

# Museum Communication, Exhibition Policy and Plan: The Field Museum as a Case Study

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## *Museum Communication, Exhibition Policy and Plan: The Field Museum as a Case Study*

Museums are moving forward in redressing the injustices of history by influencing policies through communication. As a case study museum, the Field Museum situated in Chicago, Illinois, USA, is examined to address how it is at the forefront of administration, preservation, research, and communication efforts that promote diversity, disclosing historical events, art, and anthropological objects in juxtaposition with current events and contemporary objects. To understand the role of advocacy through museum functions, the paper examines two current exhibitions, Drawing on Tradition: Kanza Artist Chris Pappan, and Looking at Ourselves, which are bi-functional ongoing processes of conservation and exhibition. The paper explores museum exhibition plans and policies, namely recontextualization of collections, which reflect the transition into a new political environment.

Keywords: Communication, exhibition plan and policy, recontextualization

## Museums and Policies

Museums are agents that should not be swayed by the change in government policies, but stand firm in their social, cultural, and political stance to be inclusive through museum communication policies and plans. The Field Museum of Natural History's name was changed to the Field Museum in 1994 in light of addressing the larger scope of the kind of collections and exhibits. The change also reflects a new perspective on classification of the anthropological collection, which was formerly viewed as second to or a part of natural history since 1933 when it was first established as the Marshall Field Museum of Natural History, an outcome of the World's Columbian Exposition. Two exhibitions at the Field Museum, *Drawing on Tradition: Kanza Artist Chris Pappan*<sup>1</sup> supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and Art Works, as well as partially funded by The Julian Grace Foundation for outreach, and *Looking at Ourselves*, are examined in this paper. The statues were first exhibited at the 1933 exhibition on *The Races of Mankind* presenting a racist outlook through science and art. Today, the exhibition and conservation policies interpret that “*we reject race as a way to explain physical differences... When we look at the statues today, we realize we're not looking at others – we're looking at ourselves.*”<sup>2</sup> The methodology in this paper is to first present the literature review on museums, politics, and policies. Secondly,

<sup>1</sup> PAPPAN, Chris – RICHLAND, Justin B. – WALI, Alaka. *Drawing on Tradition: Kanza Artist Chris Pappan* [Museum Exhibit]. Chicago, IL: The Field Museum, October 29, 2016 to January 13, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> THE FIELD MUSEUM. *Looking at Ourselves: Rethinking the Sculptures of Mahina Hoffman* [Museum Exhibit]. Chicago: The Field Museum, January 15, 2016 to January 1, 2018.

unpublished exhibition plans and policies from the Director of Exhibitions, Matt Matcuk, will be shown, compared, and analyzed with past exhibitions and literature. Third, a conclusive analysis of the political environment and exhibition plans and policies in the communication process of recontextualization in museums will be conducted.

In the context of published literature on museums, politics, and policies, “Engage the World: Examining Conflicts of Engagement in Public Museums” examines the *Dead Sea Scrolls* exhibition in the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto in 2009. The discussion is on the relationship between museum policies as a part of engagement and democratization, with the argument as follows:

*a more radical and high-risk positioning of engagement, while not embraced by the ROM, offers the museum transformative potential...Such a positioning must involve the recognition of engagement as an agonistic political field, and museums as potential arenas for making public the perpetual struggles and irreconcilable differences that are intrinsic to processes of democracy.<sup>3</sup>*

The vision of agora was intended by William Thorsell to exhibit the scrolls in order to bring together Christians, Jews, and Muslims, who are all the stakeholders of the scrolls, into a dialogue on interfaith and traditions.<sup>4</sup> Engagement on different levels are explored:

*...engagement viewed from the intellectual or curatorial perspective; engagement seen as a social integration and cultural diversity exercise; engagement as a market orientation; engagement perceived as participation and interaction, but also, engagement viewed as a political practice. The last was not encompassed within the ROM's own objectives, but derives from my particular interest in engagement and democratisation.<sup>5</sup>*

The conclusions are that museums as cultural institutions should be active in the public sphere and in the contemporary context.<sup>6</sup> The *Dead Sea Scrolls* exhibition is retrospectively seen as a space where different cultures could have come together to discuss the differences and controversies and embrace traditions that are ideally a part of the democratic process of policy building.<sup>7</sup> Like the *Enola Gay* exhibition planning stages in the 1980s at The National Air and Space Museum of The Smithsonian Institution where stakeholders were adamant to hold an open discussion on a variety of issues, the Palestinian and Israeli stakeholders closed themselves off from the challenges of the deeper and complex debates surrounding the *Dead Sea Scrolls*.

In the book *Politics of Museums*, the question of how are international policies understood by specific actors in nation-states and different actors is posed.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the top-down politics of globalization is discussed in addition to Marxist-inspired governments and museums. Such debates are also within the context of the *ICOFOM Study Series*, e.g., a paper by Vinoš Sofka argues the importance of the museum to preserve totalitarian regimes' history to teach future generations the past political authorities that controlled what museums should and should not communicate.<sup>9</sup> In response to an immigration ban in 2017, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York re-installed works by Muslim artists, representing countries who were

<sup>3</sup> ASHLEY, Susan L.T. Engage the World: Examining Conflicts of Engagement in Public Museums.” In: *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2014, p. 266. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2013.808630>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p. 266.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 267.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, p. 294.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, p. 275.

