

**Museum of Restitution:
Reflection and Reparations for French Colonial Extractions**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Architecture

at

Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
June 2024

Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kma'ki,
the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq.
We are all Treaty people.

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To the unknown makers whose authorship was erased by
colonial extractions

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Abstract

Europe's museum collections were filled by extractive colonial practices. Cultural objects were gathered in European capitals under the guise of conservation and understanding the world. These foreign cultural artifacts would become integral and inalienable pieces in their collections. These objects, however, constitute stolen heritage alienated from their rightful place. Calls for restitution have been made and denied, until recently. The restitution of these artifacts plays an important role in the reflection on the extractive processes of colonization. Located in Paris, the proposed Musée de la Restitution serves as a site of dispersion for stolen artifacts, and a place of reflection on these extractions.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my committee for their guidance during this thesis process. Steve Parcell for your ability to always have a metaphor and reference, for your meticulous editing of this thesis, and meetings that typically went over time. Diogo Burnay for your assistance with representation, your references to performances, music and film, and making every meeting joyful.

A special thanks to Michael Faciejew and Catherine Venart for their guidance in the thesis' infancy. Michael Faciejew for pushing me to address the Quai Branly. Catherine Venart for your discussions we had during your sabbatical that helped guide my thesis and for your assistance in preparing me for thesis with your Amsterdam Studio.

Thank you to Susanna Morash-Kent, Hilary Hatcher and Susanne Marshall for always being there for the students and the school.

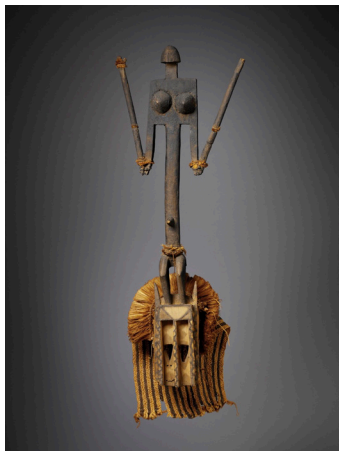
Thank you to Kaylee Peters for your help in the final weeks of thesis and getting me across the finish line. You are a true friend.

To my family, thank you for your continuous love and support.

And finally a special thank you to my mother, who throughout my education has been my part time editor-in-chief and part-time therapist, encouraging me when I doubted myself.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Cast



Mask from Mali, acquired during the Dakar-Djibouti Mission (Quai Branly n.d.a.)



Royal Throne of the Sultan of Bamoun, acquired by Henri Labouret, a military and colonial administrator (Quai Branly n.d.b.)

The artifacts of ethnographic museums are not only works of art, but also the witnesses of colonial extractions. The makers who produced them are left uncredited; the artifacts' symbolism becomes the focus of research and interpretation rather than fabrication and accounts by their creators. The artifacts were made with care by craftspeople, used in everyday life and for ceremonies. They are witnesses to pre-colonial societies that are lost to history and relegated to myth. They are witnesses to colonial violence, coveted by looters, and swept away with the destruction of a world. Taken to a foreign land, they become a spectacle museumgoers gaze upon, trying to look inside and discover their secrets. They are welcomed into collections, grouped amongst their peers, and cared for and preserved by dedicated curators. The objects gaze back at their observers. If only they could speak and tell us their tales, provenance research would be so easy and we could determine the means of acquisition. Do they long for their past lives, where they were held by hands, not white gloves, allowed to decay and be messy? This notion of messiness is important to how we live with colonial imperialism; it will never truly be returned to the way it was, rather the knots will need to be untangled. It requires unlearning imperial thoughts, letting go of art, and allowing artifacts to return to their origins so that their makers' rightful descendants can be inspired. What is the role architecture can play in acts of restitution? How can a museum open itself up to criticism and research, allowing its core principle of conservation to be exposed to the messiness of life?

Freeing these artifacts allows for breathing room in our collections, to allow for more detailed stories to be told.

Frame



Figurative plaque from the Benin Bronzes which were looted by the British (Quai Branly n.d.c.)



Head sculpture from the Benin Bronzes which were looted by the British (Quai Branly n.d.d.)

Ariella Aïsha Azoulay looks at photography as an imperial tool to dissect and study people. The camera is a tool that accelerates imperial interpretations. “The camera shutters draw three dividing lines: in time (between before and after), in space (between who/what is in front of the camera and who/what is behind it) and in the body politic (between those who possess and operate such devices and appropriate and accumulate their product and those whose countenance, resources or labor are extracted)” (Aïsha Azoulay 2019, 5). The shutter is not isolated to photography; it is evident in many forms of colonial institutions. In museums the dividing lines are: in time (pre-contact and post-globalization), assuming that non-Western “art” ceases to be practiced and increases the value placed on extracted artifacts; in space (between the colonized and those who wish to colonize), this correlates with the rise of new experts in fields of ethnography, Egyptology and African “art”; and in the body politics (the institution and the communities of production), separating the objects from their place and histories and labelling them as “art”. Not everything is made to be collected and archived. When artifacts taken from colonial extraction are archived, the violence surrounding the object is suppressed by this neutral procedure. It is taken and examined by specialists, and classified in the past (Aïsha Azoulay 2019, 41). Violence is abstracted and then extracted from the passage of time to create a neutral art object. Presumably, these objects exist solely in the past, which in turn increases their value. In many ways the demise of African art is a crafted narrative by colonial

powers, to justify their collections as protecting culture rather than letting it be practiced. Through deeper explorations into the origins of the works and the sources behind them, we can develop meaningful restitution. Museums will never be free from violence; it is their foundations, the origins of their collections. The world we live in is a legacy of colonial empires. This inheritance of trauma and power will not go away. Museums cannot be decolonized without reinvention. Decolonization is a process rather than an endpoint and must involve the communities affected by colonization, not a top-down approach (Procter 2020, 261). The artifacts in these collections can act as epistemic objects, able to weave new nodes of contact between peoples. Restitution has become a central part of the future of ethnographic museums; this involves going to the source and understanding provenance. One must engage in a revision of collections, through opening collections to the public and to the people to whom these objects originally belonged.



Artifacts from the Congo displayed in the Musée du Quai Branly



Collection of masks acquired from Mali on the 1931 Dakar-Djibouti Mission for the Musée de l'Homme. Displayed at the Musée du Quai Branly.

Narrative

By telling the stories of extraction, preservation, retaliation, restitution, revision and rehabilitation of artifacts by colonial cultural extractions, we can create a narrative and produce meaningful change, revitalizing tainted institutions. The return will be messy and conversations that need to be had are difficult, but they are crucial to understanding our post-colonial world.

How can we use architectural thinking to reimagine the colonial museum from a monument of colonial extraction into a site of deaccession, and a funnel where cultural artifacts are transferred on their journey towards restitution?



Map of Paris, highlighting its museums. In blue: museums connected to colonial artifacts. In yellow: the Musée du Quai Branly.

Chapter 2: Extraction

Establishing Worldless Bodies

The year 1492 was the beginning of imperialism; it was the year of the discovery of the New World. The world was brought into a new light, one of exploration, and an insatiable appetite for knowledge emerged. It reconstructed the world into a place of extraction of raw materials. During this extractive period, communities were destroyed and altered to produce labor. It established modern institutional structures. In this process of extraction, a carelessness for people became present, and a care for objects and resources became more important (Aïsha Azoulay 2019, 24). People were enslaved and became worldless, and their possessions became “art” from past cultures. The Black Anthropocene is the connection between black and brown bodies to inhuman geology, and “White Geology” where lands are subjectively dispossessed and their resources are extracted to the benefit of colonial powers. Yusoff speaks to the historical geographies of extraction. The Anthropocene is seen as lamenting the end of the world; however, “imperialism and ongoing (settler) colonialisms have been ending worlds for as long as they have been in existence” (Yusoff 2018, 12). This creates points of erasure in cultures and extract genealogies, cutting people from their sense of place through geographic displacement. Europeans created an otherness around African art. Western museums are a byproduct of this colonial extraction. Through the use of de-civilization and conquest, they “transformed from the human subject of his own culture into the inhuman object of the European culture.” Through the use of erasure, the “deliberate destruction and pride in dehumanization that

characterized colonial conquest was not just a butchery that was inflicted on the colonized but one that also brutalized the colonized.” This destroyed the link to one’s past and culture. The concept of colonization = thingification is applicable to the objects taken and displayed as “fetishes” for observation by Europeans. Their meanings were wiped clean and left for aesthetic values (Yusoff 2018, 41).

Artifacts help humans establish their world through the process of making beyond that of labor to survive. This was described as *homo faber*, popularized by Hannah Arendt, which was ignored under colonial rule and slavery (Aïsha Azoulay 2019, 82). When cultural artifacts leave their makers, they essentially lose a part of their context. “When *homo faber* is understood as simultaneously a member in a community of *fabri* (making) engaged in the collective work of the *vita activa* - a life of laboring, making, acting as part of a community - and as active in these three domains, the scale of destruction wrought by looting, beyond the theft of the objects is undeniable” (Aïsha Azoulay 2019, 90). The extraction of their objects coincided with the denial of a place in a world of *fabri*. These communities were not only exploited of their labor, but also of their artistic skills in pottery, carpentry and their traditional skills in the construction of colonial spaces and architecture. What became of these pieces was that knowledge of the world held by communities of *fabri* were transformed into universal art as in the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris, constructed as a means of elevating the non-Western art status. What remains of the *fabri* are laborers, and in their absence, the experts of African art are born. The need to prove expertise on a subject is an indication of the detachment of these artifacts from place, and their displacement into worldlessness.

Acts of Imperialism



Top: A watercolour of the slave ship *La Marie-Séraphique* in a harbour in Haiti in 1773

Bottom: Depiction of slave deck of *La Marie-Séraphique* (Lhermitte ca. 1770)

Colonization was an integral part of the construction of the Spanish and Portuguese empires in the 15th century and the Dutch, French and English empires in the 17th century. These colonial extractions revolved around trade in the Americas, with trading posts at key ports across Africa and Asia. African trading posts were directly tied to the slave trade and the movement of laborers from the African continent to the Americas, where they would be subjected to forced labor and the extraction of resources. In their first wave, France's colonial efforts centred on New France, comprising Canada, Louisiana, Haiti and the French West Indies, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Saint Martin and Saint Barthélemy.

Enlightenment and First Reparations

Historically, France has played a key role in establishing museums and their association with the Enlightenment. A famous example of French extraction is that of Napoleon's expeditions to Egypt from 1798 to 1801. The expeditions were motivated and legitimized by the extraction of artifacts by French soldiers and scientists of the newly minted



Bonaparte Before the Sphinx by Jean-Léon Gérôme is a historical painting produced after Bonaparte's expedition, in a mythological style (Gérôme 1886)

study of Egyptology. In service of preserving culture, the urban fabric was disassembled to extract histories to be reassembled in the newly minted Musée Napoleon (later Musée du Louvre), leaving behind faint tracings of what was. This is a European mode of thinking: an art of not displaying everything everywhere (Aïsha Azoulay 2019, 137); rather, remove art from its context to be displayed in glass vitrines. Napoleon also sacked the Cairo Genizah, a historic archive, bringing the documents back to the West. In doing so, he delegitimized the capability of non-Western institutes to care for objects, despite the centuries of preserved histories until colonial expeditions “discovered these documents”. The end of Napoleon at Waterloo was the first large-scale repatriation of artifacts taken by Napoleon’s armies to be displayed at the Louvre. It was at this point that the term “cultural property” replaced “spoils of war” (Miles 2008, 11). Artifacts were returned to their original owners as long as they were European. Hence, the Rosetta Stone was returned to England, and not Egypt. In the 19th century, French and British ambassadors would frequently supplement low paying positions by dealing in antiques (Procter 2020, 37). Positions in Italy, Greece and Egypt often involved the illegal exporting of antiquities. European agents in Egypt were glorified grave robbers, taking anything and everything for the Louvre or the British Museum (Procter 2020, 39). Many “collected” pieces were stolen or violently taken, with some traded for European weapons or tools.

The world exhibitions marked a new form of enlightened entertainment in the form of encyclopedic displays (Procter 2020, 74), often encompassing the vast diversity of European colonial empires displaying trophies and the power of “their” empire. These spaces were meant to promote patriotism



Exposition Universelle de Paris, 1867 French Colonial Objects (Library of Congress 1867)



Crowd on “a street in Cairo” during the 1889 Paris Expo (Library of Congress 1889a)



Watercolour by François d'Orléans of Gorée, a centre of the Atlantic slave trade (Orléans 1837)

and act as aspirational spaces. The museums sought to accumulate everything to create records. The museum, in its early stages, can be seen as a tool for enlightenment, pulling men away from bars and “gin palaces” of the era and inscribing morals onto the citizens (Bennett 2007, 18). Early museums adapted their exhibits to reflect the popular Universal Expositions of the era and festivals, sometimes directly incorporating pieces previously put on display in pavilions dedicated to colonial territories. Museums also adapted ideas from department stores, with displays and events to bring people inside. These displays were used to promote stories of statehood and develop hierarchies between European powers and their colonial possessions. Museums are a colonial product that emerged from early exhibitionary orders established by Western European cultures. In the 19th century, Europe created a world exhibition centred in European capitals. These exhibits highlighted the economic and political capital of Imperial Europe, showcasing the far reaches of the empires for their citizens to marvel (Mitchell 1991, 8). Museums promoted the recreation of spaces for European curiosity, staring at all that is new. The Parisian phenomenon of “le spectacle”, as seen in the panorama, cosmorama, and diorama, presented the world in pictures, as objects were displayed for the European gaze (Mitchell 1991, 6). The European approach to exhibiting the world through artifacts and fetishes defined ethnographic museum practices.

France's Involvement

In Africa, France participated in the Atlantic slave trade centred on the island of Gorée in Senegal. During this period, labor and resources dominated trade. The Second French colonial empire occurred during the Scramble for



French soldier inspecting looted art from Dahome (Bibliothèque nationale de France 1892)

Africa (1833-1914) alongside the other Western powers of the United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Germany, and Belgium. During this time, not only were resources and labor extracted, but also cultural artifacts, fueled by European curiosity. When the European powers conquered Africa, the destruction of place occurred and former palaces were looted. The spoils were returned to Europe, to be displayed in newly formed institutions. During the colonial period many anthropological missions occurred where artifacts were purchased at unfair prices or taken by force. The argument ensued that African culture needed to be preserved and recorded before being assimilated into European culture. An increase in these cultural extractions occurred prior to the independence of many African countries. In the year 1960, the Year of Africa, many of France's colonies declared independence. What makes French colonization unique was the lasting overseas territories, along with lasting economic control through the CFA franc. Prior to the independence of Africa, the French government shifted the responsibility of its ethnographic collection from the Ministry of the Colonies to



Illustration of General Dodd's camp at Place Goho in Abomey (Albéca 1895)

the Ministry of Culture and began to cement these artifacts as indispensable parts of French culture. The UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transport of Ownership of Cultural Property was imposed to protect cultural looting, also indirectly naturalizing artifacts taken centuries earlier during colonization. This provided the framework to protect developing countries' cultural assets, and in turn legitimized the ownership of cultural heritage by Western museums (Aïsha Azoulay 2019, 50).



Map of France's colonial empire, with colonial trade networks highlighted. The diameter of each circle corresponds to the number of artifacts currently in the Musée du Quai Branly.



Top left: Wooden Dan face mask, 19th-mid-20th century, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
 Top right: Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger*, 1907, detail of woman's face, MoMA, New York
 Bottom left: Mbanga mask, Central Pende, Bandundu, Democratic Republic of Congo, Apollo Magazine
 Bottom right: *Les Femmes d'Alger*, 1907, detail of woman's face, MoMA, New York (Modiano 2022)

museum that Pablo Picasso would draw inspiration from the works of “primitive peoples” and founded the Primitivist art movement, alongside Paul Gauguin and Henri Rousseau. Paul Gauguin created his art from his exploration of Tahiti, not unlike that of ethnologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. Henri Rousseau was a Parisian customs officer and tax collector; his paintings are inspired by foreign exports entering Paris as the elite craved pieces from the Orient. These painters offer a unique look into the European gaze; they utilize stolen cultures that Europeans tried to preserve, acting as the successors of these pieces, an evolution that should have been created by the descendants of the original makers. This was a white gaze with an abstracted context and gaps in its understanding. Its viewpoint missed many key elements and did not truly capture the pieces, but rather fetishized them for the sake of aesthetics. The Palais du Trocadero was dismantled in 1935 and replaced with the current Palais de Chaillot for the 1937 Exposition, which now contains the Musée de l'Homme (a precursor to the



Panoramic view of the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle (Baylac 1900)



View of the interior of the Palais du Trocadero during an ethnographic exposition (Rigal 1931)

Musée du Quai Branly), Musée National de la Marine, and the Cité de l'architecture et du Patrimoine.

The Quai Branly – Chirac and Nouvel



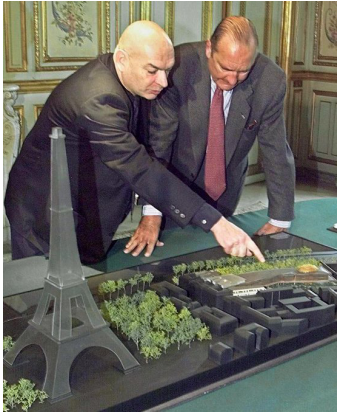
Le Palais de la Porte Dorée, site of the former Musée National des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie (Pic 2020)



Palais de Chaillot, site of the Musée de l'Homme (Tourneboeuf n.d.)

The Musée du Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac was conceived through merging the collections of the Musée de l'Homme and the Musée National des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie located in the Palais de la Porte Dorée, an Art Deco Pavilion made for the Paris Colonial Exposition of 1931. It was conceived as a modern museum that would elevate the ethnographic collections to a similar status as European cultural objects. This was proposed to Jacques Chirac by ethnologist and art critic Jacques Kerchache while Chirac was Mayor of Paris.

