Pigorini as the closing work of the European project READ-ME (Network of Diaspora Associations and Ethnographic Museums). The exhibition took place from the 20th September 2012 to 16th June 2013. READ-ME was the second long-term project after RIME (Ethnography Museums and World Cultures), organised with the European sponsorships to encourage a wider collaboration among the European museums involved in the programs. These projects were meant to open a share of experiences and good practices among the Musée royal de l’Afrique centrale in Tervuren in Bruxelles, the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris, the Etnografiska Museet in Stockholm and the Museum für Völkerkunde in Wien.71

Vito Lattanzi was the curator of the exhibition and in the catalogue he defined the work behind the exhibition as an encounter of the Diaspora communities in Rome with the museum’s collections. The exhibition was the result of two years of long process made of workshops, meetings and mediations. For all the process, some Diapora’s Associations in the city of Rome had been involved. The exhibition didn’t concern only the African continent but also Asia and America. The African associations that worked actively for the success of [S]oggetti migranti. People Behind the Things were the Cultural Association “Kel’Lam” and the Association “Buudu Africa”. To use the words of Lattanzi, behind the exhibition there was a work of “testing ethnographic objects through dialogue” to “give back to the objects a subjective value”.72 The objective of [S]oggetti migranti was to give voice to the objects of the collections at the Museum Pigorini and to focus on the travel of the objects during the migrant experience. The theme of the travel became the key to interpret both objects and personal experiences. The objects became “contact zones” for dialogue and exchange of knowledge.73

The first step of the work behind the exhibition was the “opening” of the museum Pigorini toward the diaspora communities through narrative presentation of the objects collected in the deposit, silence visits and emphasis on personal memories about the collections. Rosa Anna Di Lella, a collaborator of the project, argued that to open the deposit to the members of the diaspora associations was a way to “desecrate” the museum as temple of the knowledge.\(^{74}\) Then, the second step envisaged the analysis of single object to generate a discussion about a single case study. About this experience, Godefroy Sankara, Director of the Association “Buudu Africa” which was one of the association involved in the project, argued that the analysis of specific object raised memories about an “internal travel” made of personal experiences, oral histories and identity.\(^{75}\) Sankara asserted that one of the challenge of \[S\]oggetti migranti was to bring out the cultural diversity from the objects. He highlighted that it was difficult to find time to talk about the several communities behind the objects. In order to avoid that the project was understandable only for expert scholars, Sankara argued that there is a need to create a connection with the actuality. The museum had to become a means of communication among the humanity and it had to become a common area of sharing in the city.\(^{76}\)

During the interview with Rosa Anna Di Lella, she highlighted the several contrast raised during the working group. Particularly the attitude of the two African representatives were described as more polemic and “political” than the other Diaspora representatives. Di Lella argued that Sankara and Ndjock Nganatel (founder of the Association “Kel’Lam”) were strongly critical against the idea of the museum because they see it as a place where the structure of power of the colonialism was re-displayed. In the final stage of the team work, the representatives of the Diaspora associations had to “adopt” some objects of their “culture” and took care of the display. Sankara and Nganatel decided to expose an empty shrine with near a maternity figure outside the glass as a show of protest (Fig. 2).

Di Lella argued that the African representatives were more conscious about the political and social meaning behind the museum and its expositions. To use the words of Amselle, Sankara and Nganatel knew that the museum is not a neutral space but places that spawn new narratives.\(^{77}\) During two years of work behind this exhibition, Di Lella highlighted an intrinsic difficulty. She argued that, in the Italian context, the Diaspora associationism is weak, not well organised and often with internal

\(^{74}\) Ibid.


\(^{76}\) Ibid., p. 40.

disagreement and that it was hard to find a coherent collaboration with the associations. This characteristic of the Italian Diaspora associations is in contrast with the Belgian associations.

The exhibition was structured in different sections that represented the three spatial experience of the migration. “Mother Heart” was the first migrant experience where identity roots and a sense of belonging were intertwined with the stories of the objects. In the second section, “Movement of People and Things”, there was a connection with the Italian migration between 1860-1985. I argued that creating a comparison with the Italian emigration was a powerful way to let the audience understand the “new” immigration. The final experience of the migrant was the “Land of Becoming” described as a place of challenge and hopes. This third section was based on a more specific work made by the Diaspora communities.78