<sup>8</sup> GRAY, Clive. *The Politics of Museums (New Directions in Cultural Policy Research)*. Basingstoke, U.K. : Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p. 61.

<sup>9</sup> SOFKA, Vinoš. From oppression to democracy. Changes in the world and European upheavals, heritage, museums, the museum profession and museology. In: *ICOFOM Study Series 33 Final Version*, 2004, pp. 94-101.

affected by the order, on the fifth floor in the permanent gallery, a very quick response in the name of protest. Then the question is - how is the decision to embrace former policies affect the Field Museum as we enter new administrations? In Chapter 3 on “*The National Politics of Museums*,” this phenomenon of the choices that museum actors make and the results of those choices in museum functions are discussed. Clearly, in the case of the MoMA, those choices were made without too many bureaucratic decisions that could have prolonged the situation, but a disaster management cultural quick response communication policy and plan to a wider national and international forum was produced. How a government perceives museums is through how much funding is prioritized to them.<sup>10</sup> The Field Museum building is on the National Register of Historic Places, but the museum is incorporated by the State of Illinois. Yet how much funding is it receiving from the federal government in the current exhibitions? How much power does a museum have to make choices internally on museum display? Altogether how is museum communication free from the influences of current governmental stance?<sup>11</sup> The argument here is that museum communication decisions should not have to be pressured from the national political environment.

How do museums in the twenty-first century follow the debates of the national policy as we have seen with the example of MoMA? Although MoMA’s actions were an immediate reaction protest to the Executive Order, the national policies that are already implemented previous to the current administration can be questioned. Museums need to make their own agendas to approach the world as inclusive and open to just causes as a cultural, social, and political agent.<sup>12</sup> Museologist François Mairesse has examined the developments of *la nouvelle muséologie* that lays its foundations on the issues of the social fabric or the stakeholders of the heritage, thus directly related to the culture and community.<sup>13</sup> In this study, it is not the intention to examine all the different actors that perform the power game such as pressure groups but to explore some of the main actors who create the exhibition plans and policies.

To continue with the discussion in published literature related to the topic, a paper on “*Antipodean Aesthetics, Public Policy and the Museum: Te Papa*” discusses the transformation of New Zealand political policies that affected the museums creating a ‘backward’ culture to a more competitive one, and the critiques that were made on the Te Papa exhibition as a postmodernist populist exhibition; but the argument is that the exhibition embraces a complex understanding of a Pakeha futurism and the fall of colonialism, what Dibley calls an “*antipodean camp*”<sup>14</sup> Silverman’s “*Diasporas of Art: History, the Tervuren Royal Museum or Central Africa, and the Politics of Memory in Belgium, 1885–2014*” explores The Royal Congo Museum, which was established from 1897 to 1910, to understand the history of the imperial museum. Belgium, a neutral country, had colonized one-thirteenth of Africa, considered a glorious configuration in the form of maps at the time and the cartography and reflected in the iconography in the museum architecture. Silverman discusses the permanent galleries that were untouched for a century and *La Mémoire du Congo* exhibition, which excluded the concept of a colonial past. In 2005, the exhibition raised debates for those stakeholders who were a part of the colonial history

<sup>10</sup> GRAY, ref. 8, p. 70.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem, p. 124.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, p. 100.

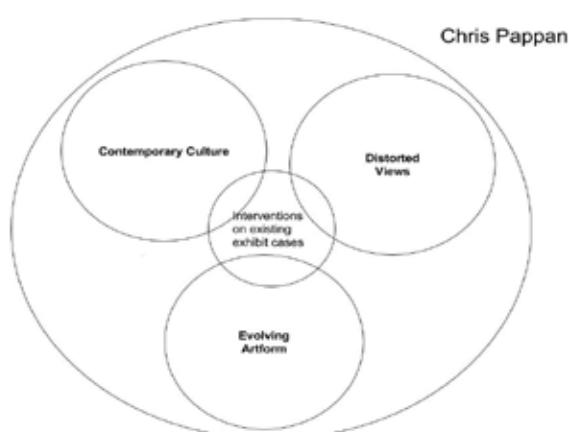
<sup>13</sup> MAIRESSE, François. La belle histoire – aux origines de la nouvelle muséologie. In: *Publics & Musées*, 2000, no. 17-18, pp. 33-56.

<sup>14</sup> DIPLEY, Ben. Antipodean Aesthetics, Public Policy and the Museum: Te Papa, for Example. In: *Cultural Studies Review*, vol. 13, 2007, no. 1, pp. 131-132.

because of the exclusion of the Congolese communities, and the continuation of a past set to glorify how Imperial Belgium allowed the Congolese free from the Arab slave holders.<sup>15</sup> The renovations from 2005 to 2013 “*Africa today and in the future*” addressing post-colonialism and democratization are also discussed. She also provides suggestions on research and provenance of the collections: for example, the distinction should be made with artwork created in Belgium while the resources and design are Congolese, and thus the reassembling of the “*diasporas of objects*” Congolese and Belgian is necessary.<sup>16</sup> All in all, these discussions are relevant to the topic of this research on museum communication policies and plans.