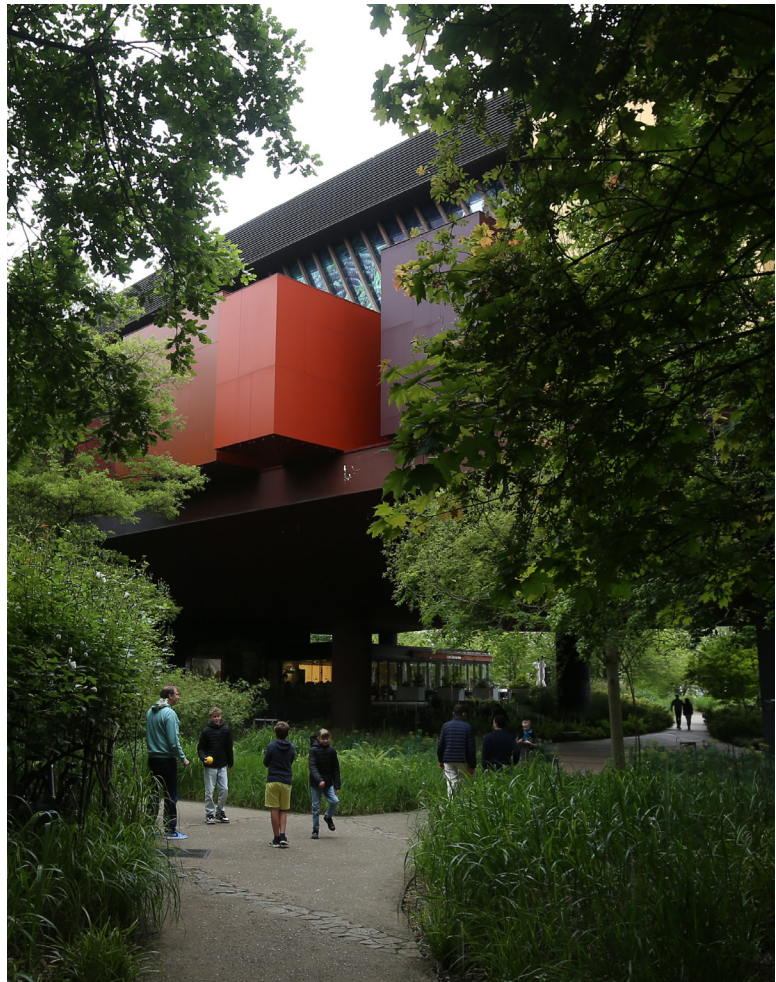
Kerchache wrote a manifesto titled "Liberation", calling for a museum of the entire world. It was signed by three hundred artists, writers, philosophers, anthropologists and art historians. Jacques Chirac would go on to become President in 1995 and in the following year he announced



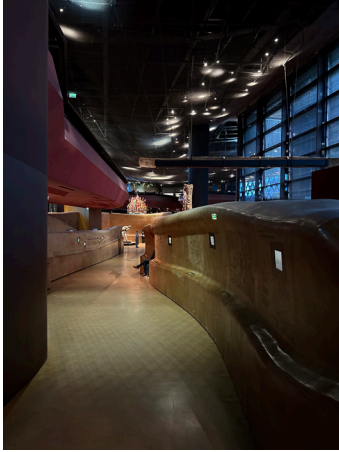
Jacques Chirac and Jean Nouvel inspecting the Quai Branly's model (Atelier Jean Nouvel 2019)

the proposed museum. In 1998, the Pavillon des Sessions opened in the Louvre as a precursor to the Quai Branly. In 1999, an international competition was won by French architect Jean Nouvel, who previously had completed the Institute of the Arab World and Fondation Cartier.

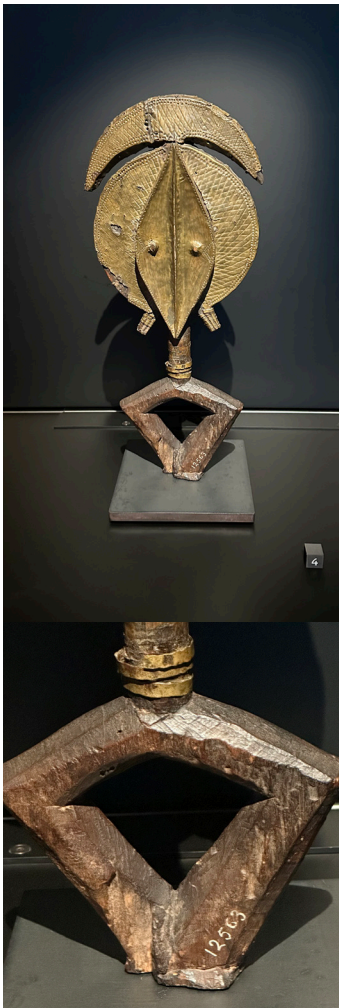
Nouvel's vision was a secret garden filled with foreign plants. A glass wall continued the existing street façade and enabled the building to be set back from the road. A garden surrounded the building and created its own foreign world in the heart of Paris. Architecturally, it has a garden-level gallery for temporary exhibitions, with the main gallery suspended above the garden. A tower around the core displayed all the



Musée du Quai Branly, with mature garden in 2024



"Knowledge River" in the Quai Branly



Visible inventory number marker on a displayed artifact.

musical instruments in the collection; these instruments are used in the basement theatre for performances. The top floor is occupied by a public library and a restaurant that serves forgotten recipes. The main galleries façade is dotted with multicoloured boxes filled with artifacts to explore. It was designed around a collection, however, the storage facilities lie under the Garden in the basement of the museum, away from prying eyes and critique, inaccessible to the public. The collection, consisting of 300,000 works, is for the most part locked away, with only 10% on display at one time. Its ambition was bound to fail, as it is impossible to display the world in one museum.

The ethnographic museums in France muddied the provenance of artifacts in the future Quai Branly, as they labeled their archives differently. When researching the online collection, identification numbers vary based on their original collection, making it difficult to summarize the entire collection. The Musée du Quai Branly more closely resembles the department stores of Galeries Lafayette and Printemps on the boulevard Haussmann, with individual stores separated by gender and home. In this case, they were separated by continent rather than gender, and by a "knowledge river" rather than a grand boulevard. In the nineteenth century, the ethnography museum was created alongside shops and displays, showcasing colonial emporiums (Deliss 2020, 95).

Reflections on the Quai Branly

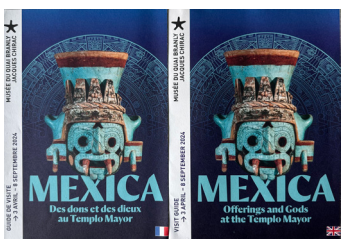
France has led the charge in revolutionizing museums, with Centre Pompidou being the basis for most modern contemporary art museums. The Musée du Quai Branly attempted to revolutionize the ethnography museums of



Interior of the Musée du Quai Branly



Musical instrument storage at the Quai Branly (Borel n.d.)



Visit guide for "MEXICA" exhibit

the past, and in many ways it was successful. In the early 2000s, politics promoted the Quai Branly to seek newness, showcasing non-Western art in a world class museum. However, in the context of potential histories, the Musée du Quai Branly abstracts and conceals the colonial extraction, promoting the pieces as high art rather than objects of communities from which they were extracted. Ethnographic museums in the twenty-first century remain an extension of the complex regime of colonial and neocolonial governance (Deliss 2020, 94). The Musée du Quai Branly — Jacques Chirac is a prime protagonist of the guardianship of a universalist imperialism (Deliss 2020, 94). Philippe Descola wrote in 2004, when describing the Quai Branly, “Le Musée est un grand trafiquant d’agences” (the museum is a huge trading post of agencies). Deliss argues that trade and trafficking turn the museum into a temporary home, sheltered space, Maison de pass, or halfway house (Deliss 2020, 49). The Quai Branly was an improvement over its predecessor. The basement auditorium is used for concerts using the musical instruments in the adjacent display tower at the center of the museum that make up the only storage facilities available to the public. It offers a peek into the greater storage facilities, albeit a rather niche fraction of the total collection. The shows are far from revolutionary; during my visit, the main temporary exhibit was “MEXICA,” which in name was promising, as it identified the people as they identified themselves, and not the European coined “Aztec”. However, the exhibit reduced the indigenous peoples of Mexico City to solely information about human and animal sacrifices and included the skeleton of one such sacrifice. This defiling of human remains leads one to question whether progress is being made? How can we leave behind

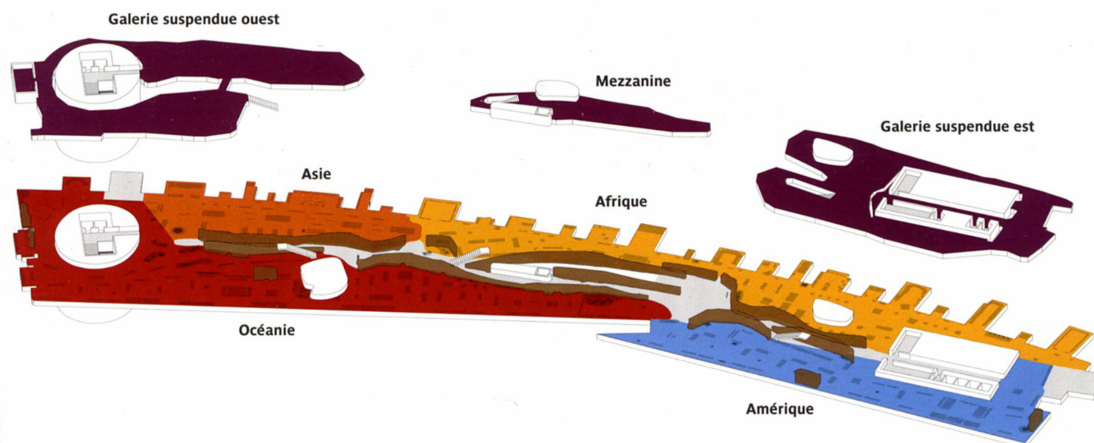


Closed-off storage facilities in the Quai Branly (Zachmann 2024)

these missionary narratives that justify cultural genocide? The museum presents artifacts as art, often reducing their meaning. Its collection is vast, its library is limited, and its archives are buried under its foreign garden.

The Archive and the Curator

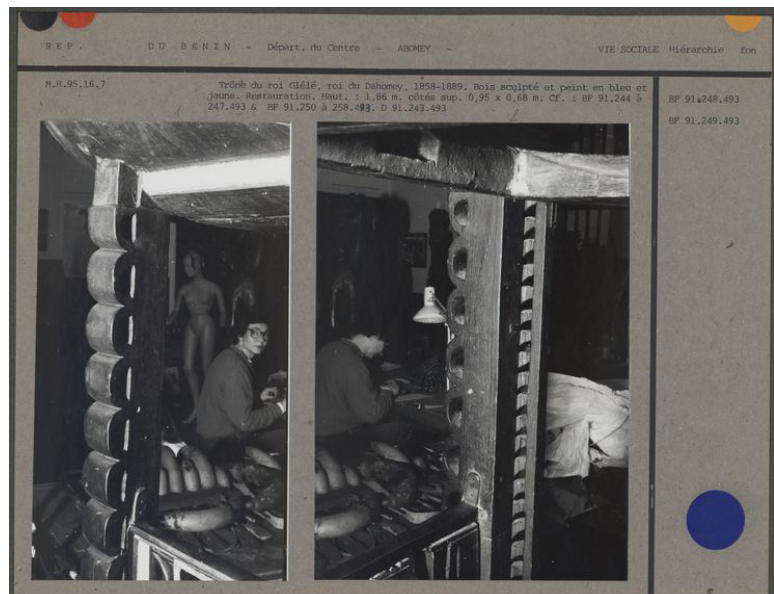
Current archival practices in the contemporary ethnographic museum are shaped by sanitation and medical procedures. Upon donation, an object will go through a sterilization process where it is quarantined and deep frozen for a week to kill any creatures. A gift will take weeks of custodial labor from disinfection to restoration, evaluation, and stock taking (Deliss 2020, 82). They also require provenance screening to ensure that an object is legitimate and has been acquired through legal channels. The contemporary art market is filled with looted goods. Once in a museum's collection, artifacts are analyzed in a biomedical way, searching for blood, oil and clues to identify the rituals behind these objects (Deliss 2020, 99). New acquisitions are subject to a more thorough examination compared to the mass looting during the European Enlightenment. The artifacts post looting were legitimized by neo-liberal apparatuses,



Gallery layout of the Musée du Quai Branly, exhibiting the world by continent (Atelier Jean Nouvel n.d.)

put in place by UNESCO when amendments were put forward to prevent war looting and promote restitution; it did not include previous colonial acquisitions, which ensured that collections remained in Europe. Museums now use underground storage facilities and elaborate retention strategies to ward off potential claims and to maintain the illusion of a global encyclopedic collection.

The goal of archives is to grasp the process of a subject through a non-biased lens, through tracing unfolding aggregates of both humans and nonhumans, which emerge within archival work. Albená Yaneva outlines the steps in archiving: conserving, cataloguing, processing, archiving born-digital material, registering, and curating (Yaneva 2021, 18). There is an emphasis on doing the right thing with the objects. The enhancement of archival presence can establish wider socio-material networks of archiving between objects by making them available to a broader community and easier to connect with other global archives. “Far from being an isolated fortress, a collecting institution is rather a node in



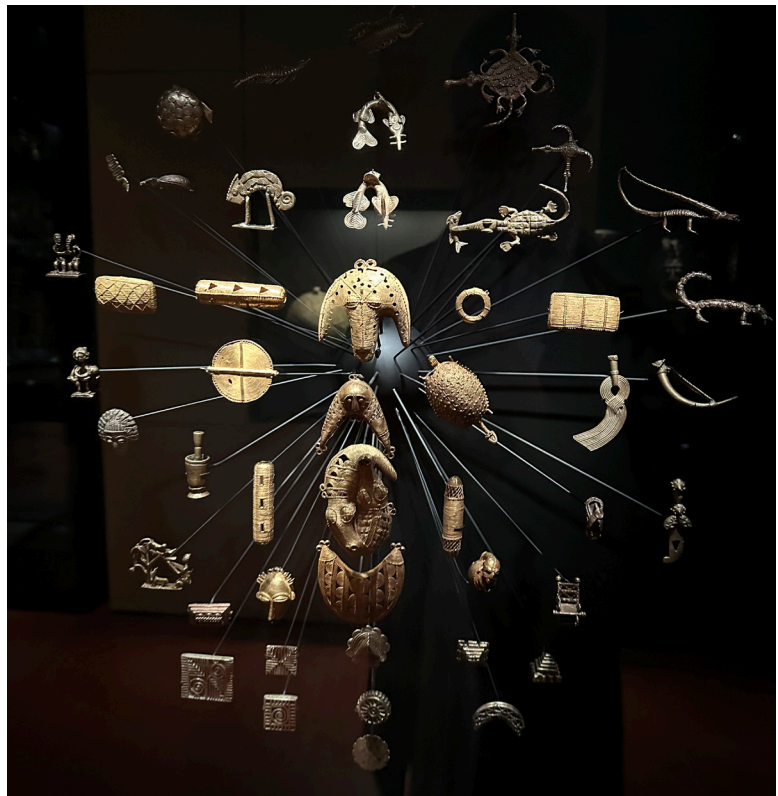
Historic photo from the Musée de l'homme laboratory, showing restoration of artifacts (Musée du Quai Branly 1991)

the large network of architectural knowledge production. Not a temple, but a regulator of flows and trends, bending space and time around it, an accelerator, a transformer” (Yaneva 2021, 121). The coherence of the fragments of the museum can be achieved only through human imagination; the people witnessing these objects determine their value, challenging their historic importance. For Yaneva, “archivable meaning is not determined in advance by the structure of the archives; instead, structure and meaning negotiate with each other in the minute operations of archiving” (Yaneva 2021, 122). The archivist’s job is to converse with the objects, understanding, preserving and preparing the pieces for their display to a greater public. Understanding the objects and their provenance can provide vital information on whether an artifact should be designated for reparations. Making this information available to the wider public can lead to change in institutions. However often in current archives, only privileged eyes are privy to the collections; this can affect how objects are interpreted, creating biases and opening the collections to misinterpretations.

Museums are framed in a neutral way, as they did not directly destroy communities during colonization, but instead protect and preserve pieces of history and culture. Museums are symbols of progress and help educate citizens on other cultures. The title “curator” comes from the Latin *curare*, meaning “to arrange” or “to care for”. Most curators will say their role is not to conserve and display collections, but rather to nurture and heal collections (Procter 2020, 16). Alice Procter divides museums into four categories: the palace, the classroom, the memorial, and the playground. The palace represents our traditional historic notions of museums such as the Louvre and private collections. The

classroom describes collections as seeking to educate and inspire. The memorial describes places of commemoration and often grief. The playground is where contemporary artists challenge the status quo with interventions and performances. The modern ethnographic museum was conceived as a universalizing mission, a utopian cultural ambition to create an all-encompassing lopedia (Deliss 2020, 94). This mission was bound to be incomplete, as it is impossible to encompass the entire globe's material culture. At its inception, this method of collecting artifacts was to measure, compare, depict, identify, classify and exhibit people as if they were goods (Deliss 2020, 94).

Often, in defense of museums holding these artifacts, there is a question of whether the descendants want them back at all? Have the artifacts been dissociated from the past, leaving



Historic artifacts from the Akan culture displayed at Musée du Quai Branly

the objects to simply be sold off to private collections? Do the communities have the infrastructure to preserve these historical works? Is it safe for these artifacts to return? This is where there is a major issue with restitution and the dragging of museums' feet. We need to ask why we need all these artifacts in such abundance in Europe, where in Africa they don't have the ability to present their own history. Is it fair to allow only the privileged to see their history? Africans can witness more of their history as an immigrant or refugee after leaving their home. These artifacts are most important to the cultures that produced them and would be cared for and protected by these communities, just as Europeans protect their heritage. Through different views we can alter the way we perceive cultural heritage by bringing in non-Western approaches to conservation and appreciation of heritage.



World map of the collection in the Musée du Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac.