In the description of the objects, the collaboration among the different actors of the organisation came out. Every object was characterised by a new and intensive explanation: there was not only date, place and material, but memories, personal experience and cultural meanings. One example was the burial sculpture ntadi (fig. 3) from central Africa which, thanks to “[S]oggetti migranti”, obtained three levels of information. The first level was based on the usual archivial data. There was the indication of the place of the object, Democratic Republic of Congo/Angola, Kongo, and of the number of the museum inventory, 102147. The second level of information was given by the then curator of the section Africa Edoardo Cossa. The described how this statue was usually commissioned by aristocrats to commemorate the departed. Cossa added that the use of the steatite alluded the indestructibility of the ruler class. This kind of funeral statue was made taking account the peculiarities of the departed. The jewels and other decorations of the statue were social symbols that identify the departed in the community. The final and third level of information was given by Sankara and Nganatel where they described the significance of the ntadi. The statue had a common meaning and social role also for the ones were not from the DRC. Sankara and Nganatel depicted the ntadi as filled with a thinking attitude and obsessed by many preoccupations. The ntadi represented the wisdom of the older.79 Due to the collaboration of the different members of the project “[S]oggetti migranti”, the ntadi reached an higher level of communicability.

During the [S]oggetti migranti exhibition, several initiatives were organised at the Museum Pigorini. These were part of the “Migrant Ideas” (Idee Migranti) program. Photographic exhibitions, documentaries and short films were displayed during the main exhibition. This parallel program was intended as a complement of the exhibition to open the spaces of the museum to different actors and to reinforce the image of the museum as “multivocal area”, a space for cultural and linguistic

79 Ibid.
encounters. In “Migrant Ideas” there were few works that concerned the African countries and people. “Home and Identity” was the name of the conference held by Veronica Ferreri who talked about her fieldwork in Damascus, Syria, within a the Somalian communities of refugees. Two further installations made by Elena Pinzuti and Claudia Belloccchi were based on the concept of migration, seen as life change and a memory experience.80

What comes out from this experience of [S]oggetti migranti is that every object needs an ethnographic research to discover its story. Sometimes one object is the result of oral traditions of a community, other times it has been emphasised the “cultural contaminations”. I argue that the ethnographic research applied to the museology is a valid tool to let the objects express their identity and also to create a bridge with diaspora communities in the not home-countries. But to feel an object as shared, it has to recollect the “real” history. For this reason, I would like to highlight that the importance of a strong research and knowledge behind any object is not only a responsibility of the museum but also a right to see the own culture represented in correct terms.

3.1.4 Analysis

The *The wonder of the diversity: a travel to the roots of the racial discrimination* exhibition has to be contextualised in the new genetic discovery of the 1990s that declared as unfounded not only the biological hierarchy among the “races” but also the concept of race. The exhibition retraced the dynamics of the racial discrimination within its dramatic consequences during the Nazi regime and the ethnocides. Racism is a common enemy in numerous societies and I have witnessed several episodes of this kind of discrimination in the city of Rome, where I live. The objective of this first exhibition was to divulge the biological discoveries to stop at least the narratives on the biological discrimination at the base of the early racism. During the last decade of the XX century, the geneticist Luigi Cavalli-Sforza started his research from the previous work of Richard Lewontin, who is also a geneticist. Cavalli-Sforza demonstrated that there was more genetic diversity in the same continent rather than among the population of different countries. Nowadays it is scientifically found that it is not rationally possible to declare that the human species are divided into different races.84 “The wonder of the diversity: a travel to the roots of the racial discrimination” exhibition fought racism using scientific evidences and the power of the dramatic historical events. The tools to reach its objective were the voices of scholars, geneticists and internal functionaries of the museum talking about the Nazi and ethnocide’s catastrophises and other contemporary issues. This exhibition was based on the work made by the insiders of the museum and by scholars expert in those themes.

The *Traces. Ethnographic collections from Morocco* exhibition could be seen as an embryonic form of what would be the methodological approach of the *[S]oggetti migranti* exhibition. I argue that this exhibition of Moroccan art is important for this analysis because it demonstrates the gradual opening of the museum toward the “not insiders” of the museum. The Moroccan woman was invited to discuss and to add a bibliographic description to the objects. This encounter opened for the first time the doors of the museum to a “new Roman”.

In *Eritrea: colours, portrays, emotions* exhibition, the only element that I consider relevant for the aim of my topic is the free access of the Eritrean habitants in Rome at the exhibition. This was a way to facilitate the Eritreans’ visits but I argue that this is not an efficient way to bring the diaspora communities to the museum. The price of the ticket is not the greatest obstacle. This aspect is strictly connected to the absence of migrants in museums or also at conferences and debates about the social integration. Why don’t the migrants participate at these cultural events? I agree with Marco Aime when he asserts that the migrants’ absence could be the consequent of a low level of education.