Using primary sources, a “public historical” or “museum historical” approach to conducting research on the phenomenon of the Field Museum’s exhibitions and policy is applied. The outlook is a Marxist political and identity-based approach in examining groups and individuals who have been “disfranchised” in society throughout history and continues in the present.<sup>17</sup> This research takes the politico-cultural lens to explore the communication policies that the Field Museum embraces in recontextualizing its collections. The annual reports of the Field Museum are also perused. For the *Drawing on Tradition: Kanza Artist Chris Pappan*, an examination of the actual exhibition, newer and older exhibition plans, minute books, and funding is conducted. For the study on *Looking at Ourselves*, the exhibition and restoration plans, minute books, and funding are viewed. To make a comparison with the older exhibition, the 1933 exhibition plan and published literature on this exhibit in addition to Marvina Hoffman’s writings are analyzed to understand the iconography of the Marvina Hoffman statues.

### Drawing on Tradition: Kanza Artist Chris Pappan



**Fig. 1:** Bubble Plan Simple 4.01.16, Courtesy of the Field Museum

of the Plains Indians. Two other curators, the Field Museum’s Dr. Alaka Wall in the North American Anthropology Collections and Dr. Justin Richland, who is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Chicago, produced this exhibition with Pappan, which

Although two contemporary Native American artists Rhonda Holy Bear (Cheyenne River Lakota) were featured at the Field Museum during the same period, this research concentrates on Chris Pappan (Kanza, Osage, and Cheyenne River Lakota), who was the principal exhibition curator of *Drawing on Tradition*.<sup>18</sup> By making choices on the artifacts and his artwork, Pappan is producing a connection with heritage, but he also shows the dynamic changes and the proprietors of heritage interpretation through the influence of ledger art

<sup>15</sup> SILVERMAN, Debora L. Contemporary Issues in Historical Perspective Diasporas of Art: History, the Tervuren Royal Museum for Central Africa, and the Politics of Memory in Belgium, 1885–2014. In: *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 87, 2015, no. 3, p. 627.

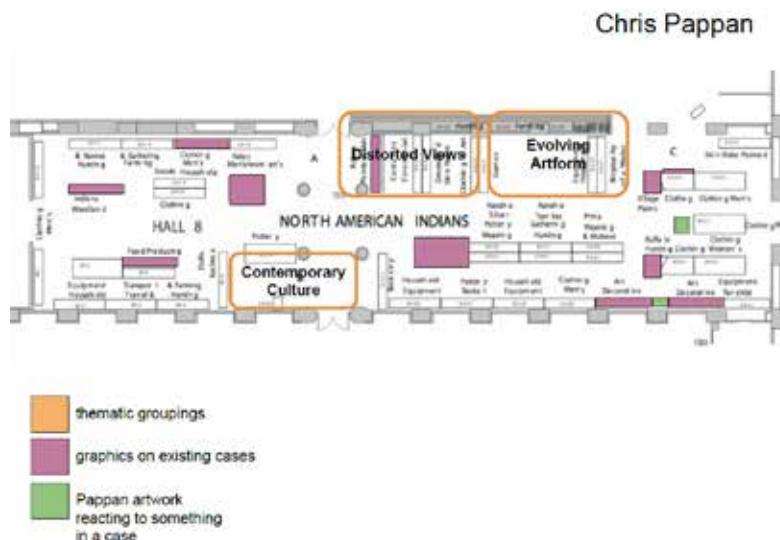
<sup>16</sup> Ibidem, p. 616.

<sup>17</sup> TOSH, John. *Historians on History*. London & New York, 2014, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> THE FIELD MUSEUM. Annual Report to the Donors, 2016, p. 3.

was displayed from October 29, 2016 to January 13, 2019. This project was partially funded by the National Endowment for the Arts with outreach funding by the Julian Grace Foundation.<sup>19</sup>

Through the exhibition planning stages with the Exhibition Design Director Matthew Matcuk, Exhibition Developer Susan Golland, and the rest of his team, Chris Pappan's "big idea" for *Drawing on Tradition* is to use "*his art to transform our perspective on Native American cultures?*" as his "*art exposes inaccurate ideas about Native American cultures*" at the same time demonstrating "*that Native culture continues to change.*"<sup>20</sup> As Figure 1 shows, the three main themes linked with the existing exhibit cases create an interventionist linkage of "*Contemporary Culture*," "*Distorted Views*," and "*Evolving Artform*." Figure 2 explicates how the larger themes are showcased in three areas, while graphics are created on existing cases throughout the exhibit and two areas where Pappan reacts to the existing cases.