Chapter 4: Retaliation

A Post-Colonial Critique

The International Council of Museums met to propose a new definition of the museum and create an “ideological manifesto”. The prior definition needed to be historicized, contextualized, de-naturalized and de-colonized. In 2019 in Kyoto, this definition was presented:

Museums are democratizing, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures. Acknowledging and addressing the present’s conflicts and challenges, they hold artefacts and specimens in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations, and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people. Museums are not for profit. They are participatory and transparent, and work in active partnership with and for diverse communities to collect, preserve, research, interpret, exhibit, and enhance understandings of the world, aiming to contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equality and planetary wellbeing. (Procter 2020, 256)

This proposal to redefine the museum is more utopian than practical, calling for a dramatic transformation of what museums could be, rather than describing their current realities. This proposal was seen as too political, supporting decolonizing practices and universal museum ideals (Portin and Grinell 2021, 676). The new definition of museums reflects a need to adapt and change the status quo. Bruno Latour’s theories have been used to understand the agency of non-human objects that museums maintain and present. He argues that museums are able to contribute to an “object-oriented democracy” (Portin and Grinell 2021, 677). The museum is one of the most complex cultural constructs and is based on a great many historical assumptions. Latour’s criticism of moderns can be applied to museums; they instill a new rational order on the world to the enlightened. They see the world evolving; museums help record the past,

which they felt was being lost due to human progress. The moderns believed they were custodians of history.

(The) moderns suffer from the illness of historicism. They want to keep everything, date everything, because they think they have definitively broken with their past. The more they accumulate revolutions, the more they save; the more they capitalize, the more they put on display in museums. (Portin and Grinell 2021, 679)

Post-colonial museums or museums of the future aim to become spaces for intervention and to create decolonized space for active knowledge. Museums attempt to be good examples of colonial critique. Museums should be political; however, their approach should be that of a diplomat. Museums can mediate these conversations around change and colonial legacies, assist in our understanding of colonization, and re-legitimize these institutes for knowledge and memory.

Lasting Colonialism in Museums

The UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transport of Ownership of Cultural Property was designed to protect cultural looting, but also naturalize artifacts taken centuries earlier during colonial looting. Aïsha Azoulay criticizes institutions created by the international community, such as UNESCO and ICOM. The framework to protect developing countries' cultural assets legitimizes the ownership of cultural heritage by Western museums (Aïsha Azoulay 2019, 50). This legitimized the Quai Branly's collection as an inalienable part of France's heritage, therefore claims for reparation could be denied until recently. Even then, the returned artifacts are required to be housed in ICOM-approved museums, not returning them to the communities. Instead, the artifacts are transferred to local institutions to be

preserved, using the same methods as Western museums. Museums without change will die; the lack of inaction has become an issue. It is not enough to just claim you are not racist, and to do the bare minimum; museums need action and reformation (Procter 2020, 272). Tensions emerge from ethnographic collections through the overflow of collections in Europe, the omissive histories of largely looted goods, the absence in places of origin, the complex movement of goods, and the current neoliberal conditions that determine the exchanging of artifacts, which includes restitution (Deliss 2020, 66).

The preservation of the past came at the expense of other cultures and created a substitute for destroyed worlds (Aïsha Azoulay 2019, 19). The artifacts salvaged from colonization become artifacts of the past, severed from the active communities that they inhabited. The role of the museum is not always neutral. Museums initiated, contributed to, and participated in expeditions that extracted artifacts from colonies, establishing collections and museums of ethnography while accelerating colonial violence. Modern art centers on collecting, preserving, and displaying objects. It creates experts in fields to distinguish great works of art. Michel Leiris wrote that

We pilfer from the Africans under the pretext of teaching others how to love them and get to know their culture, that is, when all is said and done, to train even more ethnographers, so they can head off to encounter them and 'love and pilfer' from them as well. (Leiris 1996, 204).

Through proposing the return of artifacts, this undermines the status quo of ethnographic collections being a world repository and a classroom. However, it is unreasonable to believe nothing would be left, as the vast collections sit under-utilized in storage (Procter 2020, 137). Museums

could benefit from reparations through learning how to be more representative and inclusive in the stories they tell and the relationship to colonial extractions (Procter 2020, 133). Museums could use their artifacts to tell more complex narratives and a complete narrative of the artifacts' trajectory highlighting "tense and violent" moments. By returning pieces we can open up spaces for these narratives and spaces for imperialist stories. In Europe, these narratives can be used to inform the public of inherited trauma imposed during the colonial period that impacts world histories.

As colonial empires formed, artifacts were displayed as object traces of faded societies, as relics of pre-Christian life, and as a triumph of culture (Procter 2020, 127). When sculptures from colonies were brought to Europe, they were treated as curiosity objects. They were not held to the same artistic standard as European sculptures, and therefore were displayed in different spaces. Aisha Azoulay criticizes this as a Eurocentric belief that they are caretakers. Despite being public museums, they privatize their collections from the original makers by appraising, collecting, processing and (re)making artifacts accessible to the European public (A'isha Azoulay 2019, 143). Museums have played a role in homogenizing art history into a global space, through exposing Western artists to global art, from which they developed careers. Picasso and the primitivists borrowed heavily from works displayed at the Trocadero museum. The art museum reflects these inherited colonial worlds. Museums are increasingly criticized for the financial donations they receive from political parties, lobby groups, and the influences that these parties have on what is displayed and told. Art and money become a contentious issue.

Fine art is a Western concept, for which many indigenous languages lack an equivalent word. It is an imperial terrain that has enriched the cultures of the West through expropriation. Aïsha Azoulay highlights the reduction of the objects to art, from a polysemous set of practices endemic of diverse communities to a unified activity producing exchangeable objects. These objects are then destined for the interpretation of experts in art and then cared for by a neutral party (Aïsha Azoulay 2019, 58). There is a danger of depriving people of their material and spiritual worlds that were spoiled, plundered, and dissected, left as almost worldless. Their world is reduced to artifacts and art, and stand as markers of cultural genocide. Some artifacts respond to colonization. Produced to be traded to Europeans, they keep their aesthetic value while not carrying the same cultural power as other objects not for sale (Procter 2020, 147). For Aïsha Azoulay, “imperial violence is not secondary to art but constitutive of it” (Aïsha Azoulay 2019, 59). The objects become detached from their environments, community and modes of activity and are re-anchored to the art market and museum. Objects are displayed as detached commodities, separate from their use and full meaning, and from the people who created and cared for them. At the end of an era, art increases in value as it becomes more scarce. Art markets commonly buy art while an artist is alive, and then hold the art until the value has increased. By promoting cultures as lost, the same occurred for the collections of museums. The increase in value made them more fragile and prevented restitution, due to this value and potential danger in returning the cultural artifacts.

Aïsha Azoulay describes imperialism as a pursuit of the “new” promoting reinvention and dissociation from the past. This

further alienates one from their past, in pursuit of a future. It ignores how imperialism was opposed in earlier times. To change this narrative, she asks us to stand outside the temporality of progress and unlearn imperialism. This involves returning to the original refusal towards dispossession, and bringing that moment to the present rather than detaching it from the past. Her way of opposing imperialism focuses on undoing imperial acts through meaningful restitutions that unpack each layer (Aïsha Azoulay 2019, 21). Museums imply that cultural artifacts belong to the state rather as a collective. It indirectly appropriates the commons and transforms citizens into external users. They can take part in these cultural activities, while denying access for non-citizens, and exclude people from their histories and access to the commons (Aïsha Azoulay 2019, 39). When world leaders promise restitution of looted artifacts, they reduce the acts of colonization to discrete objects. This assumes that these artifacts have remained the same after being preserved and saved by Western museums. They are oblivious to the destruction inflicted on communities during the extraction, and the mutilation of the objects removed from their world (Aïsha Azoulay 2019, 9). Glenn Coulthard describes this method of return as allocating, “the abuses of settler colonization to the dustbins of history” (Coulthard 2014, 108). The act of restitution involves more than simply returning stolen artifacts, but also uncovering the stories behind them, the process of accumulation, and the destruction of communities that occurred in their removal. It is also important that the artifacts are returned to the local communities of origin, where they can decide the future of their artifacts.

Chapter 5: Restitution

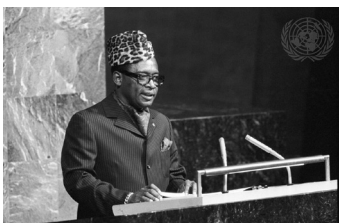
The Act of Return

Decolonizing museums is essential to rewinding the imperial condition. In restituting these pieces, it is important to return all works collected and not to negotiate, as museums historically have represented the state over the communities. It is important that these artifacts are returned to local communities vs. state bodies who, in themselves, are byproducts of colonialism. The process proposed by Aïsha Azoulay to undo looting is not just returning the objects, but engaging with objects alongside those from whom the artifacts were appropriated, and who were later denied access (Aïsha Azoulay 2019, 143). A critical analysis of imperial thought is a value and appreciation of objects, without any regard for the atrocities committed against the makers of such objects. What can improve spaces is introducing more spaces of communal making, and experiencing these pieces through use and handling.

Year Zero

In the debate for restitution, the year 1973 is seen as year zero, marked by Zairean president Motutu Sese Seko addressing the United Nations in New York. This was an attack on Western industrial nations; the address lasted 90 minutes, criticizing rich nations and the perception of the “third world”.

During the colonial period we suffered not only from colonialism; slavery, economic exploitation, but also and above all from the barbarous, systematic pillaging of all our works of art. In this way the rich countries appropriated our best, our unique works of art, and we are therefore poor not only economically but culturally. Those works of art, which are found in the museums of rich countries, are not our primary commodities but the finished products of our ancestors. Those works, which



President of the Republic of Zaire, General Mobutu Sese Seko, addressing the General Assembly of the United Nations (Chen 1973)

were acquired for nothing, have increased in value so much that none of our countries has the material means to recover them. What I am telling you is fundamental, because every rich country, even if it does not possess all the masterpieces of its best artists, has at least the bulk of them. Thus, Italy has those of Michelangelo; France, of Renoir; Belgium, of Rubens; and Holland, of Rembrandt and Vermeer. Another circumstance which demonstrates that what I am saying is right is that Hitler pillaged the Louvre during the Second World War and took away the magnificent works of art which were there. When liberation came, even before thinking of signing the armistice France did everything in its power to recover its art objects, and that is quite right. That is why I would also ask this General Assembly to adopt a resolution requesting the rich Powers which possess works of art of the poor countries to restore some of them so that we can teach our children and our grandchildren the history of their countries. (Savoy 2022, 31)

Four weeks later Zaire used an emergency motion to put the subject of the restitution of works of art to countries who were victims of expropriation (Savoy 2022, 30). Presented and supported by twelve African countries, it became resolution 3187, with 113 votes in favour, 17 abstentions and 0 dissenting votes. The abstentions were by former colonial powers France, Belgium, Denmark, West Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Italy, United Kingdom and Ireland, along with Austria, Canada, Japan, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and the United States (Savoy 2022, 32). This act would be the first of many on the long journey to the restitution of art to former colonies. It would be subject to many criticisms and pleas falling on deaf ears, with museums choosing to hide and preserve their colonial treasure troves. This became a history of post-colonial defeat.

France's Response

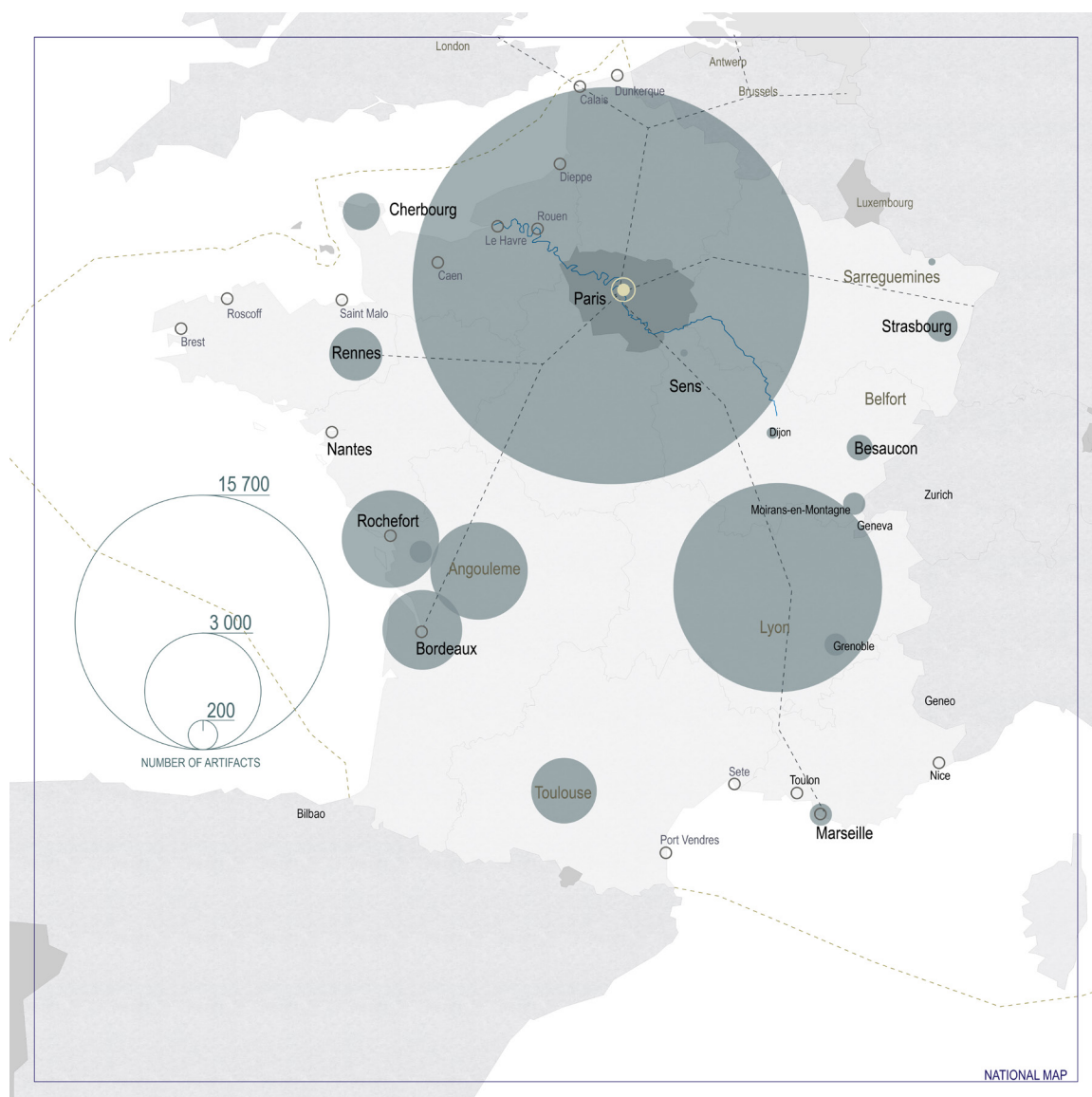
French governments have maintained that its foreign cultural artifacts are part of the cultural heritage of the French nation, and therefore are inalienable. This denial constitutes colonial amnesia in modern French society. The restitution

of cultural artifacts is a reflection on history. Simon Njami states that the return of objects does not mean restituting them as they once were, but re-investing them with a social function. It's not about a return of the same, but of a "different same" (Sarr and Savoy 2018, 30). Restitution addresses the painful legacies of colonization, and the extraction of resources, artifacts, and human life. Restitution can restore legitimacy to museums that have been called into question for their role in colonization. "The relation to others is often mediated by history (the past). The condition for freedom is not to be governed by the past, but to re-write it in the present (time)" (Sarr and Savoy 2018, 89).

On November 28, 2017, Emmanuel Macron declared,

Colonization was a significant part of French history. It was a crime, it was crime against humanity, a true example of barbarism. And it is an example of this past history that we must have the courage to confront by earnestly apologizing to those toward whom we have committed these acts. (Sarr and Savoy 2018, 1)

As an act of reparation, Macron ordered a report on the restitution of cultural artifacts extracted as a result of French colonialism. These artifacts were transferred between French museums of ethnography and colonies until settling in the Musée du Quai Branly. Here, the former ethnography collections were absorbed a second time, integrating them as inalienable French national assets. Their aesthetic qualities became the focus, instead of their ethnographic histories. Until Macron's request, successive French governments had turned down all requests for restitution. Everything in a museum is political, because everything in it is shaped by the politics of the world that produced it (Procter 2020, 16). In the museums' pursuit of neutrality, they increasingly risked losing their relevance to contemporary society (Procter 2020, 16). We are at a moment of great



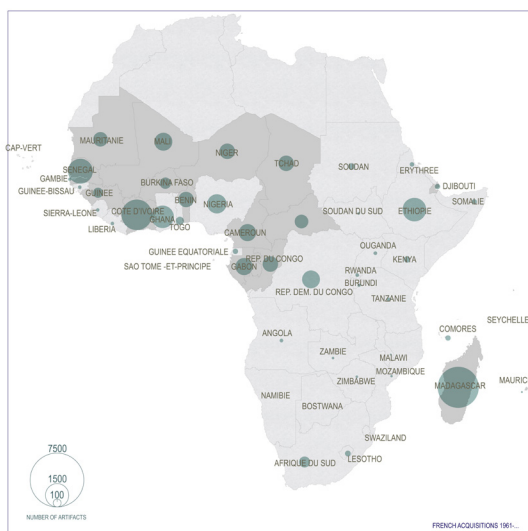
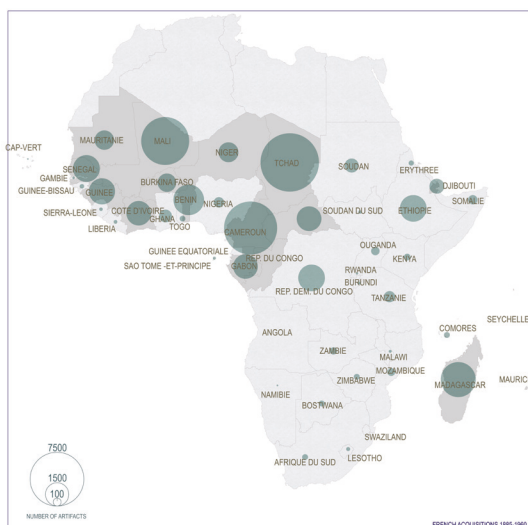
Map of France, highlighting colonial collections by city (Data: Sarr and Savoy 2018, 139).

transformation in museums, where the status quo is not enough to keep museums relevant. A change in museum practices is needed to bring new life to museums. Through restitution, we can free up space in ethnographic collections for accounts of histories lost and later recovered through open research.