However, other reasons could be the rare participation of the migrants in the organisational phases of these cultural events or the probable distorted representation of their personal culture in the foreigner contexts.85

With [S]oggetti migranti: People Behind Things the relationship between the African diaspora associations and the museum became stronger. The collaboration lasted for two years and, despite of the complex balancing of different ideologies and personal experiences of the participants, I think that the result was successful according to the new museology trends. I consider [S]oggetti migranti as the best example among the several temporary exhibitions, according to the theoretical framework of the new European trend in museology. I argue that the engagement of the diaspora associations in the project is a decisive factor that highlights the receiving of the new theories in museology by the National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum ‘L. Pigorini’. Firstly, the diaspora communities are invited to have an active participation in the project and the museum became a “forum” because opens toward an intercultural debates including the stakeholders. These two elements confirm the application of the theories of De Varine and Cameron. Moreover, the role of the anthropologist is activate both as cultural mediator and as ethnographer. This fact confirms the suggestions of Clemente and opens the doors of the ethnographic museum to the ethnography. Finally, thanks to the theme of migration, the Museum Pigorini demonstrated a peculiar attention on the contemporary events which entered in the museum narratives.

Nowadays the racist ideologies are generally based no more on biological discourses but on cultural, sociological and political differences. Of course there are still those believes in the superiority of the white race and who, in 2003, asked for separate train cars for white and black people.86 The anthropologist Marco Aime asserts that what is happening in the contemporary era is the “ethnicization” of social and political problems. The role of the media is crucial in emphasising the migrant emergency and the migrants are the scapegoat of the social tensions.87 With the [S]oggetti migranti exhibition the migrant has the occasion to enter in the museum and to establish an intercultural dialogue with the other diaspora associations and the internal functionaries. The central theme of these temporary exhibitions changes from the racist ideologies and the historical events of the ethnocide to the contemporaneity of the migration. The participation of the migrant communities in the museum is the result of the thematic switch of the temporary exhibitions and the new museology influences. In this sense, I argue that the National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum ‘L. Pigorini’

86 In 2003 the Italian party ‘Lega Nord’ proposed to establish separate train cars for white and black people along the Brennero-Verona route (Italy). Barbujani, L’invenzione delle razze, p. 9.
87 Aime, Eccessi di culture, pp. 94-95.
has a pronounced sensibility in absorbing the contemporary influences both from the historical and social events like migration and the new trends in the European museology.

The work behind the *Soggetti migranti* exhibition started in 2010, five years before the Year of the Refugees’ Crisis. Despite migration has been a constant in the human history, the media coverage has sharply increased in the last few years. The mediatic boom could be pinpointed in the 2015 causing also a degeneration of the quality of the information, vitiated by sensationalism and the exploitation of the migration issue by political parties during the elections.\(^{88}\) I argue that the sensibility of the museum in tracing this hot issue as its topic of the temporary exhibition arrived before the mediatic boom. The museum has been involved in the contemporary debates about migration thanks to the dynamism of the temporary exhibitions.

The activities of the National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum ‘L. Pigorini’ are part of a wider network of museums and European projects. Firstly, I would like to mention the RIME - Réseau International des Musées d’Ethnographie - project that was organised thanks to European funds from 2007 to 2013. This projects aimed to establish a fructuous collaborations among different European museums about the role of these institutions in the modernity. The objective was to find alternative interpretations and new opportunities to intensify the communicability of the exhibitions. During the workshops organised at the Museum Pigorini that collected the opinions of the European museums’ exponents involved in RIME, one common problem was highlighted: the difficulty of the anthropology in entering in the museum thought the ethnographic research and the tangible heritage. The result of this project was an emphasis of the role of the ethnographic researches in the museum.\(^{89}\)

The projects READ ME - Réseau Européen des Associations de Diasporas & Musées Ethnographiques - I and II connected the Museum Pigorini with the Royal Museum of the Central Africa in Tervuren, the Ethnographic Museum in Stockholm, the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris and Museum für Völkerkunde in Wien. For the Museum Pigorini, the fundamental result of this collaboration was the *Soggetti migranti* exhibition. This demonstrates how the role of these European networks was crucial for the creation of these new way to communicate in the museum.\(^{90}\)

The project SWICH - Sharing a World of Inclusion, Creativity and Heritage - is still underway from 2014. The number of the museums involved has increased and the National Prehistoric and

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Ethnographic Museum “L. Pigorini” is active part of this project. The main themes of the project are: citizenship, connecting diaspora of objects and people and creative dialogue.91