**Fig. 2:** Bubble Plan\_Pappan\_03.23.16, Courtesy of the Field Museum

An artist who is a part of the stakeholders' group that the heritage belongs to leading the curation is a strong political action as a democratic approach. As stated in the briefing for the exhibition design:

*"Chris Pappan is an Osage, Kans, and Cheyenne River Lakota Sioux artist who is known for his contemporary ledger art. The ledger art tradition is a Plains art form that originated as narrative paintings on hides and later transitioned to work on paper, notably during the 19th century on ledger books, hence the term ledger art. Chris Pappan's work draws on that tradition and adds to its contemporary imagery, collage, and surrealistic elements."*<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> THE FIELD MUSEUM. Matt Matcuk, Exhibition Design Department, "Chris Pappan: big idea 3.18.16," March 18, 2016. [Unpublished notes].

<sup>21</sup> THE FIELD MUSEUM. Matt Matcuk, Exhibition Design Department, "Chris Pappan: Developer's Brief 4.18.16," April 18, 2016. [Unpublished notes]. THE FIELD MUSEUM. Chris Pappan, Exhibition Design Department, "Groupings Rotation 6/8/2016," October 8, 2016. [Unpublished notes].

As part of the exhibition planning and policies, museums apply different kinds of goals and objectives.<sup>22</sup> They are the overall communication process and the policy-making of exhibitions for each kind. Within the process of the experience goals, the affective goals that the visitor would feel are “*challenged and sometimes a little uncomfortable*,” and a cognitive goal is that the visitor would know that “*Native cultures continue today*” and “*Pappan’s work is just one example of living tradition.*”<sup>23</sup>

Prior to planning out this exhibit, visitor research was undertaken in conjunction with the Native American Hall’s Renovation study in 2015 that resulted in visitors who wanted to see the exhibit to be renovated with *Drawing on Tradition* as an enlightening work. There was no front-end evaluation produced but a literature review entitled *Demographics of Visitors and Efficacy of Exhibitions Addressing Contemporary Native Americans* written by an intern Michelle King. The study focused on the National Museum of the American Indian, the Field Museum, Milwaukee Public Museum, and Southeastern Native American Museum. The results that are shared from the report show that many visitors do not have prior knowledge about native peoples, for example, in the differences of the cultures within indigenous nations and tribes, the importance of cultural ideas, and environmental issues.<sup>24</sup> Museologist Jan Dolák stresses the importance of listening to the audience and response to be reflected in museum communication with professionalism as the purpose of museums is for the public at large.<sup>25</sup> And in this case, the message should be about the new perspective on knowledge concerning Native Americans.

The Exhibition Walkthrough describes how the visitors will be oriented to *Drawing on Tradition* as they enter through either the Webber Gallery, Northwestern Coast/Arctic, Pawnee Earth Lodge, or Levin Hall. The walkthrough details the interaction that visitors will have with the contemporary interpretation of the old exhibit with video projection and music, the graphics with text added on to the old cases. The visitors also encounter the larger themes through Chris Pappan’s artworks, including ledger art that are a part of the original collection and communicating the relationship between the traditional objects and *evolving* work by Pappan. As shown in Figures 4 and 5, the traditional artifacts are recontextualized with contemporary drawings. The *distorted* view theme is portrayed with paintings that are actually distorted in the image of contemporary Native Americans and how, as visitors, they see people through a skewed worldview, perspective, or lens. The third theme interprets contemporary culture through ledger art, e.g., Wizard of Oz, and that history meets present culture as a “*continuum*” in Native American culture. The objects and resources that were selected for this exhibit included objects, imagery, sound, and multimedia to produce an experiential effect of past and present, and recontextualization and reconfiguration.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> CHUNG, Yun Shun Susie. “Heritage Planning”. In: *The SAA Archaeological Record*, vol. 7, 2007, no. 4, pp. 42-46.

<sup>23</sup> THE FIELD MUSEUM, ref. 21.

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>25</sup> DOLAK, Jan. OTEVÍRÁNÍ SE VEŘEJNOSTI NEBO „NOVÁ ORTODOXIE“? (Opening to the public or new orthodoxy?) Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo, vol. 5, 2017, no. 1, p. 145. In original Czech language:

“Muzeum musí znát potřeby a přání (mnohdy i nevyslovené) svých uživatelů a reagovat na ně, ale muzejní expozice, výstavy, programy atd. musejí být tvoreny s maximální profesionalitou, bez podbízivosti. Jen to je cesta k společenskému uznání profesí v muzeích zastoupených a koneckonců i k podpoře muzeí ze strany veřejnosti.”

<sup>26</sup> THE FIELD MUSEUM, ref. 21.



**Fig. 3:** Developers Brief Pappan\_04\_16\_17  
Courtesy of the Field Museum



**Fig. 4:** *Ledger Art Tradition and Now*  
Photo credit: Y.S.S. Chung



**Fig. 5:** Drawing on Tradition  
Photo credit: Y.S.S. Chung

### Looking at Ourselves: Rethinking the Sculptures of Malvina Hoffman

The new exhibition *Looking at Ourselves* looks back at the past on why the sculptures were created in the first place by Malvina Hoffman and the exhibition that the sculptures were made to be placed in, *Races of Mankind* opened on June 6, 1933. In 2015, as written in the Annual Report to the Donors and the text in the exhibition, a restoration process took place by the conservators in the Field Museum to shed a different light on the sculptures of Malvina Hoffman: “*The conservation process included photo documentation, restoration, and research on the identities of the subjects who posed for the pieces.*”<sup>27</sup>