The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage

Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy were asked to write a report on the restitution of African cultural heritage by the French government. This followed the acknowledgement of French colonization as a crime against humanity, and the pledge by President Emmanuel Macron to return objects to their countries of origin. The report states that restitution will require dialogue. “Restitution should not be considered as a dangerous action of identarian assignation or as the territorial separation or isolationism of cultural property”, but rather open up objects to a greater public (Sarr and Savoy 2018, 2). In the Musée du Quai Branly, 66% of the collection is from the colonization time period. Artifacts to be returned include those taken during military conquest, by scientific expeditions, by French colonial administrations, and those acquired after 1960 that have been proven to be trafficked. The post-1960s artifacts require research to understand their provenance, and retain only those that were obtained with consent (Sarr and Savoy 2018, 47). Sarr and Savoy divided restitution into three phases. The First Phase would return indisputable objects to their nation of origin. The Second Phase would inventory and digitize all artifacts and records to increase accessibility, involving workshops between French museums and their colonial counterparts and joint commissions between stakeholders. The Third Phase would archive these dialogues to ensure that restitution is continued in light of new information (Sarr and Savoy 2018, 47).

Savoy and Sarr speak to the poetics of these pieces; the extraction of these artifacts disconnected them from their origins and deprived the communities of their cultural heritage, transforming them into things. In non-Western



ARTIFACTS FROM SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IN THE MUSÉE DU QUAI BRANLY COLLECTION

Countries	...-1884	1885-1960	1961-...	n.d.	Total
Afrique du Sud	23	125	310		458
Angola		414	43		457
Bénin	14	2284	596	263	3127
Botswana	12	56			68
Burkina Faso		733	302	53	1088
Burundi	3	11	14		28
Cameroun	3	6968	713	154	7838
Cap-Vert		2			2
Comores		93	78	4	175
Côte d'Ivoire		1463	2292	196	3951
Djibouti	50	589	15	68	722
Érythrée		57	44	1	102
Éthiopie	29	1691	1329	32	3081
Gabon	149	1543	687	69	2448
Gambie	15	18	2		35
Ghana	5	376	1258	17	1656
Guinée	21	1861	267	61	2210
Guinée équatoriale	2	43	49		94
Guinée-Bissau	1	46	23	55	125
Kenya		101	80		181
Lesotho		24	75		99
Libéria		25	19	2	46
Madagascar	76	3083	4196	426	7781
Malawi		37	1		38
Mali	89	5863	795	163	6910
Maurice			2		2
Mauritanie	9	880	522	14	1425
Mozambique		167	4		171
Namibie		7			7
Niger	9	998	592	16	1615
Nigeria	41	257	840	10	1148
Ouganda	5	180	24	1	210
République Centrafricaine		1505	382	56	1943
République démocratique du Congo	5	697	551	173	1426
République du Congo	7	1801	723	62	2593
Rwanda	3	9	32	3	47
Sao Tomé-et-Principe		9			9
Sénégal	66	675	1522	13	2276
Seychelles			2		2
Sierra Leone	1	32	41	1	75
Somalie	53	251	62	57	423
Soudan	72	502	92	29	695
Soudan du Sud	3	31	4		38
Tanzanie	13	334	23	2	372
Tchad	1	8557	627	111	9296
Togo		99	138	3	240
Zambie	4	126	8	1	139
Zimbabwe	1	68	9		78
Total	785	44691	19388	2379	66980
Countries	...-1884	1885-1960	1961-...	n.d.	Total

Maps depicting artifacts acquired by the Quai Branly over time (Data: Sarr and Savoy 2018, 140)

cultures there was not typically museum typology, however spaces for material culture were still found in the form of libraries and royal palaces. These spaces were susceptible to looting, where treasures were extracted by French troops and scientists, and brought to Europe. Destruction and collection are two sides of the same coin; museums are conservationists of human creativity, yet receptacles of violent dynamic appropriation (Sarr and Savoy 2018, 14). This report on restitution serves as one of the key pieces of research for my thesis. My project follows its goals by creating an architectural dialogue between museums and restitution.

The French report faced criticism by Cameroonian historian Achilles Mbembe, who described it as legalist and paternalist. He believed it comes with no explanation for returning cultural artifacts, and no awareness that Africans may reject this offer. He argues that the loss is not of the objects, but of the worlds these objects carried (Mbembe 2018, 9). He says that colonial museums will use the return of such objects as a way of stating that we caused you no harm and now our debt is repaid. He questions what would happen if a nation were to refuse this offer of reconciliation? He protests that the objects would be transformed once more into symbols of the crimes committed by European powers. Objects turn “Into eternal proofs of the crime they have committed, but in which they do not want to recognize responsibility, will we ask them to live forever with what they have taken and to assume to the end this figure of Cain?” (Mbembe 2018, 9). He says we must recognize these objects not as art, but as relics from a destroyed world. They can be used as visual reminders of colonial injustices. Looted artifacts can serve as palimpsest to where potential histories are

inscribed. Lost cultures never truly will be extinct. This loss will emerge as an architectural space of reflection on the acts of colonization.

The Restitution of 26 Royal Treasures

In 2016, the Republic of Benin officially requested 26 works that had been taken from the Kingdom of Dahomè in 1892 by Colonel Alfred Dodds, following his coup of King Behanzin's royal palace and the capital of Abomey. In 1893 and 1895 Dodds donated the royal throne, large statues, and other items to the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro. Initially, Benin's request was refused in the name of French national heritage, based on the statute that had been in place since 1566 (Zachman 2022). However, following the Sarr-Savoy Report, the request was reopened, and in 2018 a new law was proposed to allow the artifacts to be returned. This law was adopted by the National Assembly and put into effect by the President on December 24, 2020. In October 2021, the objects were displayed one last time before being returned to the Republic of Benin almost 50 years after the first call for restitution. The exhibition, titled "Benin: the Restitution of 26 Works from the Royal Treasures of Abomey," "explores different aspects of the history of the works, from their creation through to their future in their country of origin, and includes a detailed description of the colonial conflict, their life in Parisian museums for more than a century, and the legal aspects" (Harris 2021). A new museum in the city of Abomey, called the Musée de l'épopée des amazones et des rois du Danhomè, is set to be built on the former site of the royal palace, to house the restituted cultural artifacts. This will be partly funded by the French government. These 26 works of art taken from Abomey by Dodds are now the inalienable property of the Beninese state.



King Béhanzin of Dahomè, and his two wives - French government prisoner in Martinique, Fort de France (Underwood & Underwood 1902)

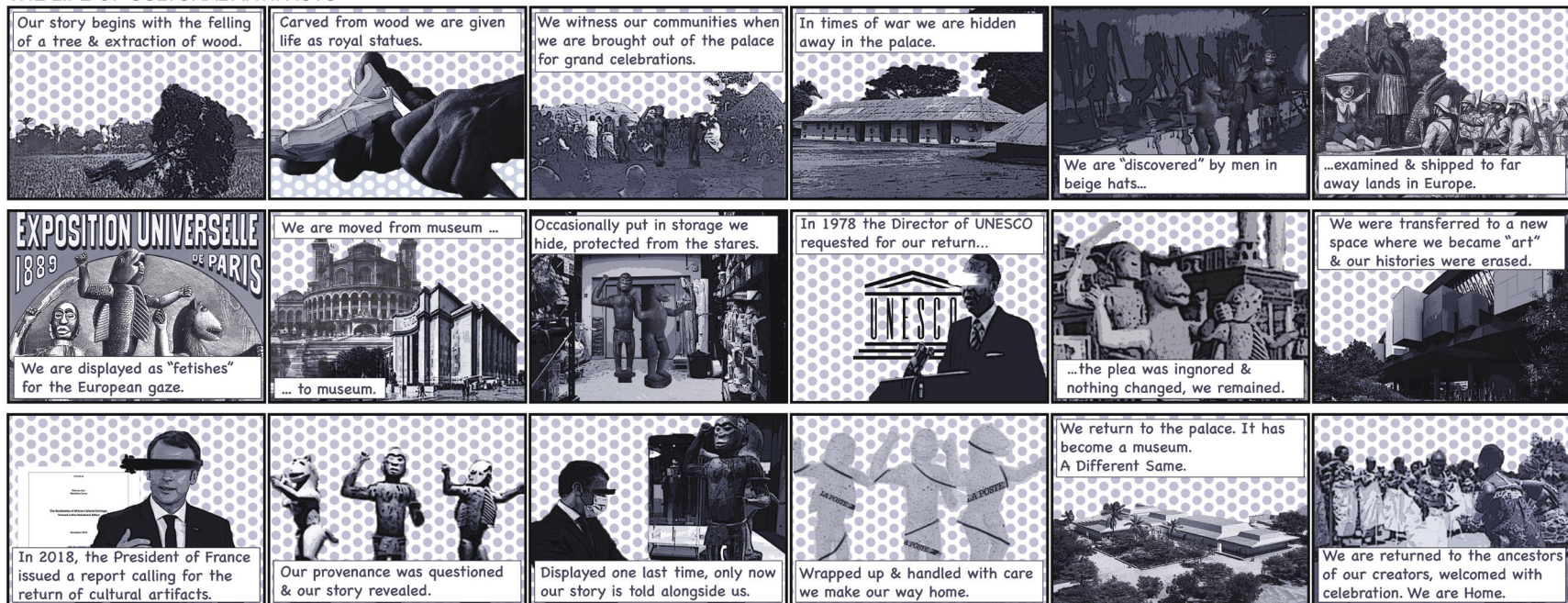


Musée de Quai Branly - Jacques Chirac prepare for the departure of Abomey's royal treasures, Paris, France, 2021 (Zachmann 2024)



A man kneels in front of the statue of Behanzin at the exhibition opening, Cotonou, Benin, 2022 (Zachmann 2024)

THE LIFE OF CULTURAL ARTIFACTS



Comic telling the story of artifacts' journey over time. This narrative focuses on the artifacts returned to Benin by France.

Chapter 6: Revision

How Can Museums Evolve?

Challenging the status quo is a difficult task in a vulnerable sector reliant on visitors. The argument often is presented as “museum visitors don’t want to see histories of enslavement, of violence and empire, and if we focus on them, we’ll lose our visitors. If we take a position that welcomes and celebrates queer identities, or a range of gender expression, it will be too controversial. We’d rather keep an audience we already have, by refusing to condemn their racism, by quietly accepting any bigotry, than push them to change, or work to find a new audience” (Procter 2020, 259). This can be found on all scales of institutions. A contemporary type of exhibition is “mining the museum”, a practice where artists explore existing collections to confront bias, uncover narratives locked away in storage, and bring them to the surface (Procter 2020, 164).

By transforming existing museums through collaboration with partner institutions, we can create symbiotic spaces that allow open dialogues to occur. Contemporary museums have these spaces, but they often lack a certain scale and are isolated in their building. Curatorial work tends to be done by people of privilege. Its low salaries make the field only accessible to people with inherited wealth, typically white. Clémentine Deliss states that opening up the archives and breaking down the private spaces will allow multidisciplinary and multicultural eyes to witness the artifacts sealed away and let new stories be told.

Memory

Pierre Nora's "Between Memory and History" looks at differences between memory and history, and memory's capability to attach itself to a site. He writes that memory dictates, while history writes. Collective memories are what form our histories, influencing how we perceive our pasts. Nora states, "Memory attaches itself to sites, whereas history attaches itself to events", allowing museums' memorials and archives to have a connection to our collective history (Nora 1989, 22). Nora's work relates to post-colonial museums by looking at histories from multiple viewpoints. Often in the French context, the memories producing history are those of a privileged class, promoting the nation in only the best light, and ignoring the harm France inflicted with its extractive colonial rule (Nora 1989, 12). Not only site and place can provide memory; artifacts can be a key to memory and history. For my thesis, the objective is to return artifacts to communities where their history had been altered, and in some cases ignored. It is necessary to augment the Western eye that focuses only on the colonization of a place, by recognizing the country's independence and history before colonization, to which these objects belonged. The colonial period caused an irrevocable break from the past and its distant memories (Nora 1989, 7). Reparations are needed to move forward and to ensure that we do not forget colonial atrocities.

Contact Zones

Mary Louise Pratt defines "contact zones" as spaces of imperial encounters, in which peoples historically and geographically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, despite conditions of

coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict (Procter 2020, 97). This includes museums and other spaces where native and foreign cultures collide.

James Clifford speaks of a village of travelers in places. One might not see this as very dynamic in the developing world, speaking of dwelling and travelling, moving between places. He looks at roots and routes where people transplant themselves. In the chapters under the heading "Contacts", he talks of museums as contact zones between partners in his case study (Clifford 1997, 192). As Aboriginal artifacts were to be displayed, curators set up a meeting with elders, expecting to hear the purpose of the artifacts. Instead, the artifacts brought about stories from the elders that were shared. Songs sung about legends and the Elders added layers of meaning to the objects (Clifford 1997, 189). The stories become almost more important than the objects themselves when displayed. When approaching curation, collections become ongoing, historical and political. Objects can speak to struggles and the contemporary. Museums can often become authoritative over their objects; when exhibiting art, it is important to be careful not to have asymmetrical relations. This can happen when museums use exhibits in self-promotion, or when we display artifacts in an exploitive way. Sometimes other cultures are framed in an exotic way, or only in positive lights, ignoring the negative histories. Clifford offers a lot of discussion about the ethics of museums and promotes a sharing of common culture. In a global world, cultures mix and become enriched by mixing narratives.

Amy Lonetree draws upon these "contact zones" in her interpretation of decolonizing museums, revealing a process of collaboration between diverse peoples amid conditions

of unequal empowerment that is found in Native American museums/cultural centers. She proposes museums as “both translators and translations, agents of social change and products of accommodation” (Lonetree 2012, 4).

Contemporary Voices: Curators and Architects

Contemporary architects and curators are in the midst of reinventing and improving the world of museums for an increasingly global audience. András Szántó talked with international museum directors about the new era of museums and the challenges they face. The directors represented different continents, genders, new museum collections and old collections. Common themes emerged, such as inclusionary practices to make museums more accessible to a wider public. Museums have power to highlight social injustice, through art and exhibitions that speak to our contemporary problems. His book discusses the importance of reparations, but also the need to be practical. In certain climates, museums need to use a lot of energy to keep their artifacts at a certain humidity and temperature. This can be a challenge for repatriating artifacts (Szántó 2020, 14). András Szántó also talked with international architects who have worked on museums. His subsequent book highlights the need for updated hardware to enable museums to evolve. Other topics included flexible programs, accessibility, approachability of buildings, and avoiding colonial narratives (Szántó 2022, 12). They argue the importance to create new museums in Africa, such as the Museum of West African Art in Nigeria, designed by David Adjaye Associates, which houses the Benin Bronzes. Why should one go to London or Paris to experience the culture of a country? Architecture can be symbolic and reclaim narratives. Exhibits can foster learning and general



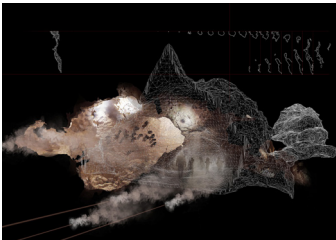
Museum of West African Art (MOWAA) by Adjaye Associates (Adjaye 2023)

interest in a place. Museums are a metabolism built on the cohabitation and interchange between different organs and symbolic functions (Deliss 2020, 56).



Fondation Zinsou in the Republic of Benin (Fondation Zinsou n.d.)

Marie-Cécile Zinsou, director of the Zinsou Foundation in the Republic of Benin, proposes that an African museum would emphasize community. Historically, the king would show his collections by bringing them outdoors and having a runway show with amazons wearing the treasures (Szántó 2020, 54). Dance and music can play a critical role in museums, but not everyone can build a new David Adjaye museum. She also expressed a need to move past the colonial narrative, as the Republic of Benin has been independent for more years than it had been colonized, and had a thousand years of history before then (Szántó 2020, 55).



“Of Steam and Struggle,” an overlaid three-dimensional scan of the Mbai cave with a photogrammetry plan of the cave, by Caves architecture, Kabage Karanja and Stella Mutegi (Caves 2019)

From the architect’s point of view, Kabage Karanja and Stella Mutegi see museums in Africa as a problem, as they are installations of what colonists thought museums should be. Museums are alien to parts of Africa (Szántó 2022, 256). Objects were used for rituals, not displayed, and more in tune with life and existence. They communicate that Africa can be a laboratory where new thoughts can emerge about what a museum should be (Szántó 2022, 259). The idea of reparations is difficult since so much time has passed; the context of these artifacts has become alien due to cultural erasure (Szántó 2022, 257). Museums are institutions that embody trauma and imperialism; the communities affected play a key role.

Museum-university

The ethnographic museum retains its colonial presence through its modus operandi, however its system are reaching a boiling point for change (Deliss 2020, 9). Museums began

to distance visitors during the eighteenth century, when museums moved from private homes into public institutions. Those “unruly social bodies” that once engaged in “flirting, playing, eating, drinking, talking, laughing, and napping” on furnishings were evicted and replaced with capitalist institutions (Deliss 2020, 15).