3.2 Photographic exhibitions

3.2.1 In Mozambique: notes from two insiders. Photos by Paolo Messeca, texts by the Mozambican writer Mia Couto

In Mozambique: notes from two insiders. Photos by Paolo Messeca, texts by the Mozambican writer Mia Couto (“In Mozambico: appunti di due insiders. Foto di Paolo Messeca, Testi dello scritto Mozambicano Mia Couto”) was a photo exhibition organised at the Museum Pigorini from 5th December 2002 to 6th January 2003. The exhibition was presented by the then Superintendent Maria Antonietta Fugazzola Delpino as an important occasion for the encounter between two cultures (Italian and Mozambican cultures) and therefore in line with the modus operandi of the Museum Pigorini.92 The exhibition included 60 photos and 100 screened slides and was born as an initiative from the University of Naples “L’Orientale”.93 Between sky and hearth: on the road to Mozambique (“Tra cielo e terra: in cammino verso il Mozambico”) was the title of the exhibition book where there were printed all the photos and texts showed during the exhibition at the Museum Pigorini. Flipping through the book, I have understood the reason behind the name of the exhibition, especially in the part “notes from two insiders”: Paolo Messec had lived in Mozambique for over twenty years, working as an architect, and Mia Couto is originally from Beira, one of the largest city of Mozambique. To ensure that, during our messages exchange, Messeca wished to make clear that his photos has to be conceived as a “work from the inside”94. The photographer strongly emphasised the wish to perceive this exhibition as an internal eye on an African context.

Paolo Messec took the pictures in the period 1989-2001. The intention of Messeca was to impress on the photographic paper some rural areas of Mozambique as Nampula, Sofala, Niassa and Ilha de Moçambique. The photos were combined with the words of Mia Couto. In the exhibition book

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and in the description of the expositive project, Mia Couto defined himself as the “silences’ translator”, since his aim was to give voice to the Messeca’s photos. Couto explained that usually the first temptation of the professional photographer in Africa is to find symbolic values, something “real African”. According to the Mozambican writer, the work of Messeca stood out from this temptation and used the photos as medium.\(^{95}\) The pictures were mainly in black and white and the subjects were children, ships, buildings (Fig. 4), sea and fields. In the interview with Antonio Gnoli, Paolo Messeca explained how he decided to not use the sufferance or a drama setting to tell about Mozambique.\(^{96}\) I argue that these feelings live partially in the background of the photos, with abandoned ships and buildings or with a hand of a child, too wrinkled for the early age of the child (Fig. 5). Nevertheless, Mia Couto gave a different interpretation about the child’s hand according to which that hand was wrinkled because the child had played too much in the water.\(^{97}\) The writer broke the cycle of the Western eye which is keen in looking for dramatic scenarios in the African representations. The Western eye could be more familiar with the image of a starving children or child soldiers, due to the marketing of humanitarian agencies and of the media, than with a photo of a healthy child who could play.

The exhibition, based on the intertwining work of Mia Couto and Messeca, tried to distance itself from a common vision of the African countries as desperate and ruined. In the photos, the human presence was often blur and not central. Paolo Messeca argued that avoiding the emphasis of the human figures was a way to stay off from the platitudes and a way to clarify that what he photographed was just a small part of what is Mozambique.\(^{98}\) With his work, the photographer didn’t want to talk about civil war or tourism\(^{99}\), but in order to avoid these issues, on the one hand Messeca gave a different prospective of the African country, on the other hand, he did a qualitative selection of what show and what not show about Mozambique.

The photos of *In Mozambique: notes from two insiders* were characterised by chiaroscuro, shadows and foggy horizons. Mia Couto tried to interpret that silent lands and people, telling the emotions, the sounds and the smell that coming out from that rural areas. The texts of the Mozambican writer were a transporter to the Mozambican reality. The photos are a valid tool to know a different

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\(^{97}\) Messeca and Couto, *Tra cielo e terra*, p. 49.

\(^{98}\) Gnoli and Messeca, Interview, pp. 62-64.

\(^{99}\) Ibid., p. 65.
culture but the photographic representation is two-dimensional and there is often a construct behind the camera. I argue that in this sense, the role of Mia Couto was precious for this exhibition. He transformed the photos in “experiential pictures”, thanks to the autochthonous description and, with his words, he relived the photos of Paolo Messeca.