The funding for the exhibition is through private funding, from Pamela K. Hull, who happens to be the granddaughter of Stanley Field, nephew of Marshall Field; the restoration of 83 sculptures and 30 busts can be viewed in the exhibition. The funding for the restoration is from The Elizabeth Morse Genius Charitable Trust and an anonymous donor, also private funds.<sup>28</sup> In the history of the *Races of Mankind* by Henry Field, the curator notes that the bronzes were sponsored by Marshall Field, whom the museum is named after, Mrs. Stanley Field and Mrs. Charles H. Schweppe.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> THE FIELD MUSEUM. Annual Report to the Donor, 2015, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> FIELD, Henry. *The Races of Mankind: An Introduction to Chauncey Kepp Memorial Hall*. Chicago, IL: Field Museum of Natural History, 1934, p. 3.

What has already been discussed by authors concerning the 1933 exhibition and rationale for the commissioned sculptures, each chapter in Kinkel's book discusses the processes in which the exhibit configurated from the conception of the idea and the theories that were developing and prevalent in physical anthropology. As described in 1940 by geographer Elizabeth Eiselen, there was a taxonomic hierarchy in the manner in which races of the three primary divisions were displayed. In addition, the life-size sculptures were according to a conceptual arrangement, and the heads and busts demonstrated the variations in racial types.<sup>30</sup> Kinkel also notes from her research that a racial narrative was created throughout the exhibit hall, alluding to a kind of character for each racial physique with the idea of a personality characteristic of a culture or a particular nation.<sup>31</sup> However, there were those who did oppose the idea of race, such as anthropologist Edward Sapir who remarked in a lecture that an entire cultural personality trait had no scientific basis.<sup>32</sup> The *Races of Mankind* guidebook tells an account of the three different views on race according to Berthold Laufer, Arthur Keith, and Henry Field, who used Malvina Hoffman's sculptures of human beings to justify those views.<sup>33</sup> Berthold Laufer was against the idea of the exemplary state of the Aryan civilization and the color of the eyes being blue; furthermore, he claimed that a national characteristic of behavior was the effects of the tradition of the culture, and not from a biological determination.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, Arthur Keith, Conservator and Professor in the Royal College of Surgeons of England, Corresponding Member of the Field Museum, had a differing view, a Social Darwinist was arguing for white superiority.<sup>35</sup> Keith boasted about his bust that Hoffman had created as a model of a man from the Nordic origin, which was to represent the most ideal physiognomy.<sup>36</sup> Decoteau further notes that Keith was against the idea of mixed races, arguing that it would cause disorder in society and the genetic composition; in addition, he believed that the Caucasian race had reached the highest stance in a civilized achievement, compared to the “*Conglloid*” and “*Mongoloid*” races.<sup>37</sup> This comparison of race and museum objects is not new. Museums in the mid-nineteenth century were pronouncing the inferiority of colonized races through the comparison and contrast, for example, to the English race through county archaeological artifacts found in England and contemporary objects collected from colonial countries.<sup>38</sup> As described in Henry Field's *The Races of Mankind: Sculptures by Malvina Hoffman: An Introduction to Chauncey Keep Memorial Hall*, he gave a detailed description of the “Special Scientific Exhibits” according to biological or physical anthropology.<sup>39</sup> The sculptures were accompanied by charts made by Dr. A Hrdlicka of the San Diego Museum used to classify race according to the shape of the head, body, and facial features which were applied using the cephalic index; maps were also shown representing skin color, hair types, and ears.<sup>40</sup> Although Henry Field did not rely

<sup>30</sup> KINKEL, Marianne. *The Races of Mankind*. Urbana : University of Illinois Press, 2011, p. 90.

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem, p. 90.

<sup>32</sup> DECOTEAU, Pamela Hibbs. Malvina Hoffman and the “Races of Mankind.” In: *Woman's Art Journal*, Fall89/Winter90, vol. 10, 1989, Is. 2, p. 40; KINKEL, ref. 30, p. 93.

<sup>33</sup> KINKEL, ref. 30, p. 106.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem, p. 106.

<sup>35</sup> Also mentioned by DECOTEAU, ref. 32, p. 17.

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem, p. 24.

<sup>38</sup> CHUNG, Yun Shun Susie. “John Britton (1771-1857). A Source for Exploration of the Foundations of County Archaeological Society Museums.” In: *Journal of the History of Collections*, vol. 15, 2003, no. I, pp. 111-123.

<sup>39</sup> FIELD, ref. 29, p. 37.