Clémentine Deliss’ *The Metabolic Museum* discusses the transformation of the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt while under her curatorship. This involved inviting artists into the museum to explore the collections. She encouraged the public to usurp the museum, bringing them closer to the museum, while deconstructing the archives, bringing the internal structures of the institution to the forefront (Deliss 2020, 12). Deliss’ analysis of museums revealed complex bodies with severely ailing metabolism and affected organs (Deliss 2020,18). The objects need to be exhumed from their storage and brought to the forefront. By reading the collection first, the previous directors and their bias can be understood. Through critique, you begin to reimagine the ethnography museum and to allow objects to supersede their aesthetic status and finally retrieve their human dimension. By socializing objects, you restore them back to life (Deliss 2020, 18). When describing the changes made to the Weltkulturen Museum, Michael Oppitz in 2011 wrote,

Objects sit silently in repositories, the information about them lies asleep in the archives. They have to be opened up - with cosmopolitan flair and with money to support the researchers who want to work in the bowels of the museum. And this includes descendants of the societies that were robbed of these objects, or that sold them. It’s a dialogic mission: invite people who can reconnect with the artifacts made by their ancestors through their own interpretations of them. It may help to ease the loss. And an important step into this future is the act of setting up a laboratory, as you have done, invigorating your place of work. In my view it’s absolutely right, and necessary. The Weltkulturen Museum is the only place in Germany where anything of that sort is happening. (Deliss

2020, 89)

Clémentine Deliss, in *The Metabolic Museum*, asks when will architects transform museums from object prisons into new spatial environments for experimental inquiry, creating a museum-university (Deliss 2020, 88). Researchers would require complex spaces where they can engage in multidisciplinary inquiries. The current collections are reservoirs of memories waiting for emancipation (Deliss 2020, 106). Museums can evolve to become laboratories for inquiry and spaces for curation (Deliss 2020, 112). The architecture produced in this thesis will address various phases, including shipping, staging, curating, and the storing of objects. This is not solely about repatriating objects; it is a larger effort to reveal the hidden processes of the art world, alongside acts of restitution. The task of moving objects between institutions involves many players, from insurance to packing. Art is commonly seen as a cultural commodity associated with investment and tax evasion. The architecture sets to reform le Musée du Quai Branly by proposing a new Museum of Restitution, where artifacts are processed for their return. This would be a different type of museum, where multidisciplinary inquiries into the French colonial acquisitions can occur in open spaces, thereby inviting the public into what is often considered the private underbelly of the art world, and excavating the Quai Branly's vault next to the River Seine.

Memorial Museum

Deliss describes the museum as a hygienist, obsessed with cleansing and disinfecting its dirty past (Deliss 2020, 15). Its collections carry a bloody residue of slavery, colonialism, and the Holocaust, obscured by a lack of

credible provenance. Ethnographic museums are “toxic witnesses to genocidal practices” (Deliss 2020, 15). Objects fade from continuousness in archives like Paul Valéry’s ambitious object; artifacts are thrown back into the sea. Their doubtful materiality and absent authorship causes them to sink into the depths of human and material culture. These artifacts, as “afterlife of property,” evoke painful remembrance of transcontinental slavery, as artifacts stand in ongoing incarceration locked away in ethnographic collections separated from their sense of place, buried under the Seine (Deliss 2020, 97). The artifacts resemble the muted populations of the slave trade, where in the haste of extracting cultures for observation, the art that was collected is stripped of its original authors who created these formulations of ingenuity, virtue, and survival. The argument for artifacts to remain in these collections is rooted in a master-slave relationship. To be a conservator of world heritage is to hoard artifacts for exploitation by their current owner.

In Paris, foreign objects obtained through legal means can be engaged by their diasporic communities, to encourage a renewed connection to their pasts. Damaged objects can be studied and restored. The skills to make these artifacts are not extinct. Rather those with inherited knowledge have been denied the time and conditions to engage in their world from distancing makers from their own material culture (Aïsha Azoulay 2018, 160). Aïsha Azoulay proposes that recreating objects can restore the craft and allow the “authentic” ones to become less important. Deliss thus calls for a fundamental change in ethnography practices. Raising questions around can we allow artifacts to be used, fade and be devalued as the vast duplicates contained in museums

form redundancies in a collection? Aïsha Azoulay proposes to bring refugees into Western institutions and allow them to help make sense of their collections, develop a process of return, and to connect people to their destroyed world. Deliss imagines a world where asylum seekers arriving in Europe can apply for visas to engage with sequestered cultural objects (Deliss 2020, 94).

The proposed project for the Musée du Quai Branly is based on Ariella Aïsha Azoulay's theories on potential histories, as they relate to craft traditions that were destroyed by decolonization. It is also based on Clémentine Deliss' metabolic museum practices, taking up her call for architects to design spaces for research and public engagement, creating a museum-university typology that would reinvigorate our current museums for the 21st century. This is achieved by reexamining history and reversing the separation of objects, and the active roles they play in community world making.

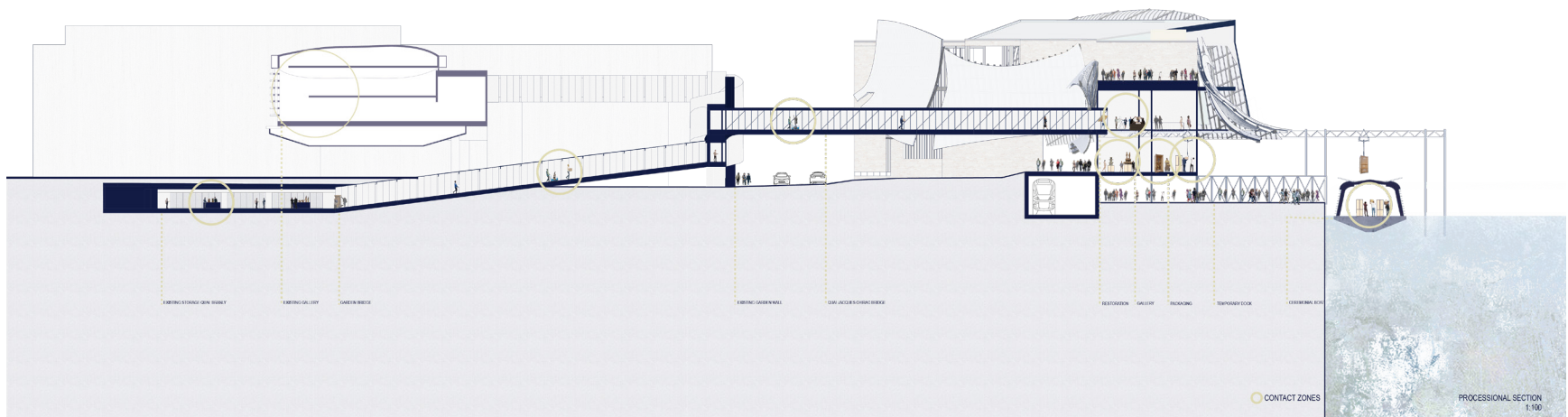
Chapter 7: Rehabilitation

The Musée du Quai Branly is a relatively contemporary museum in comparison to its peers: for example, the British Museum in London or the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam. Its design was more daring than the Humboldt Forum in Berlin.

The proposed project retains the existing museum and adds a new museum of restitution that extends between it and the Seine. The project's response begins in the garden surrounding the Quai Branly, an artificial paradise. What lies



Crowds viewing the Musée du Quai Branly and the proposed Musée de la Restitution from la Tour Eiffel observation deck



Inhabited site section, highlighting the journey of artifacts from the Musée du Quai Branly archive to the ceremonial boat on the Seine

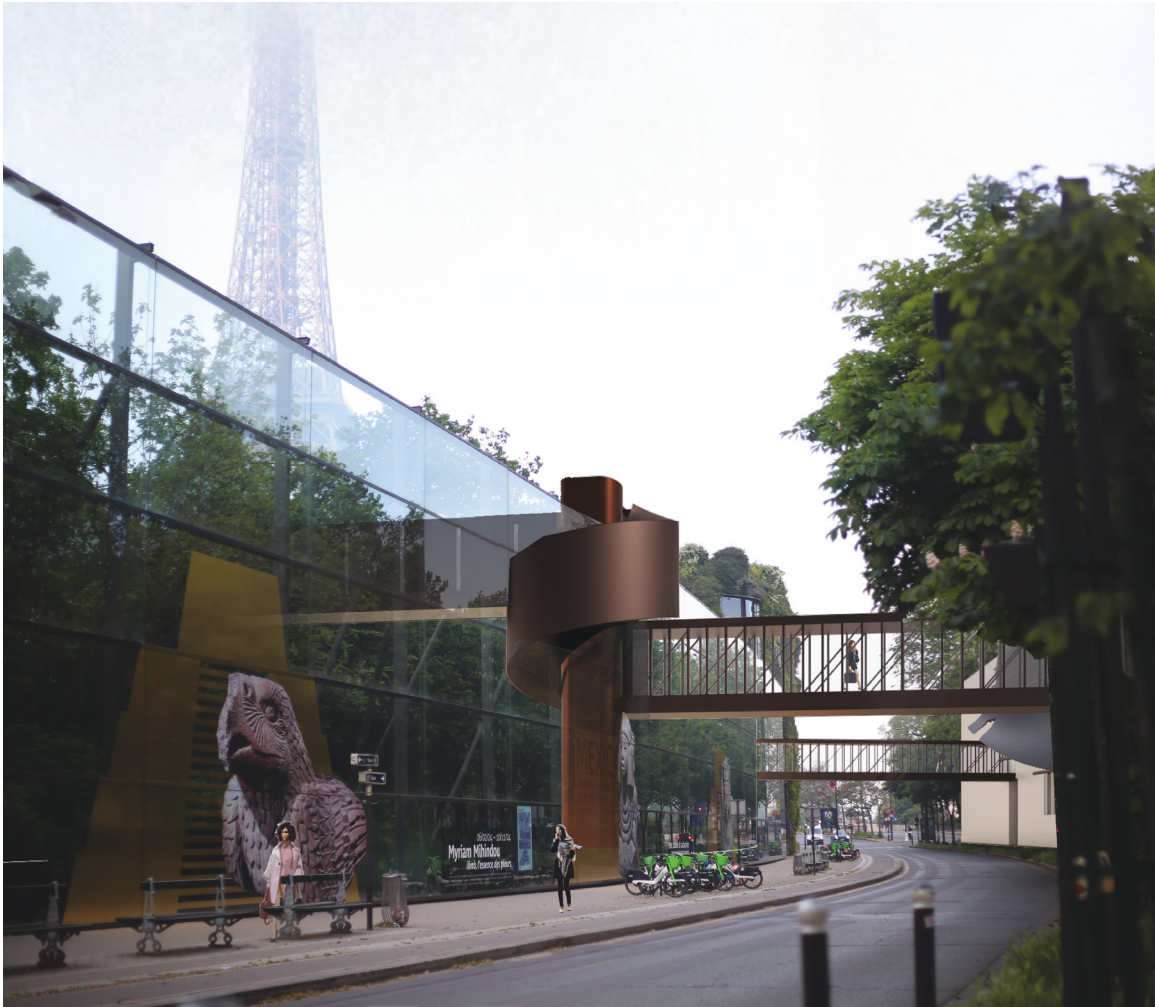
beneath the garden is a catacomb of colonial extractions hidden from view and removed from the scrutiny of post-colonial eyes. The first point of contact in liberating the objects occurs in the underground facilities at the Musée du Quai Branly. There, artifacts are currently hoarded away in storage, as opposed to being displayed, used and appreciated. The removal of artifacts from the catacombs is the first step in reparations, where they are selected and brought into a new light.

Garden, Wall, Bridge

The garden is where the first incision occurs. A bridge breaks through the exterior roof of the underground archive, allowing the transfer of artifacts from its depths. The bridge through the garden has a clear skylight, allowing the public a glimpse into the Quai Branly's archive. To see what is beneath the artificial forest exposes the underlying truth of the museum's mass accumulation. It acts like a colonial industrial mark on the exotic and picturesque garden, much like the scars formed by the colonization of the worlds from which these artifacts came. The second incision is made in the floating main gallery, cutting out the bottom



Incision into the Musée du Quai Branly archive, the start of the restitution process



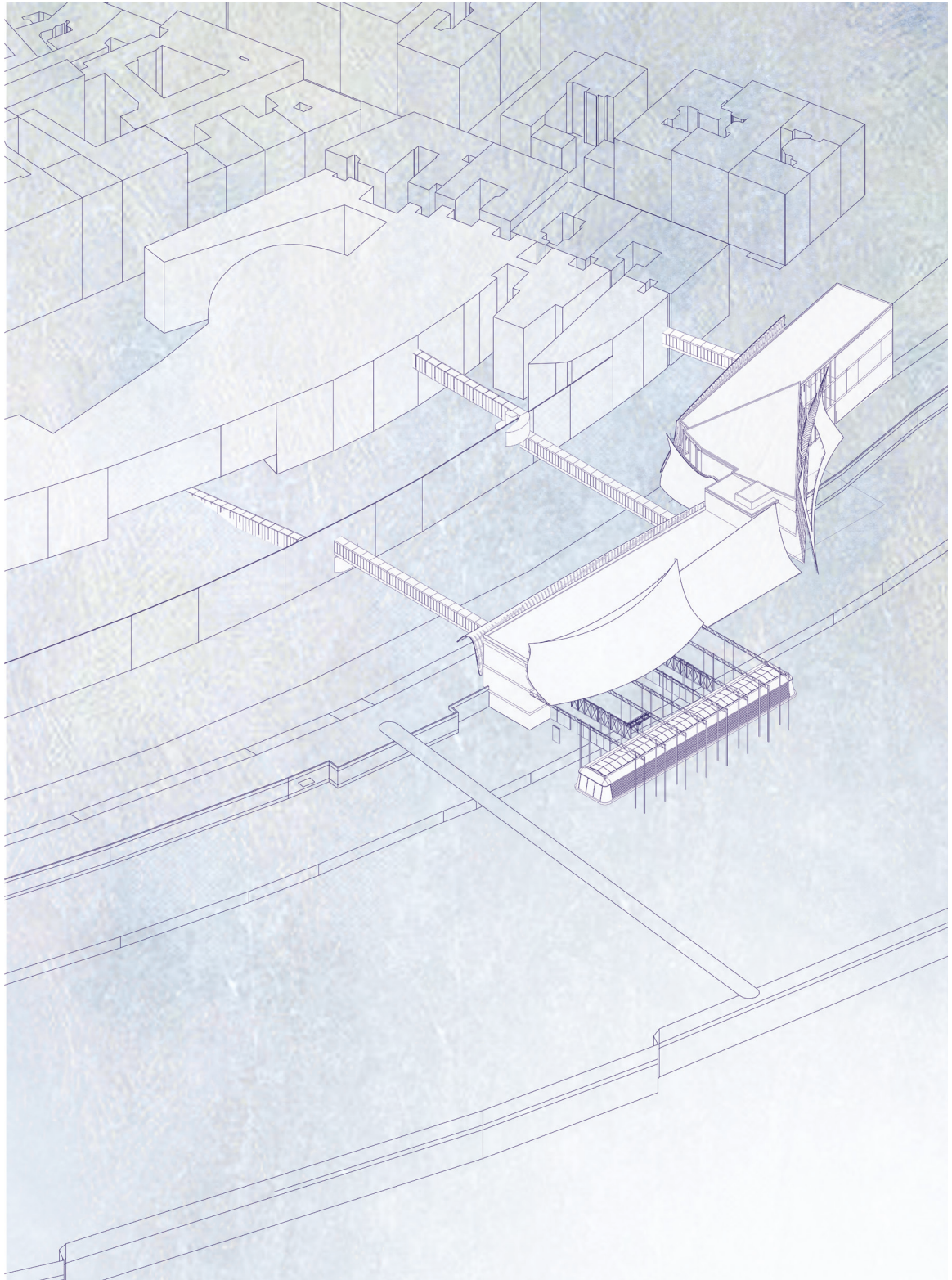
Bridges connecting the Musée du Quai Branly and the Musée de la Restitution, breaking through Nouvel's glass wall

of one of the façade's boxes. Its bridge extends over the garden, towards the River Seine. These walkways act as passages to move artifacts from the Quai Branly, the first step in repatriation. Both bridges through the garden have steel cladding, punctured by zoetrope windows that provide brief glimpses between the passages and the garden. As artifact caretakers approach the wall, the bridge ends and they are met with a spiral staircase that breaks through the wall the circles around. As they exit the other side of the wall, the bridge becomes glass and is open to the street and the pedestrian walkway below, revealing the movement

of artifacts between the Quai Branly and the Musée de la Restitution.

Musée de la Restitution

The site of the Quai Branly and the Museum of Restitution is at the foot of the Eiffel Tower, along the left bank of the Seine. The Museum of Restitution is situated along a raised pedestrian walkway above the RER C commuter rail line that follows the curvature of the Seine and connects Versailles to Paris. This walkway is popular amongst locals and tourists, as it is a primary path to reach the Champs des Mars and la Tour Eiffel. It runs parallel to the Seine and the lower quai that is used as an alternative walking path. This walking path floods during periods of high rainfall; its walled embankments protect the city from flooding. These walking paths in the summer are inhabited by floating restaurants, clubs, galleries and tour boats. Parisians line the Seine to visit and relax on its banks. The site of the museum is currently occupied by a large tour boat company. This is adjacent to a pedestrian bridge named the Passerelle Debilly, and a container port that is used to bring Franprix goods into Paris each morning by boat. During the morning, the adjacent site is closed off for the port authority. The museum is designed to straddle these paths, maintaining the free movement of people. This site is very visible and brings the issue of restitution to a prominent visible location. In the project, there are two lines of movement: the first is for artifacts, curators, and actors in restitution; the second is for museum visitors, the audience for this spectacle of return. The Musée de la Restitution is a comprehensive vehicle for restitution, where artifacts undergo restoration, research into provenance is carried out, the ethics and origin of the colonial extraction are understood, contemporary artists



Site isometric of the Musée de la Restitution

can challenge these complexities through art, communities affected by cultural loss can regain historical craft, and artifacts can be packaged in preparation for their return. It culminates in a ceremonial boat ritual, where artifacts are loaded onto a barge that will take them along the Seine to visit communities from their countries, then on their final journey out of Paris, where they are returned to their home. The return of objects does not mean restituting them as they once were, but re-investing them with a social function. It's not about a return of the same, but of a "different same."