3.2.2 Gaze and soul, the African poetics of Paolo Bocci

Gaze and soul, the African poetics of Paolo Bocci (“Lo sguardo e l’anima, la poetica Africana di Paolo Bocci”) was a photographic exhibition organised at the Museum Pigorini from 6th February 2003 to 30th April 2003. Paolo Bocci had been a tropical agronomist and, for over thirty years, he travelled among Africa, Latin America and Asia. This, at the museum Pigorini, was his first personal exhibition and included 120 black and white photos.100 These photos had been taken from the end of the 1950s to 1970s. This chronological range was not only wide but also dense of crucial events because of the end of the colonial experience and the crisis of the independence’s hopes. In the exhibition catalogue’s introduction, Carlo Carbone, an Italian historian who participated at the exhibition, argued that these two decades, had been characterised by a lack of historical researches and a general indifference for the social-political analysis.101 Also the spatial framework of the photos is wide: Egypt, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Mozambique, Senegal, Niger and so on. In the messages exchange between the Superintendence of the Museum Pigorini and Paolo Bocci, the description of the exhibition’s theme underlined the wish to picture the “normality” of the African continent.102 In this sense, I have found some similarities with the Paolo Messeca’s exhibition. Both the exhibitions were driven by this desire to depict Africa without resorting catastrophes, misery and degradation. We, as global audience, have already seen enough images of Africa as a purgatory made of lost people. Now, it is time to see something more, also beyond paradisiac beaches and blue seas: this was the daily life that Messeca and Bocci wanted to show about Africa.

The exhibition Gaze and soul, the African poetics of Paolo Bocci was divided in several sections and African people were the main protagonists of the pictures. Generally, the female figure

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was rare and photographed only in the first section. “The strength of the sight” (La forza di uno sguardo) that is the first section of the exhibition, portrays women, children and adults in Mozambique and Niger. In this section, Bocci focused on face and eyes of the subjects. “Men of the sea” (Uomini di mare) tells visual histories of Senegalese seamen among shabby boats and sands. “The informal economy” (Economia informale) depicts street sellers of cobs, bags, pots and food from Kenya (Fig. 6), Niger and Algeria. In the section “Working without time” (Il lavoro senza tempo), men adult with bend head are occupied in manual labours in Mozambique, Marocco, Niger and Tunisia. The “Time without working” (Tempo senza lavoro) section is set in Algeria, Marocco, Niger and Egypt where men enjoy their relaxing time, seating on the asphalt or on chairs in the streets.

In “Any man has his rooftop” (Ogni uomo ha il suo tetto), Bocci explores the roofs and the domestic dimension of some villages and cities of Cameroon, Niger, South Africa and Egypt. “Holy places” (Luoghi sacri) depicts few Egyptian holy places as grieves and mosques. In “city life” (Vita di città), the photographer impressed streets and markets of South Africa, Algeria, Egypt and Niger.

The exhibition was organised with the collaboration of the Association “Miche” that has been involved in the establishment of structures for primary education and micro-credit projects in Tanzania.103 In this case, a cultural event as the photograph exhibition became a tool to finance development projects in Tanzania.

103 Association “Miche” (n.d.). Chi siamo. [online] Available at: https://michegermogli.wordpress.com/chi-siamo/ [Accessed 29 April 2018].
3.2.4 Analysis

Messeca and Bocci aimed to depict the daily life aspects of Africa through black and white photographs. The subjects of their photos are people, cities and rural areas. Without getting into professional details, I think that the use of the black and white texture could be seen as a way to set the image of Africa free from the colourful folklore that distinguishes the mediatic imaginary. In deciding to reset the colours, Messeca and Bocci wanted to show the day life of the different places.

I assert that there are some elements that make these two exhibitions interesting for the objective of this thesis. Messeca and Bocci were not professional photographers and lived in the countries that they portrayed for several years. Moreover, Messeca pushed the observer to conceive the photos as coming from an internal point of view and underlines his position as insider. Following, Messeca added the insider voice to his photos through the words of Mia Couto. The two photographers used to live and work in the African countries and, with their approaches, wanted to highlight their emic perspective in taking the photos. The emic point of view represents a legacy of Structuralism when the scholars have pushed to obtain an insider perspective in numerous disciplines.107

The two temporary exhibitions showcased the strength to depict Africa from an insider perspective. Moreover, the photographs impress day life moments as workers in the streets, children playing and houses. I notice a contrast between the image of Africa coming from the photographs and the one coming from the permanent exhibition. In the permanent exhibition there are most of all jewels, instruments, arms, masks and fetishes. It is not the aim of my research to do a deep analysis of the permanent exhibition, but from a surface description of the outcome of the permanent exhibition, the visitor could image the African intents on religious rituals, on fighting a war or on donating jewels to the Italian conquerors. What the two photographic exhibitions tried to do was to depict the African in domestic areas, during the work or while they were playing. The exhibitions of Bocci and Messeca try to give a new version on the African imaginary.