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem.

on Keith's theory, he instead applied Alfred Haddon's (of the University of Cambridge) and other British anthropologists' theories; however, he did classify racial types and eugenics in the exhibition, which Laufer was against.<sup>41</sup> Field was producing a plan titled "Hereditary and Eugenics" that tried to link certain features such as alcoholism as well as a demographic map with vital statistics on racial problems, and a chart that showed eugenic pedigree.<sup>42</sup> In the end, Field used a phylogenetic tree as a means of pedagogical approach in the displays.<sup>43</sup>

Decoteau writes the biography of Malvina Hoffman beginning with her study with Auguste Rodin in Paris from 1910 to 1914 and concentrating on the sculptures she created numbering 104 sculptures of which 50 were head sculptures, 27 busts, and 27 life figures.<sup>44</sup> Hoffman traveled worldwide during a period of five years to create the sculptures for the Keep Exhibition Hall at the Marshall Field Museum of Natural History opening for the 1933 Chicago World's Fair.<sup>45</sup> Her husband Sam Grimson traveled with Hoffman taking more than 1,800 photographs, documenting the models and measurements of the body and trying to find the best representation of the races that she encountered.<sup>46</sup> She was acclaimed as one of the top female artists of her time writing her own college textbook *Sculpture Inside and Out* published in 1939.

Malcolm X College displayed some of the sculptures after removal from the Field Museum. Then the Museum of Contemporary Art presented sixteen of the sculptures re-interpreted in *OpEd: Fred Wilson* raising issues about race in the museum.<sup>47</sup> What we consider art in different contexts is clearly demonstrated in the museum environment: for example, sculptures made to be placed for art history or sculptures were created for an anthropological study.<sup>48</sup>

Conjoined with the historiography of the sculptures and first exhibits of Malvina Hoffman, the Field Museum is endeavoring to redress the wrong of the past by re-interpreting Malvina Hoffman's sculptures. The exhibition is concerned with the restoration and the re-interpretation of *Races of Man* and the changing views, the public policy of the nation, and the development of anthropology as a discipline. The planning stages for the Malvina Hoffman sculptures in the Comer Gallery, as it was for the *Drawing on Tradition* exhibit, were produced by Matt Matcuk and his team, Alvaro Amat, Jaap Hoogstraten, Alaka Wali, Sadia Ahmed, Janet Hong, and Gretchen Baker. This, too, is a semi-permanent exhibition. The visitor experience goals are to show that the works are not art as a part of the sensory/motor goals; to feel connected with the sculptures of individuals shown as affective goals; and the cognitive goals as to how race and anthropology are a part of the conversations and actions in the current times.<sup>49</sup>

As it was for the *Drawing on Tradition* exhibition, there are three main themes for the Malvina Hoffman exhibition. The first is "*diversity of cultures*" displaying twelve full figure sculptures, and the thematic message is: "*who we are; how we fit into the world around us; and how we respond to*

<sup>41</sup> KINKEL, ref. 30, p. 110.

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem, pp. 111-112.

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem, p. 116.

<sup>44</sup> DECOTEAU, ref. 32.

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem, p. 15.

<sup>47</sup> KINKEL, ref. 30, pp. 183-84.

<sup>48</sup> Ibidem, p. 199.

<sup>49</sup> THE FIELD MUSEUM. From Matt Matcuk. To Alvar Alvaro Amat, Jaap Hoogstraten, Alaka Wali, Sadia Ahmed, Janet Hong, Gretchen Baker. "Concept notes for Malvina Hoffman exhibit. July 14, 2015. [Unpublished notes]; THE FIELD MUSEUM. Matt Matcuk, Sadia Ahmed, and Susan Golland, Exhibition Design Department, "Malvina Hoffman: Final Object Groups 10/2/2015," October 2, 2015.

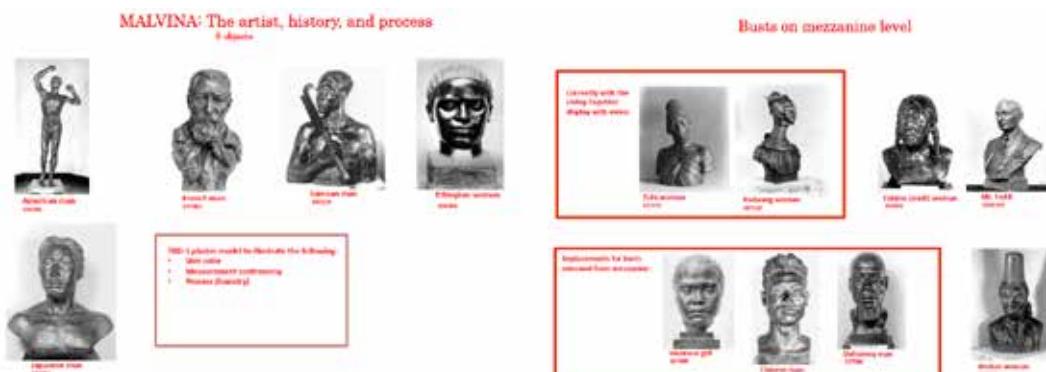
*our physical environments—but the ways that we respond to these needs differ across time and space.”* The second theme is the *idea of race* represented by fifteen portrait busts encouraging the visitors to probe into this theme: “*A digital rail will help visitors explore the sculptures from the perspectives that interest them most. In addition, a graphic element will encourage visitors to make guesses about the “race” of the people depicted—and to see how often those predictions are wrong.*” The third theme is *Malvina Hoffman* with 6 portrait busts and heads in addition to Brooklyn Man of a full figure statue conveying: “*the commissioning of the pieces, her travels around the world, the making of the sculptures, and how changes in the way that we think about race have resulted in us displaying, removing, and ultimately redisplaying the objects—but now within a richer context.*”<sup>50</sup>