The Theatre

The museum follows Clementine Deliss' call for a "museum-university" and invites multidisciplinary professionals to come to the museum and take part in museum practices in a public manner, allowing the public to get a better idea of what museums do behind the scene. The architecture's transparency allows a full display of the return, unlike past museums' ivory tower approach. The architecture is flanked by opaque curtains of glass and steel that lift up, exposing the museum's back of house to the broader public realm. Upon arrival from the bridges, artifacts begin with a process of restoration, cleaning, and are studied. Here, as they undergo restoration, curators can develop a further understanding of provenance and craft. Located on the first level of the building, the restoration spaces are located directly adjacent to the main lobby that floats above the open walking path below. The restoration space is the first step in returning the artifacts, preparing them for their final journey. They are also the first direct contact zone where visitors can witness the act of restoration in real time as part of the gallery experience. Also, adjacent to the lobby is a provenance library and research facility. There, the



Opaque curtains of glass and steel; structural isometric

lost history of the artifact's acquisition is pieced together by researchers, offering the public a chance to witness and better understand the active research that occurs inside a museum's collection by ethnographers. Gone are the days of exploration of far away lands; most research now is done inside the museum's archives, away from public view. The museum now exposes the profession to the public, making the invisible threads of these artifacts' cloth understood and brought to the public theatre. This research space is connected to the existing museum's staff offices by a bridge, allowing the space to be accessible to the Quai Branly's researchers. The parallel structures of the Quai Branly and the Musée de la Restitution act like a loom, with the movement of artifacts serving as thread, producing a fabric

CONTACT ZONES FOR RESTITUTED ARTIFACTS



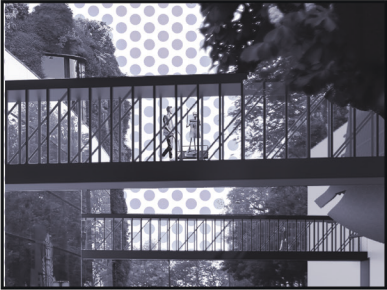
EXISTING CONTACT ZONE OF DISPLAY AT THE MUSÉE DU QUAI BRANLY



ARTIFACTS AND CURATORS IN EXISTING ARCHIVE FIRST CONTACT ZONE IN RESTITUTION



ZOOTROPE GLIMPSES OF ARTIFACTS AND CURATORS PASSING THROUGH THE MUSÉE DU QUAI BRANLY'S GARDEN



ARTIFACTS AND CURATORS BREAKING FREE FROM NOUVEL'S WALL, ENTERING THE PUBLIC REALM



ARTIFACTS ARE RESEARCHED TO DETERMINE THEIR PROVENANCE



ARTIFACTS BEING CAREFULLY RESTORED BY EXPERTS



ARTIFACTS ARE DISPLAYED WITH PROVENANCE RESEARCH TELLING THEIR STORY IN RELATION TO COLONIZATION



ARTIFACTS BEING PACKED FOR THEIR FINAL JOURNEY HOME



LOADING THE ARTIFACTS INTO CEREMONIAL BOAT FOR THE FINAL JOURNEY



CURATORS TRAVELING WITH THE ARTIFACTS ON THEIR FINAL JOURNEY

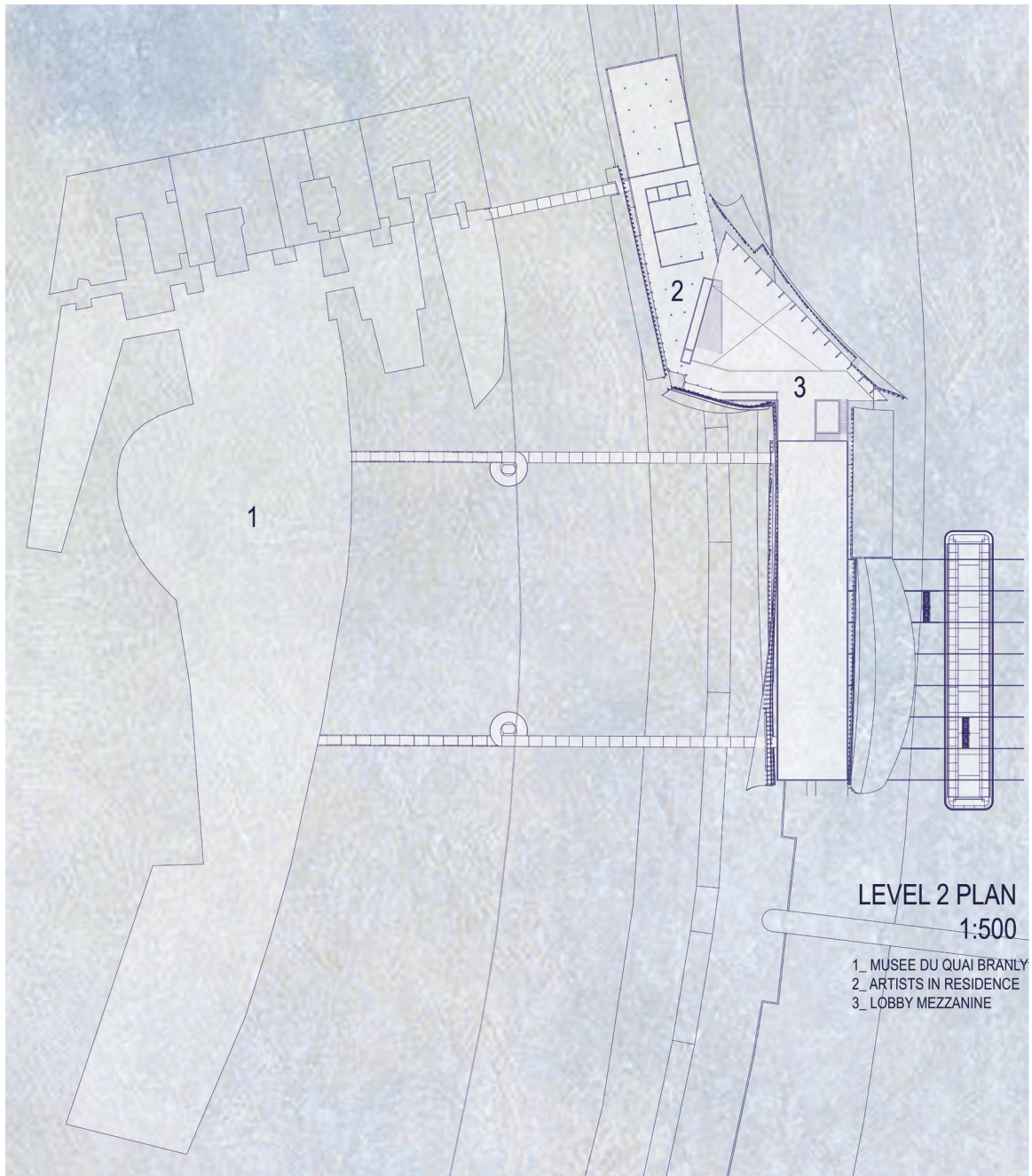


THE MAYOR OF PARIS FORMALLY HANDING OVER THE ARTIFACTS AT HÔTEL DE VILLE



DIASPORIC COMMUNITIES IN PARIS VISITING THE ARTIFACTS IN THE CEREMONIAL BOAT BEFORE SAILING HOME

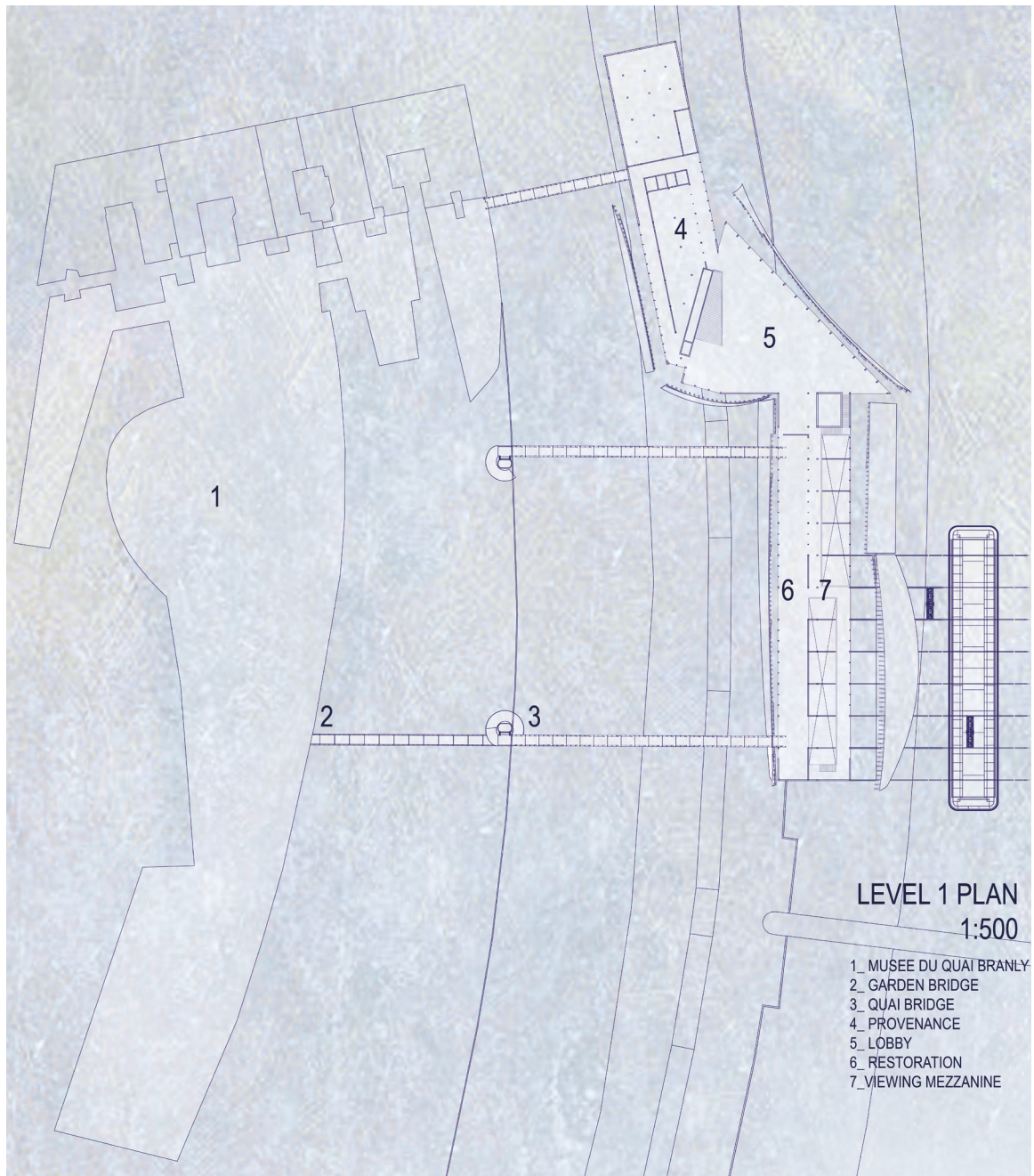
Contact zones that occur during the restitution process at the Musée de la Restitution



Level 2 plan, Musée de la Restitution

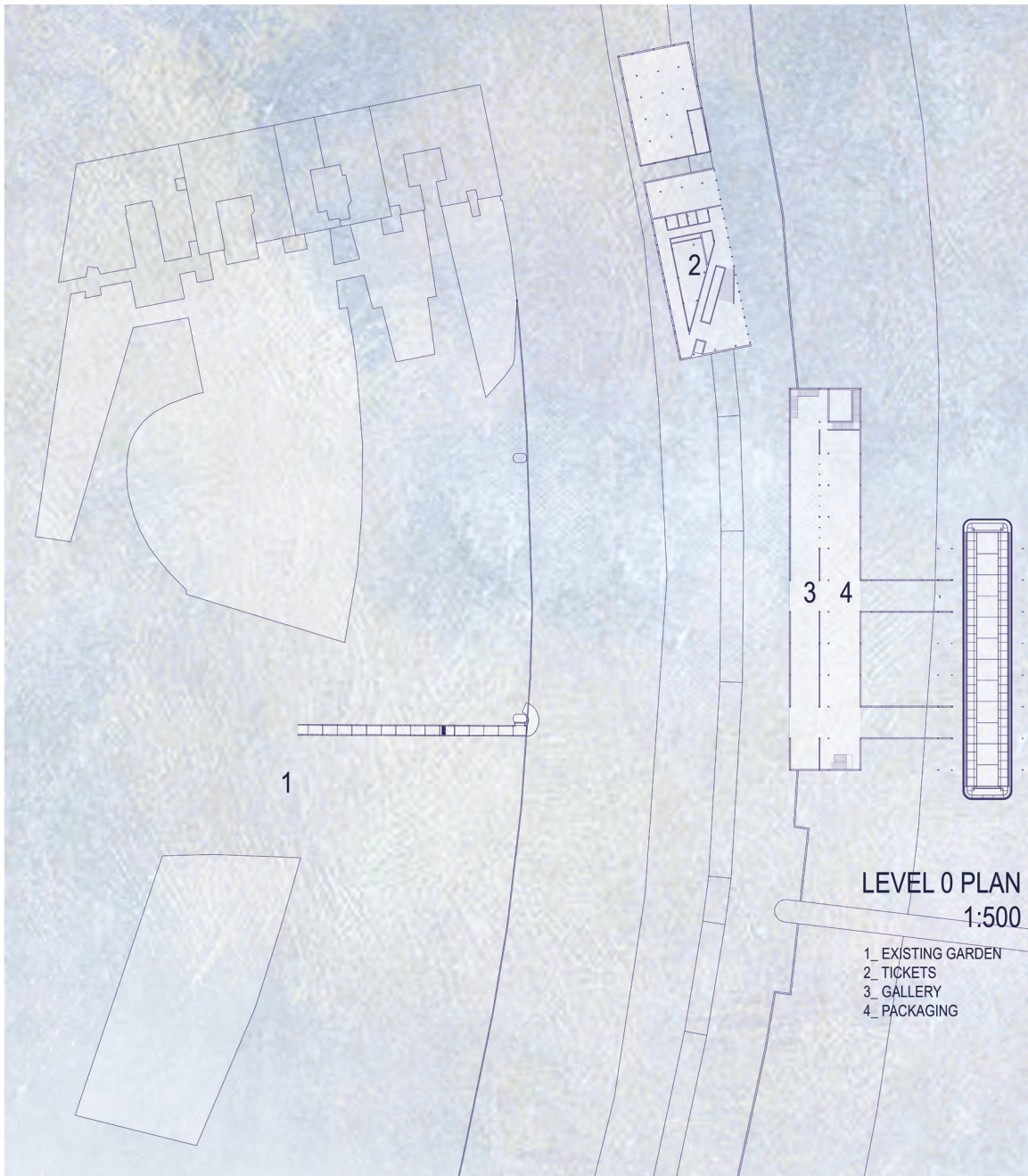
telling and unravelling of colonial extractions, through active restitutions and the unmaking of colonial violence.

The museum hosts contemporary artists-in-residence who would have access to the artifacts. Contemporary art, when paired with historic artifacts, can address colonization and reinvest in narratives. This is located above the provenance



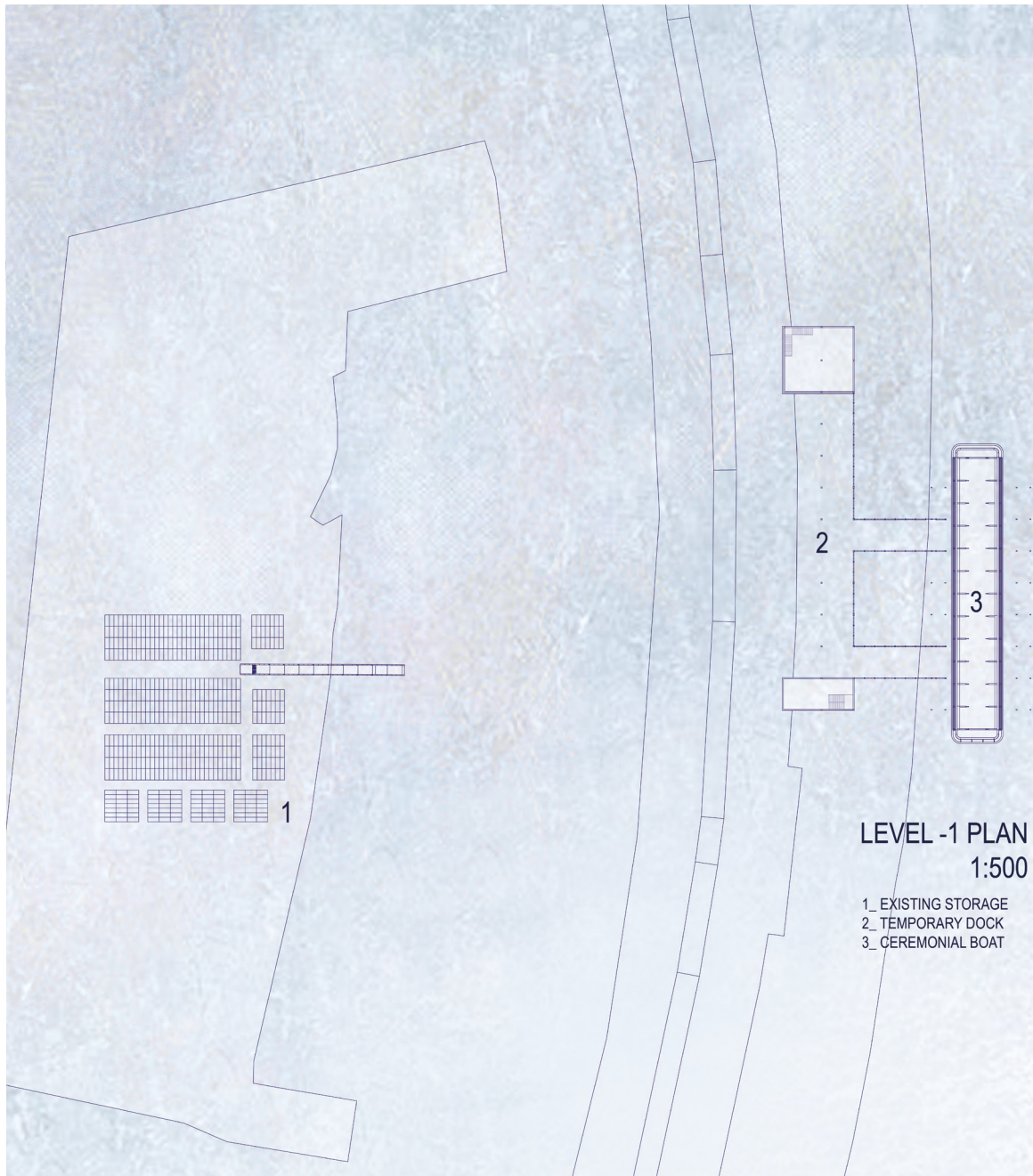
Level 1 plan, Musée de la Restitution

research space. With workshops and artists-in-residence, we can develop a better understanding of artifacts. The Quai Branly is aligned with the historic domestic façade of the Avenue de la Bourdonnais. To continue this alignment, the museum is attached to the domestic space of a hotel, with apartments for the use of guest curators, ethnographers,