3.3 The contemporary African art

3.3.1 Mari Capable. Africa. The textiles speak

_Mari Capable. Africa. The textiles speak_ (“Mari Capable. Africa. I tessuti parlano”) was a temporary exhibition organised by Egidio Cossa (ex-curator of the section “Africa”) at the National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum ‘L. Pigorini’ from 19th July to 30th September 2001. The exhibit consisted in displaying 200 colourful clothes as cloaks, _kente_ and _pagnes_ (Fig. 7) and few photos taken by Guido Schlinkert during 1990s in Ghana, Costa d’Avorio and Burkina Faso. The exhibition was divided in four sections: “power and authority”, “wealth and money”, “love and sex” and “modern life and city”. The objective of this exhibition was to show the contemporary use of some African traditional _motif_ impressed on textiles, to communicate social and power relations among the communities. The exhibition took the name from one of the message expressed by a female fabric: _Mari Capable_, which means “my husband is economically and sexual wealthy”. The _kente_, made in silk and cotton, are traditional male clothes worn by the Akan kings in South Ghana. The fabric are made by interwoven stripes of cloth that are connected to traditional values and social codes. The textiles have been used for centuries and still nowadays, the rulers are used to wear the _kente_ together with “contemporary” objects as Cartier or Rolex jewels and watches. This contrast between traditional clothes and modernity is strong also in the female textiles: the _pagnes_. Nowadays, these female clothes are produced mainly by Western industries such as the “Real Dutch Wax Vlisco”. The clothes become tool to vehiculate messages about religious, political and sexual themes.108

I argue that this exhibition is very significative in its objective because it aims to explain a way to communicate in contemporary societies and also shows a utilisation of a Western product to create a personal narrative in a local context. What demonstrates an exhibition like _Mari Capable_ is that there are traditional symbols in the contemporary realities that are still vivid but come out in different terms. The globalised connections among the worldwide countries create hybrid ways to communicate but keep alive traditional significances. In this case, the South Ghanaian clothes vehiculate meanings, customs and social structures of power, as in other Western societies the clothing hides plural messages. I assert that the interest of this exhibition consists in showing how a traditional cloth has become an hybrid protagonist of a contemporary way to communicate and a vessel of new meanings.

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3.3.2 The mountain speaks...poem-paintings in Mali

The discovery of the African art during the colonial experience brought irreversible changes in the Western artistic avant-garde of the 20th century. The history of art became also a way to understand and include the Africans in the European narratives. I would remind that the fil rouge of the permanent exhibition of the section “Africa” at the National Museum Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum ‘L. Pigorini’ is based on the discovery of the African art and its impact on the Western conception. The temporary exhibition The mountain speaks...poem-paintings in Mali (“La montagna parla... dipinti-poema in Mali”) was organised from 14th June 2005 to 30th October 2005 at the Museum Pigorini after a long message exchanges among the organisers, the Superintendence and Alessandra Cardelli Antinori (ex-curator of the section “Africa”). The main two objectives of this exhibition were: to publicise the contemporary African art with this sample works from Mali and to contribute to finance a micro-project of sustainable development managed by the communities of the villages involved in this artistic project.109

Approximatively fifty works both on paper and cloth took over the high ceiling of the Museum Pigorini. The works on cloth were banners that reached 7,40m in height and 5m in length and the works on paper were ten and never exceeded the 1,5m. All the works had been created by a group of Malian artists with Yves Bergeret, French poet and essayist. For Yves Bergeret was not the first project of this kind, in fact, he had been involved in similar productions in Senegal and Caribbean. For this project that had lasted five years, the French poet reached the Malian mountains at the border with the Saharan desert and collaborated with the habitants of three villages. The Malian artists were ten, all illiterate, between twenty and fifty years old: Alguma Guindo, Belko Guindo, Dembo Guindo, Hama Alabouri Guindo, Hamidou Guindo, Yacouba Tamboura, Soumaila Goco Tamboura, Hama Babana Dicko, Nouhoum Mondoro and Boucari Afal Maiga. In this rural area, the Dogon communities were used to express their art on stones and in domestic environment. Bergeret defined these works as characterised by essential figures and simple volumes and with a strong educative force. Regiani argued that the collaboration between the Dogon artists and Yves Bergeret had been based on dialogue and reciprocal respect.110

In this form of collaboration between Bergeret and the Malian artists, I find an example of cultural engagement that generated a “four-handed art”. There is not a photographer behind a camera...
but the artefacts of this exhibition were the result of a strong collaboration between the ten Dogon artists and the French poet.