Some questions to provoke the audience with a new understanding of the sculptures and the exhibit are “*Which one of these ‘races’ is closest to yours? Are you sure?*”; “*Where do you think these people are from? What made you think that?*”; and “*Can humans really be divided into different ‘races’?*”



**Fig. 6: Final Object Groupings**  
Courtesy of the Field Museum

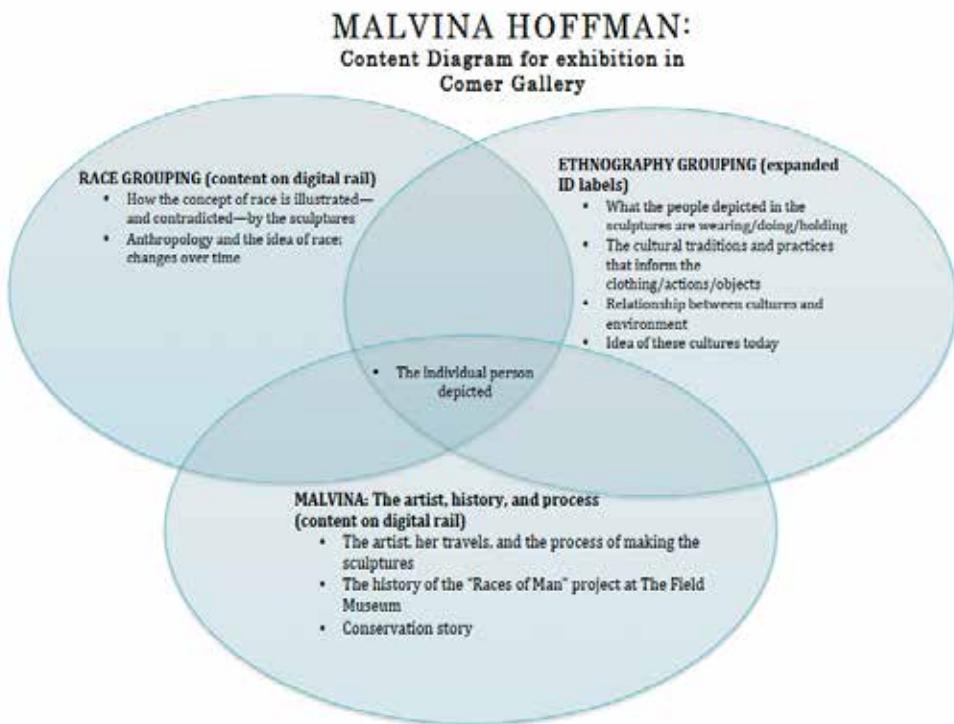
**Fig. 7: Final Object Groupings**  
Courtesy of the Field Museum



**Fig. 8: Final Object Groupings**  
Courtesy of the Field Museum

**Fig. 9: Final Object Groupings**  
Courtesy of the Field Museum

<sup>50</sup> THE FIELD MUSEUM, ref. 49.



**Fig. 10:** Content Diagram, Courtesy of the Field Museum



**Fig. 11:** Malvina Hoffman, Photo credit: Y.S.S. Chung

## Analysis and Conclusion

Labels are now being changed within the exhibit through the twenty-first-century view of the museums' cultural, social, and political causes agenda. Concerning this topic, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to re-contextualization. There are complex issues for each piece of artwork and the environment that it is situated. For example, there might be statues that are *in situ* (in its original environment) that could have been produced in an offensive context. No matter how much the label or historical marker is re-contextualized, the offensive artwork will remain the same, especially if these statues are situated publicly outdoors. For those artworks that are *ex situ* (situated outside its original environment and these are mainly artifacts in museums), the artifacts will have to be considerably re-contextualized to justify not to change the original offensive title of the artwork. One major example is the currently undergoing renovation and re-contextualization of the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium. The enormous colonial collection has been revamped to serve a twenty-first-century audience. Like many grand European museums, the Royal Museum of Central Africa (RMCA) was built to glorify Belgium's colonization of the Congo. The RMCA has revamped their exhibit spaces to demonstrate the changing needs of post-imperialistic interpretation. The building and the exhibitions have been closed since December 2013 and reopened in December of 2018. The exhibits are now addressing community engagement with the African-Belgians. These changes are made since the 1958 World Exhibition in Brussels with the view of Central Africa as a means of scientific probing and resources for the kingdom. With post-colonialist perspectives of Central African and Africans, the collections are to be approached and interpreted with the community's views with the need to look at the objects in a different light through recontextualization, and also to address the repatriation and restitution of looted artifacts in the collection.

Moreover, Silverman mentions the new communication of the RMCA as it closed for several years for the opening of the new building and galleries. The museum has gone global forming partnerships. The objects have "*their status shifted from primitivity to the postcolonial in modern Western museums: toward aestheticization, the artworks elevated as "masterpieces," as in the LACMA Luba show; and toward materialization, the works presented as embodiments of social, cultural, and ritual practices, as in the Gainesville Kongo Across the Waters.*"<sup>51</sup> Her main recommendations are systemization of the provenance and the producers and inventorying and digitizing the collections.