Level 0 plan, Musée de la Restitution

indigenous elders and artists-in-residence to live alongside the collection and acts of restitution. The production of art also acts as a way to improve our knowledge of these crafts. Tim Ingold argues that the only way of knowing is through the self-discovery of practice and doing (Ingold 2013, 5). Making is a process of growth, taking raw



Level -1 plan, Musée de la Restitution

materials and creating an artifact. To understand an object, is to understand the process behind its creation, and also its purpose. Ingold describes a handaxe not as an artifact but as the end stage of a process of making (Ingold 2013, 41). In “Round mound and Earth sky,” he studies mounds in the landscape grown over time (Ingold 2013, 75). This

was in opposition to being built, marking a record and palimpsest marking those changes with time. When looking at objects in a museum, they grow old, preserved and dated while aging. The process of making can provide additional knowledge; providing space to interact with these pieces can help our understanding. We can learn so much from an object if we recreate and produce contemporary pieces that help us connect to these pieces. The makers and materials are in constant correspondence with one another, working in tandem to produce these objects. If we can connect contemporary artists' work with historic pieces, it can increase people's understanding of the objects. Displaying artifacts alongside contemporary art produced by African artists creates a dialogue with the pieces, breathing new life into them. This continues the traditions of craft that some would say are dead. This is not true; rather, their strings were cut by colonization. Crafts are still produced in these places; however, the pace of their evolution was hindered by the lack of precedence. The faster evolution occurred in



View from the lobby of the Musée de la Restitution



Mezzanine gallery at Musée de la Restitution, connecting visitors to the process of restitution.

Europe through primitivist paintings and Picasso. Artwork produced alongside the provenance research would be displayed in the open lobby, connecting the spaces where artifacts move through on the journey to restitution.

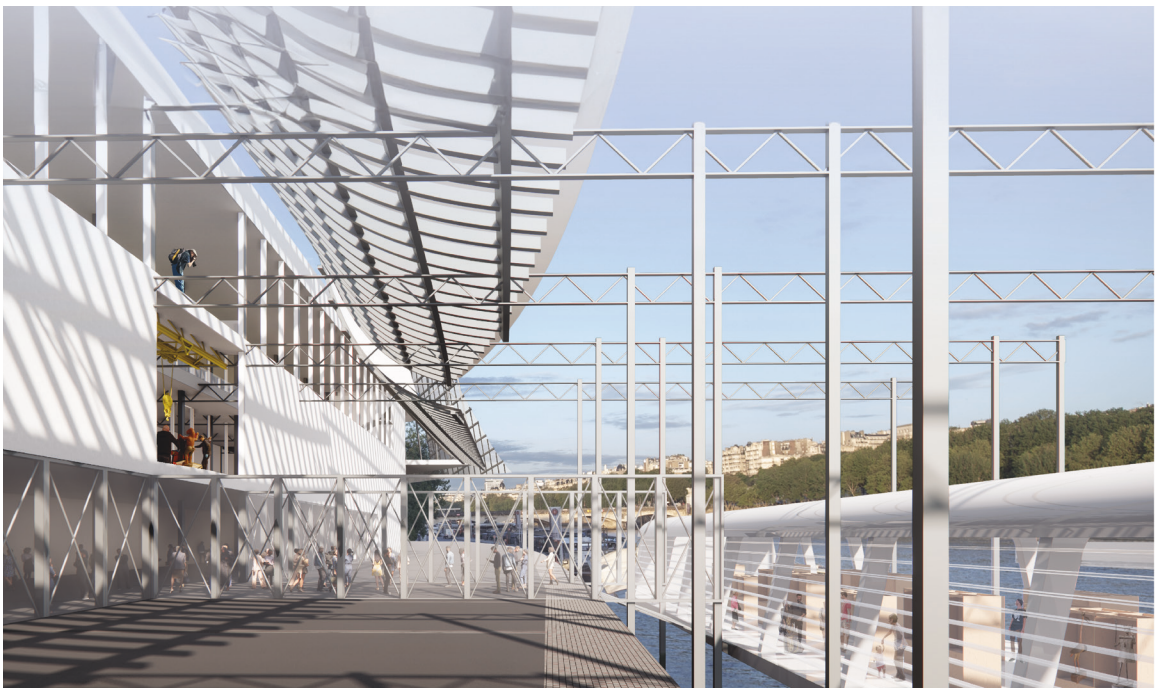
Once restored, the artifacts are moved to a gallery below, at street level. Here the artifacts are recontextualized, with their story of how the artifacts were obtained and why they are to be returned. This tradition gallery is directly below the restoration space and is a simple enfilade gallery, reminiscent of traditional French museums. This gallery tells the story in a traditional temporary exhibition that slowly grows as pieces are restored. This gallery depicts the active role of curating artifacts to be displayed in their future homes, in new museums constructed across the African continent for the communities affected by cultural extractions. This form of contact connects the research to the artifacts. In this space the artifacts are framed in a European lens for one last time, depicting the story of their illegal procurement and



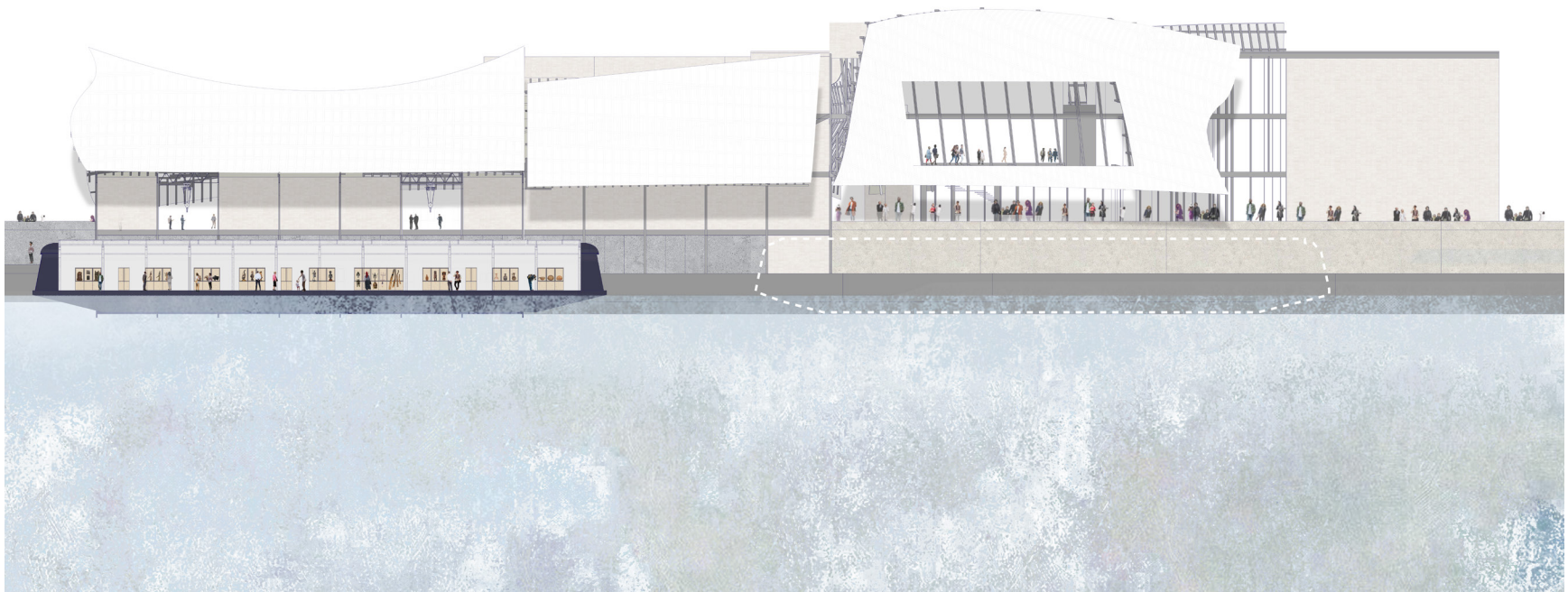
“A Parrot for Juan Gris,” an example of Joseph Cornell’s box art (Cornell 1953-1954)

identifying the root of the colonial cultural extraction. Once artifacts have returned home, it is the role of the community to determine how they wish the collective pieces of heritage to be displayed. Once filled, this gallery contains enough objects to fill the ceremonial boat, and upon completion of a collection of artifacts slated to be returned, the artifacts can begin to be packaged.

Beside the gallery the museum’s shipping facilities are on display. Once a significant collection of pieces are restored, they would begin to be packaged for shipping. The loading space is located below the mezzanines; visitors walk along, while observing the restoration, allowing both active spaces for objects to be observed during the same spatial experience. Observing the packaging of artifacts allows people to witness the final stages of restitution, and the act of preparing the artifacts for their final voyage. The crates used to ship the artifacts become their new display cases,



Visitors witnessing the artifacts on the ceremonial boat before being shipped. Temporary walls block the public route along the Seine



Elevation of the Musée de la Restitution, viewed from the Seine, with the ceremonial boat preparing to sail off



Interior of the boat sailing on the Seine, with a curator accompanying the artifacts on their journey

like the work of Joseph Cornell. They are finally loaded from the packaging area into the ceremonial boat docked along the Seine. Objects are lifted by crane, crossing the public walking path along the Seine, and descending into the open roof of the boat, where they will be displayed one final time before being shipped.

The Ceremonial Boat

Docked along the Seine, the ceremonial boat provides the final celebration that occurs in France. Sailing with important dignitaries, the boat travels along the Seine, stopping along the river bank to open up its doors to the public who can witness the artifacts packaged with care. These stops are located near museums along the Seine that once housed these pieces, as well as the Place de l'Hotel de Ville, formerly known as the Place de Grève. The boat also stops at locations along the Seine where diasporic communities

from those countries currently live, so that these artifacts can be seen by returning home to new cultural institutions.

The Audience

The museum's transparency and its situation along a walking path enable pedestrians to move easily through the museum. The museum's program is to facilitate the act of restitution, allowing for the return of the artifacts taken during colonization. The curved glass façade acts as a curtain that is raised, exposing what goes on behind the scenes in museological practices. Along the walking path, large windows puncture through the museum, allowing for public viewing of the process and glimpses of the Seine beyond. Tickets and service spaces are on the ground floor of the administrative building. Visitors ascend into the main lobby, which floats above the pedestrian walkway and connects



Views of the Musée de la Restitution from the raised walking path

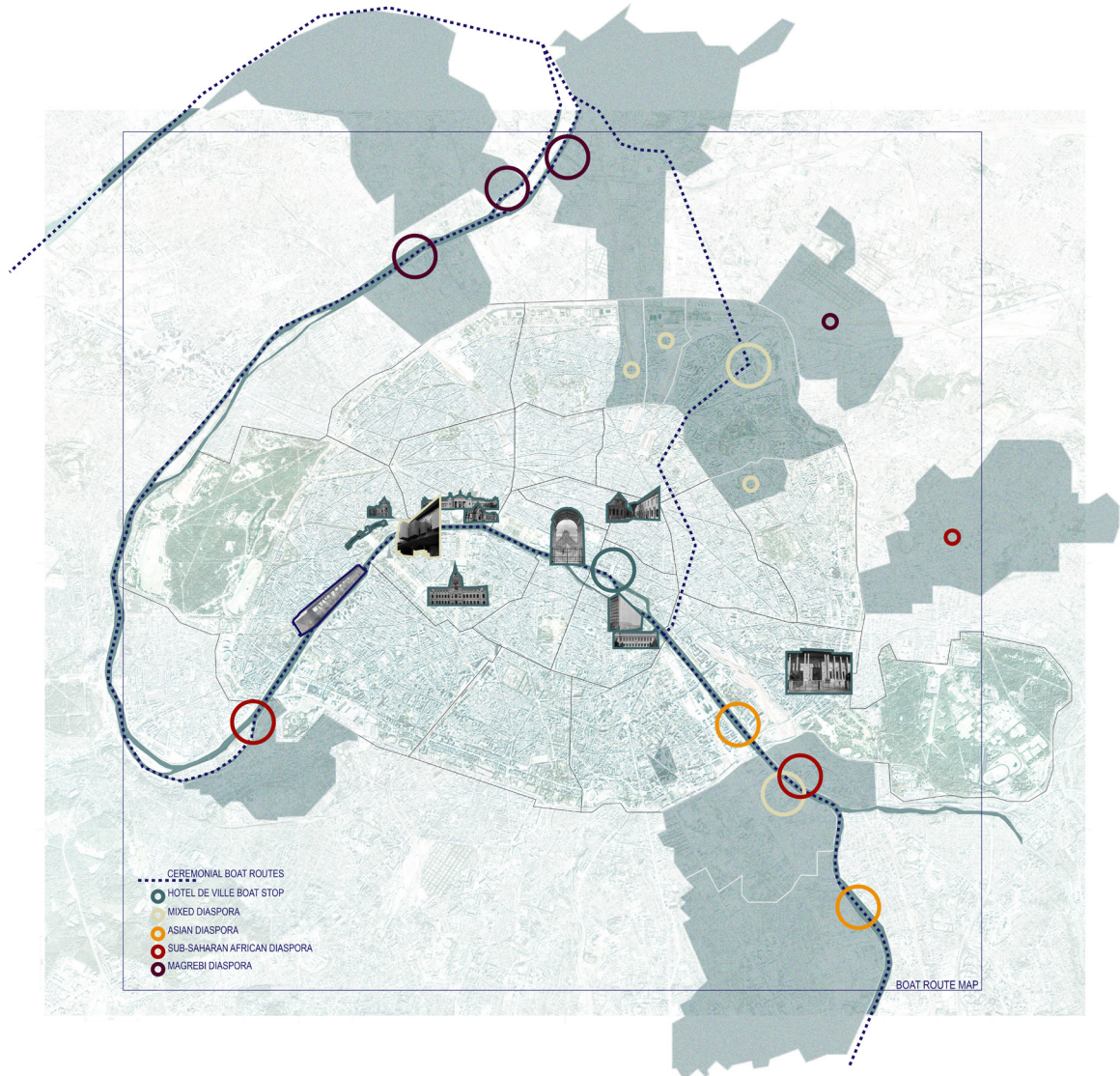


Floating lobby above the public raised walking path



Audiences on the banks of the Seine witnessing the ceremonial boat approaching Hôtel de Ville for a formal handover

the restoration and shipping facilities to the administrative, provenance library and contemporary art studios which are on display for observers. Visitors walk along a mezzanine, where they can observe the restoration spaces, as in the Depot in Rotterdam. As one walks along the mezzanine, they can look down onto the shipping and packaging area below. Visitors then flow into the main gallery, and can observe the packaging area, before descending to the banks of the Seine. When the boat is ready to be shipped, temporary walls attach the museum to the boat, and close off the public walkway, just as the neighboring port temporarily closes off the banks of the Seine every morning. The museum would disrupt public space this time of festivities. As it sails



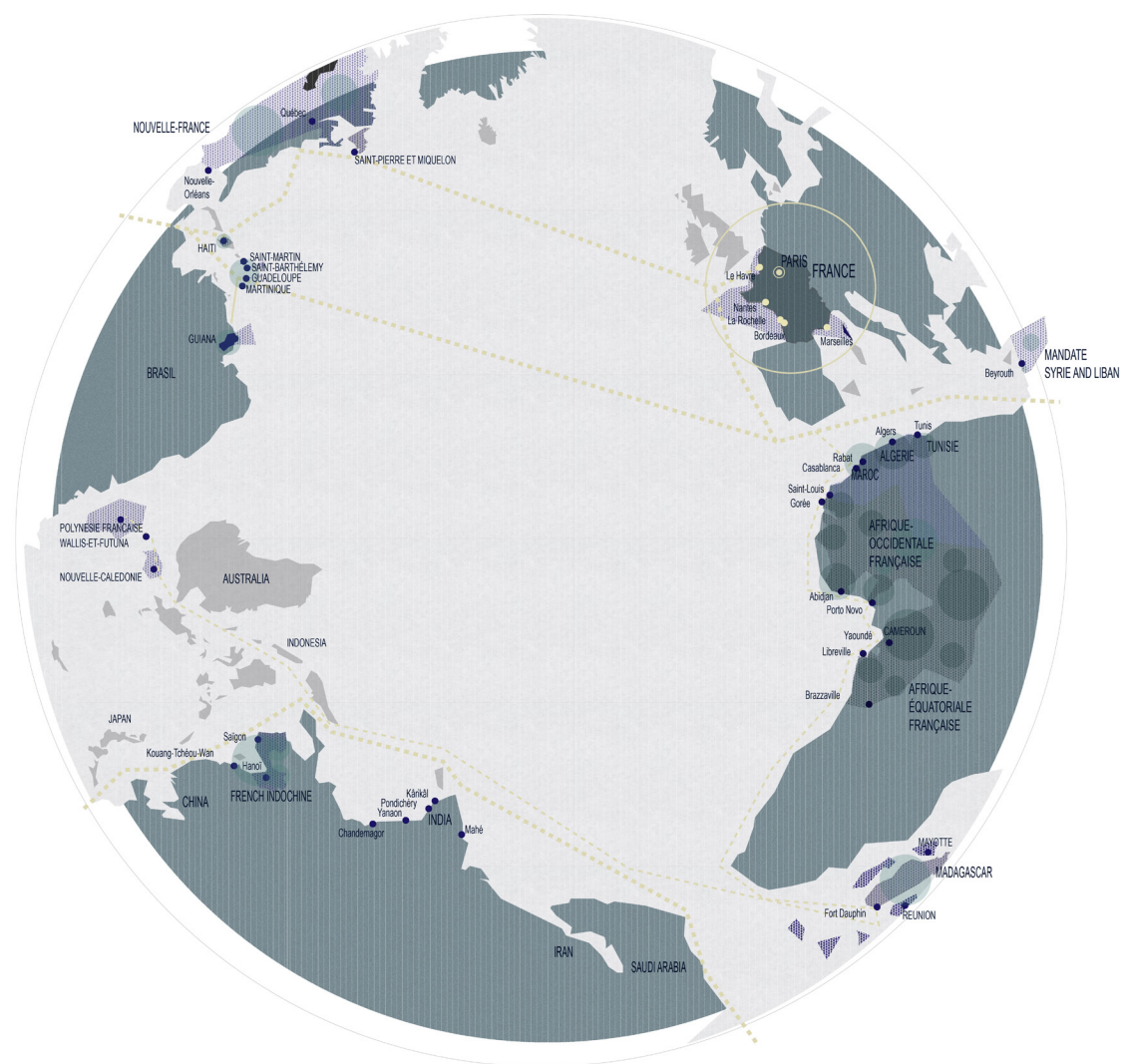
Map showing the ceremonial boat's route along the Seine as it visits diasporic communities associated with the artifacts it is carrying

away, viewers on the banks of the Seine become the public audience of the boat.