### 3.3.3 Agenda Angola

This exhibition was born from the initiative of the Embassy of the Republic of Angola in Italy and took place from 4th January to 15 February 2014 at the National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum ‘L. Pigorini’. Objects and canvas of contemporary Angolan artists had been displayed to introduce these works to the habitants of Rome and to the Angolan fellow-citizens. The ambassador Florêncio De Almeida argued that this was an occasion to publicise the Angolan culture in Italy and specifically in Rome.\[111\] The exhibition consisted in two collections. One was based on the photographs taken by Edson Chagas, already exposed at the Angolan pavilion during the 55th Venice’s art biennale and winner of the Golden Lion. Edson Chagas left Luanda at 16 years old to study in London and Newport. In 2007 Chagas returned to Luanda and noted that, differently from during the civil wars, now even the poor people had the “luxury to throw away broken things”. The artist decided to use the ruined objects to describe the urban changes in Luanda; he inserted them in the middle of his images to push the observer to think about the relationship between objects and surrounding spaces (Fig. 8). The other collection, called *Angola em Movimento*, showed the works of Masongi Afonso “Afó”, Costa Andrade “Ndunduma”, Zan Andrade, Hildebrando De Melo, António Gonga, Jorge Gumbe, Paulo Jazz, Marco Kabenda, Sozinho Lopes, Sónia Lukene, João Mabuaka “Mayembe” (Fig. 9), Guilherme Mampwya, António Ole, Vitor Teixeira “Viteix”, Fineza Teta “Fist”, António Toko, Francisco Van-Dúnem “Van”, Telmo Váz Pereiram Amândio Vemba and Landa Yeto. This project was part of the wider “Internationalisation of Angolan Art and Culture” programme within the National executive’s agenda of Angola.\[112\]

The aim of the exhibition was to talk about the new social and urban changes in Angola and, for this reason, the two collections focused more on the urban contexts both with photos and city life objects. *Agenda Angola* collected the different kind of works of different generations of Angolan artists. There were photographs, sculptures, paintings and installations all coming from a wide chronological frame. In this exhibition the Angolan art expressed the historical and political changes

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occurred during the late XX century and the early XXI century. A little space has been dedicated by the Roman museums to the African contemporary art. The image that the permanent exhibition of the Museum Pigorini generates around the African art is the same of what the missionaries found in the colonial encounter. Those African objects displayed in the permanent exhibition are seen more as a materialisation of the different cultures than an artistic production. The exhibition of contemporary African art as Agenda Angola, tried to break the vicious circle that elects beauty and art only following the Western norms and that talks about an African art made by unknown artists.

Fig. 7

Fig. 8

Fig. 9


3.3.5 Analysis

These three exhibitions enshrine the opening of the National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum ‘L. Pigorini’ to the contemporary African art. The *Mari Capable. Africa. The textiles speak* exhibition showed hybrid artefacts of the fashion industry that represented the combination of contemporary messages and textiles with traditional layouts and cultural values. This exhibition emphasises the hybrid approach of the South Ghanaian communities in communication. The communication became a creative moment impressed in the clothes. Despite of the contemporary artistic component of the exhibition, I argue that, as far as I could read in the source materials, in the exhibition were underlined more the cultural aspects about the social communication than the artistic value of the textiles.

The aim of *The mountain speaks... poem-paintings in Mali* was to publicise the Malian contemporary art. It was a four handed work based on the collaboration between the ten Malian artists and Bergeret. Anyway, the role of the French poet was the starting point of these works. Using a metaphor, I argue that Bergeret was the orchestra’s conductor and the ten Malian artists the musicians. I assert that the African contemporary art entered in the museum with a stronger significance with *Agenda Angola*. I consider this exhibition as a mature progress in the opening of the Museum Pigorini to the African contemporary art.

Jean-Loup Amselle asserts that an ethnographic object became a work of art through the selection made by a Western observer and that very often the “primitive artist” is anonymous. In fact, usually the African artefacts displayed in an ethnographic museum are considered works of art due to their cultural feature more than their artistic value. Moreover, this kind of exhibition demonstrates that the ethnographic object highlights more the cultural features than the aesthetic quality and artistic strength of the author.\(^{117}\) With the exhibitions of the African contemporary art, what happens is that there is the recognition by the museum that Africans could make art. Their artefacts are not only ethnographic objects fuelled with cultural meanings but also artistic pieces. What defines an African object more a cultural manifestation than a work of art is especially the anonymity of its author. Still today, the permanent exhibition at the National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum ‘L. Pigorini’ displays all the ethnographic objects without could indicate the authors. Sally Price asserted that “anonymity and timelessness” have been the two main characteristics of the displayed African artefacts in many ethnographic museums.\(^{118}\) I conclude that one of most important result of the


\(^{118}\) Price, *I primitivi traditi*, pp. 73-77.
African contemporary art’s exhibitions in the museum was to display the artefacts with the names of their authors. These exhibitions are a breakdown of the timelessness and the anonymity that have characterised the Western perception on the African art for centuries. The outcome of the three exhibitions is the recognition of the African as not only an artist and author of its artefacts, but also a contemporary agent.