In *The Return of Curiosity: What Museums are Good for in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Nicholas Thomas discusses the new approach "The Collection as Creative Technology" when a 2005-6 exhibition at the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology developed an exhibition with contemporary artists from New Zealand and installation with mixed media to make a connection with ancestors.<sup>52</sup> The description of the exhibition at the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology has definite correlations with not only anthropological museums but natural history museums, such as the Field Museum. Adding to the discussion is that the Field Museum's anthropological collections are a creative technology but also a political narrative that solidifies its grounds from changing public policies nationally.

In the Alsdorf Hall of Northwest Coast and Arctic Peoples and Native North American Hall, which connects to the temporary exhibition on *Drawing on Tradition: Kanza Artist Christ*

<sup>51</sup> SILVERMAN, ref. 15, p. 665.

<sup>52</sup> THOMAS, Nicholas. 2016. *The Return of Curiosity: What Museums are Good For in the Twenty-first Century*. Reaktion Books, 2016, p. 128.

*Pappan*, we can witness the ethical responsibilities as well as the exhibition policies that the Field Museum demonstrates in the theory and practice of exhibition, with two large panels that explain how the Field Museum respects the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990. The second panel is an original letter from the Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indians of Alaska in regards to “Exhibition and Public Access to Shaman Objects and Human Remains.”

*As you are aware sacred objects are subject to claims under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. However, it is more than likely that massive claims are not forthcoming in the near future. The Tlingit and Haida Indians would like to be assured that the sanctity of these objects be maintained while in your possession and care. We would therefore humbly and respectfully request the following:*

**1. Regarding Sacred Objects:**

*Any exhibition or use of sacred objects which are depicted with crest motifs acknowledge (1) that they are sacred objects; (2) that crest art is the intellectual property of specific clans and cannot be reproduced for any reason without the express written permission of the clan or the federally-recognized tribe if clan attribution is not indicated in your records. The appropriate tribe may be identified by the community from which the object was obtained, or you may contact the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska if no clan or community is identified in your records; (3) that the clan associated with the object and crest art, or the community from which the object was obtained, be identified on exhibition labels if this information is available; and (4) that no photos be allowed without the clan or community attribution.*

**2. Regarding Shamanic Objects and Human Remains:**

*The exhibition and use of such objects or remains shall be restricted. Access shall be authorized only for the necessary care and storage by museum personnel and by the Tlingit and Haida people. If shamanic objects and human remains were taken from a grave site, they should remain together as a collection. In no instance should they be separated.*

*Human remains may not be altered, photographed, or displayed in any manner without prior express written consent by the appropriate clan, or tribe. This includes any form of invasive or non-invasive testing procedures.*

*Shamanic objects should be stored in a ceremonial box or a special constructed box if a ceremonial box is not available. We realize that you may not be able identify all shamanic objects or distinguish them from other sacred objects. We also recognize that some objects may be identified as shamanic objects in your records but in fact may not be shamanic objects. However, we are requesting that this restriction apply those objects that have been identified as shamanic object in your records.<sup>53</sup>*

With this letter on display embracing it as a part of its policies, the Field Museum is trying to become a leader in policy and adhering to causes as well as promoting them. With mandates in Illinois state law that museums open up to residents free at the most 52 days annually, museums such as the Field will be responsibly communicating through exhibits by incorporating a cause for all peoples.

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<sup>53</sup> THE FIELD MUSEUM, Alsdorf Hall of Northwest Coast and Arctic Peoples and Native North American Hall, original letter from the Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indians of Alaska in regard to “Exhibition and Public Access to Shaman Objects and Human Remains” [Panel 2 in Exhibit].

In many of the colonial exhibits, such as the RMCA, an entire re-designing of the exhibit spaces and collections are being configured. Instead of “ignoring” the existing interpretation of the exhibit cases, “*a new kind of experience is being layered over the space*”.<sup>54</sup> Thus, both exhibitions *Drawing on Tradition* and *Looking at Ourselves* bring the visitors closer to the connection of history being redressed by posing new ways of seeing through perspectives of visitor agendas with personal, social, cultural, and physical contexts. The exhibitions represent contemporary artists, who are a part of the stakeholders’ group of the museum collections, and manifest the distorted perspectives of the past and racism in a politically assertive communicative light through recontextualization. Despite what goes on in the political environment in the nation, museums should be places that address the dialogue of conflicts, distortions, racism, inequality, and any other kinds of socio-political issues.<sup>55</sup> Though new political administrations may place restraints on funding and public policies may change, the museum environment through the application of exhibition plans and policies should hold its ground on inclusive cultural, social, and politically active views.

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<sup>54</sup> THE FIELD MUSEUM. Matt Matcuk, Exhibition Design Department, “Chris Pappan: Developer’s Brief 4.18.16,” April 18, 2016. [Unpublished notes].

<sup>55</sup> CHUNG, Yun Shun Susie – LESHCHENKO, Anna – BRULON SOARES, Bruno (eds.). *Defining the Museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Evolving Multiculturalism in Museums in the United States*. Paris : ICOFOM, 2019.

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