Closing Act

After restitution, the building on the Seine will become an inhabitable monument that manifests Achilles Mbembe's response to restitution. A Museum of Destroyed Worlds will contain the artifacts of forgotten cultures erased by

the destructive forces of colonization, along with spaces of memory to the disastrous effects of colonization. This will take place in the once busy restoration spaces, empty shipping facilities and traditional gallery. Objects left behind tell the story of worlds completely lost to colonial violence. Commemoration is a political act rather than an end, an act of self-awareness. The collection will contain artifacts of lost worlds that were entirely destroyed by colonial extractions of art and bodies. Unlike memorials that use a void to symbolize loss and absence (Procter 2020, 116), this memorial conveys loss by presenting objects that no longer belong anywhere, as they were refused by their countries of origin but cannot return to the Musée du Quai Branly. Therefore, the remaining refused pieces allow a glimpse to such losses. The acts of research and memorial will insure the viability of this program. The provenance research space will contain a now smaller restoration space and contemporary artist space continuing indefinitely, as research will always be occurring so that past museological mistakes are not repeated. When the last boat sails away and restitution is no longer required, the facility will lose a part of its program, but through research and the telling of lost stories, it can continue to reinvent itself indefinitely. Museums around the world continually evolve, to remain relevant to the greater collective.



The artifacts return, undoing unjust colonial acts



View from la Tour Eiffel

"Colonization Was A Significant Part Of French History. It Was A Crime, It Was Crime Against Humanity, A True Example Of Barbarism. And It Is An Example Of This Past History That We Must Have The Courage To Confront By Earnestly Apologizing To Those Toward Whom We Have Committed These Acts."

- FRENCH PRESIDENT EMMANUEL MACRON



The great escape from the archive



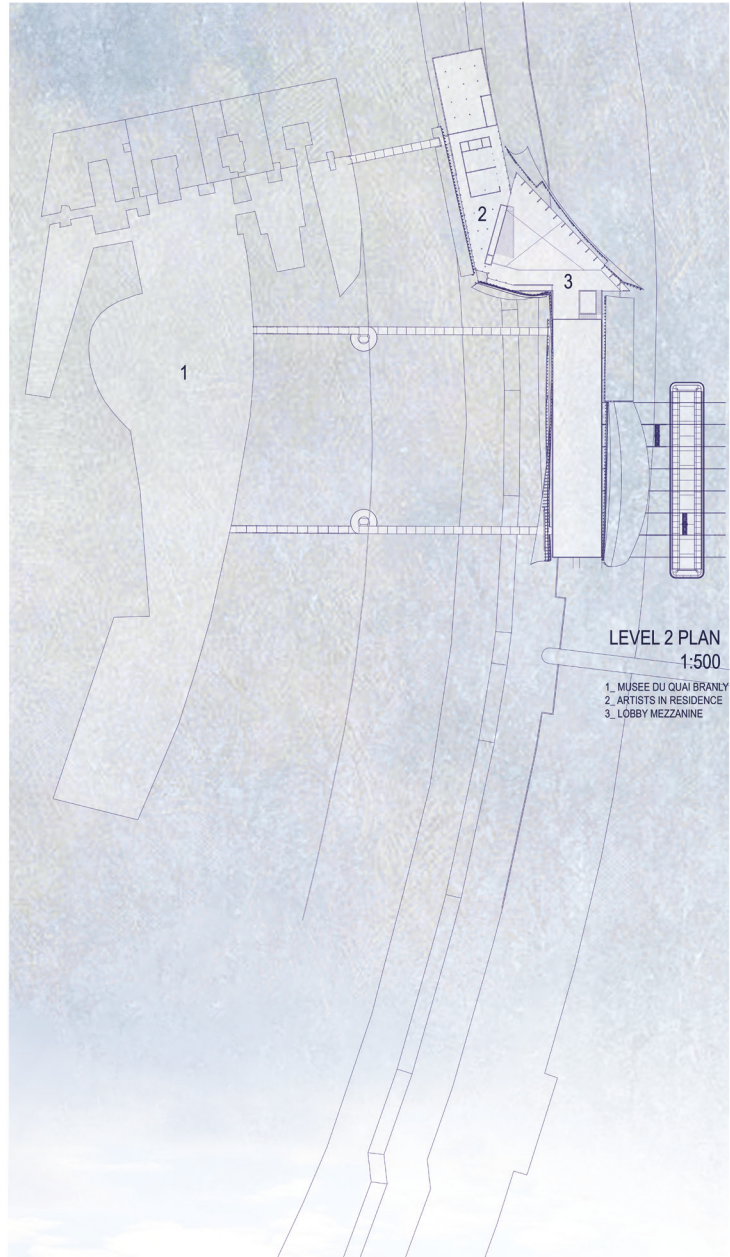
Breaking through Nouvel's wall



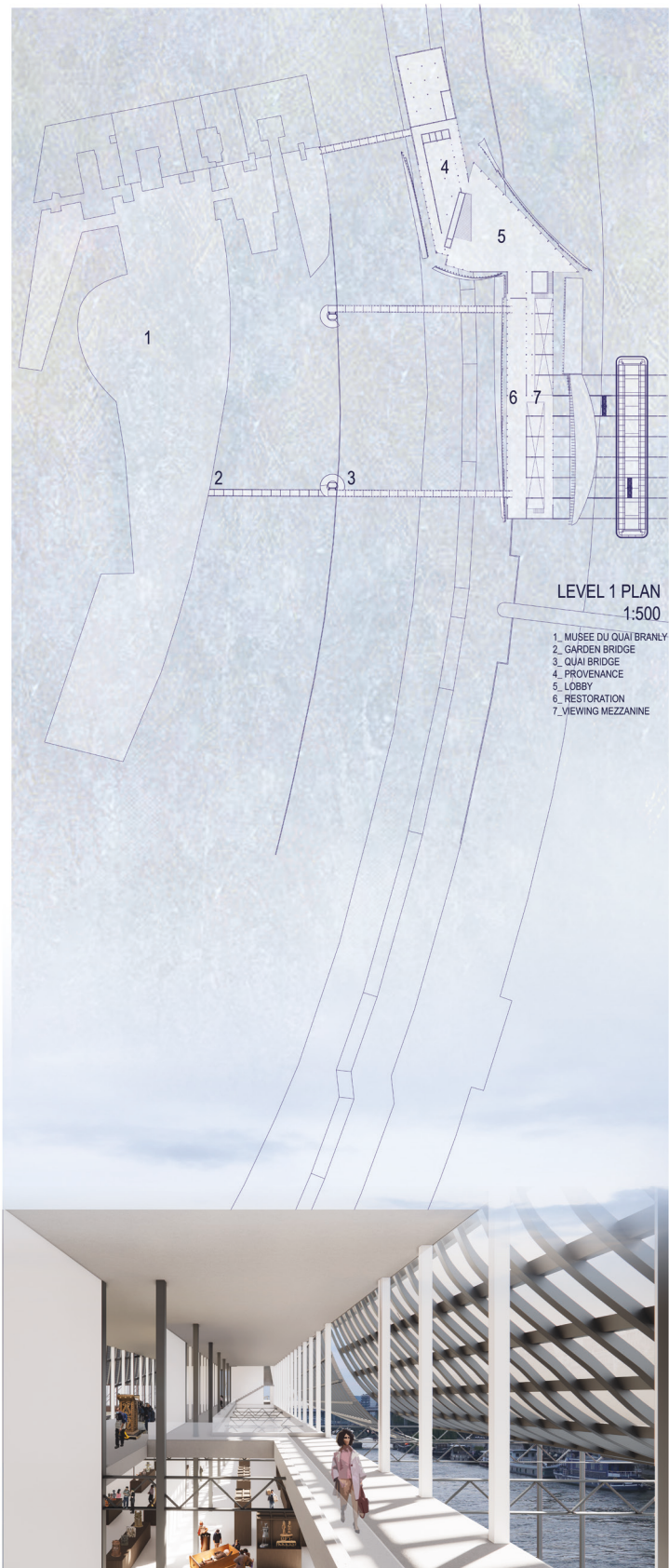
Public path along the Musée de la Restitution



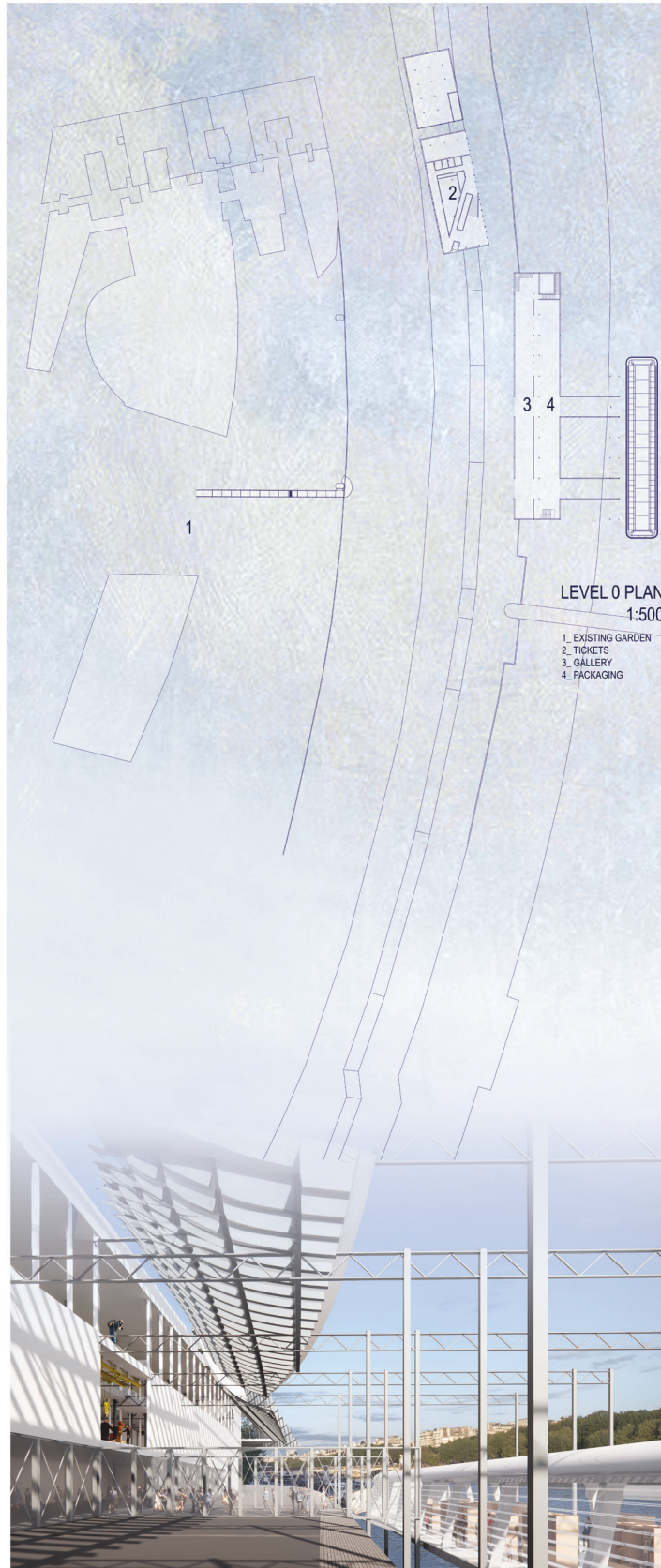
Public path and the entrance to the Musée de la Restitution



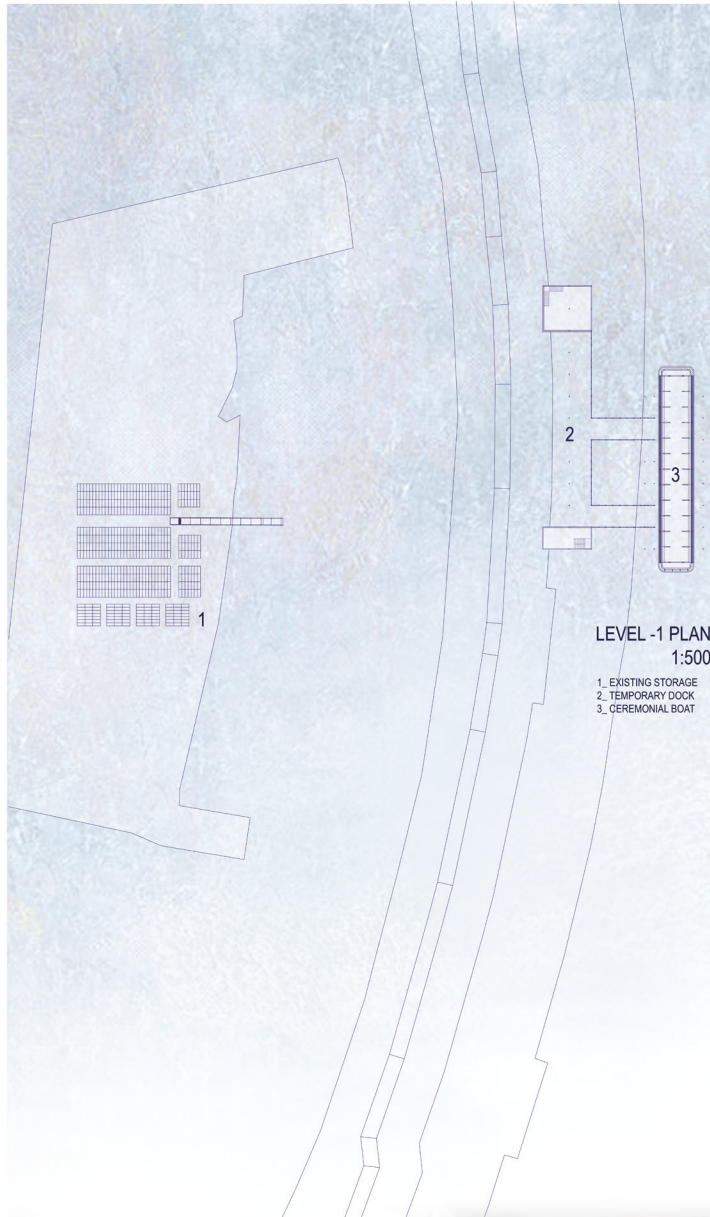
Peeking under the curtain from the lobby of the Musée de la Restitution



The Mezzanine Gallery, straddling views of restoration and packing



Temporary shipping port for restitution



Interior of the ceremonial boat traveling along the Seine



A final farewell from the banks of the Seine



Monday, June 24, 2024 - Final pinup for thesis defense

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The world we live in has been defined by the legacy of colonialism. To put it simply, we are never not worlding. Museums have acted in a colonial fashion, asserting control over their collections, trying to embody the entire world in one collection. Their contents have inherited a trauma that will not go away. We cannot undo what has been done, but must face the troubles we have inherited (Haraway 2016, 4). Museums cannot be decolonized without reinvention. Decolonization is a process rather than an endpoint and must involve the communities affected by colonization, rather than taking a top-down approach. It requires messiness and complexities. Ursula K. Le Guin described the similarities between writing a fictional world and telling historical stories; past events exist, after all, only in memory, which is a form of imagination. The event is real now, but once it's then, its continuing reality is entirely up to us, dependent on our energy and honesty (Procter 2020, 262).

The proposed architecture works in tandem with this narrative of return. The architecture tells a story through policy and action that is 50 years overdue. The fate of these artifacts lies in the hands of curators and citizens. The centre only acts as a backdrop and means to reveal the act of restitution as theatre. The boat is its stage and the banks of the River Seine are its gallery. The new museum is an accessible back of house that draws the existing collection from its underground vault. It is a parasitic attachment to an existing museum. The Musée du Quai Branly already has the capability to return its stolen contents, but what it lacks is transparency and the ability to accept other voices to contribute to these meaningful restitutions. It is open to

restoration, research, and fabrication, offering transparency and messiness to the sterile world of museology. It is an architectural response to the French state's call for cultural reparations, guided by the theories of Ariella Aïsha Azoulay and Clémentine Deliss. I acknowledge that I am designing this as only a single voice to inspire change. For museums to truly change, it would involve multiple voices from different viewpoints.

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