4. Conclusion

The European ethnographic museums are facing important metamorphoses to update their exhibitions according to the postcolonial and multicultural waves. There are institutions that have made changes in both temporary and permanent exhibitions, like the Ethnographic Museum of Stockholm. Others that have demonstrated a vivid penetration of the most recent trends in museology only in the temporary exhibitions, like the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren. Multiculturalism and postcolonialism could influence the museum practices and, with my study, I have proposed a research method that permits an evaluation on the temporary exhibitions.

According to the first research question in this essay, the objective was to find out if the temporary exhibitions, related to the African heritage and organised from 1994 to 2014 at the Museum Pigorini, have been affected by postcolonialism and multiculturalism. The evaluation has been carried out through the application of the research method composed by three different analysis’s categorisations. The methodology has developed a successful understanding of the penetration of the new trends in the case study of the Museum Pigorini. In line with the first category, the thematic shifts underlines the penetration of postcolonial and multicultural approaches in the museum policies through the return of the ethnography, the thematic shift on migration and the entry of the diaspora communities in the projects. Thereafter, the second category highlights the wish of the photographers to depict themselves as “insiders”. They decided to took photos of daily life aspects of the African countries to emphasise a different imaginary of a continent that often has been depicted during humanitarian crises and civil wars. In the last category, the expositions of contemporary art tries to break the vicious cycle of anonymity and timelessness that has characterised the African artefacts. The Museum Pigorini has reacted to multiculturalism and postcolonialism introducing these several elements in the temporary exhibitions. However, the trends have not reached yet the permanent exhibition. This makes the contrast between temporary and permanent exhibitions ever greater.
Although I could not trace a clear and coherent strategy behind the temporary exhibitions and during the two selected decades, I notice a dynamism. In 2005 there is an embryonic form of diaspora community engagement with the Moroccan woman invited in the deposit of the museum. In 2012 this engagement has been updated and brought Sankara and Nguatelle in the organisational phases of the project. In 2005 the contemporary art entered in the Museum Pigorini through the “French passport” of the poet Yves Bergeret. In 2014 the Angolan contemporary art penetrated “unescorted” in the museum. These progresses in the projects suggest a development over the time in the modernisation of the museum policies.

I argue that my thesis could be seen as innovative in both the two levels of the research. According to the topic, in the choice of the Museo Pigorini as case study, I have made an analysis in retrospect on a selected period of the temporary exhibitions. There aren’t any evaluations in retrospect about the temporary exhibitions at the Museum Pigorini. It has been the old-fashioned permanent exhibition that pushes me to find something more, toward the temporary exhibitions. What I find is that, even if there is still a long way to go, the Museum Pigorini has demonstrated a penetration of the most recent museology trends in the temporary exhibitions.

According to the wider theme and to answer to the second research question, I affirm that my research method is a valid approach to evaluate the temporary exhibitions in receiving external influences from postcolonialism and multiculturalism. The strength of the applied methodology is the capacity to individualise three of the major themes that characterise the representation of the African artefacts in Europe. The effort in combing the temporary exhibitions in categories develops clarity in the analysis. It could happen that a temporary exhibition could be located in more than one category and this permits to evaluate the most prominent aspects of the contemporary metamorphosis of the ethnographic museums.

The weakness of my research method is in the finding of the source materials. It is necessary to establish a stable collaboration with the chosen museum to access to main part of the sources. Since the analysis is in retrospect, it is fundamental that the museum has an archive about the temporary exhibitions and that the interviewees are available to talk about past projects. For example, the Museum Pigorini has a Protocol archive which is not a proper archive about the museum practices or the results of the exhibitions. The archive was more a list of message exchanges within the Office of the Superintendence and a collection of the texts of the projects. Moreover, not all the staff of the museums has been available to talk about the past exhibitions. As in other researches, the lack of source materials could be a component that affects the success of the methodology. A further problem of my research method is that it has been tested only for one case study of the Museum Pigorini. In a future research, I would like to apply my methodology to further ethnographic museums. Moreover,
it could be interesting to create a comparison between two or more museums. What will come out is a comparison among the different way of the museums to operate in the three categories. Of course the African continent has peculiar historical and social features, nevertheless it could be interesting to try my research method on contexts beyond the African heritage.

The ethnographic museums were born to represent the other cultures. For this reason, these museums have the necessity of incorporating multicultural and postcolonial theories. To do so the exhibitions don’t have to forget the concept of hybridity. Culture is hybrid, but also art is hybrid and its artefacts. In displaying African artefacts, Karp suggested to emphasise differences and similarities. It’s in the similarities that I pinpoint the hybridity of the culture. Through the photographic exhibitions the visitor discovers the “others” in their environment. Through a project that involves the engagement of the diaspora communities and the contemporary art, the visitor discovers the “others” in his city. For this reason, I argue that the objective of the multicultural and postcolonial influences is to transform the museum practice from a discovery to an encounter of the “other”.

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