

Molding Memory: An Analysis of the Relationship between Representations of Candomblé in  
Public Places of Memory and the Afro-Brazilian Community.

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## ABSTRACT

Over eighty-five percent of the population of Salvador, Brazil is of African descent, creating a rich history of cultural, political and social development. Nevertheless the majority of the museums in Salvador have historical spoken very little of this culture and its relationship to the city. In 1982, the Museu Afro-Brasileiro opened, introducing a small museum focused solely on the cultural exchange between Africa and Brazil as well as the development of Afro-Brazilian religiosity. Thinking critically about the importance of museums in the construction and dissemination of awareness, knowledge and respect for cultures as well as the current debates over the treatment of non-western cultures in museum exhibits, this paper looks to explore the ways in which different sectors of the public interact with and make meaning in the museum so that we may understand the ways in which conceptions of Afro-Brazilian culture are challenged and reified in the museums. It looks at the different ways that information is communicated as well as the different associations and representations created due to context, location, background, and arrangement of its exhibitions.

This paper begins with a critical overview of the relationship between museums and non-Western cultures, the short relationship and history of Candomblé and the public sphere and the potential use of representations of Candomblé in political and social racial movements in Brazil. It then goes on to explore four different representations of Africa, Afro-Brazilians and Candomblé in different memorials and museums in Brazil. The central focus of the paper is the Museu Afro-Brasileiro, with attention given to the narrative created through the arrangement of objects and accompanying text, the many levels of meaning created by different sectors of the museum's public and how this affects the way that the religion is seen in the public sphere. To better understand what is at stake in the process of representing a cultural in a public place of memory, the paper also examines exhibits at three other museums. Asking how is meaning constructed? Who is given a voice? Who is the exhibit for? And how does the exhibit influence how these cultures are perceived. Finally this paper looks at the potential power of the museum to change what is valued, who is given a voice in society, and the way that different sectors interact with one another outside of the gallery walls.

## METHODOLOGY

The home base for my project was the Museu Afro-Brasileiro in Salvador, BA. The state of Bahia is located in the northeastern region of Brazil. Because of its prominent location on the mouth of the Bay of All Saints and the large amount of land used for the raising of a diverse number of crops, the city played a large role in the slave trade as well as was the center of long history of black movements of resistance and the racial struggle for rights. Today, Bahia is the capital of Afro-Brazilian culture, and over seventy percent of its population is of African descent. The city of Salvador is over 85% black and is the home to over two thousand Candomblé Terreiros. Furthermore it is the site of the first politically conscious museum dedicated solely to Afro-Brazilian culture, in the historic neighborhood Pelourinho. The museum is small, made up six galleries, and a small office. It is run by the Federal University of Bahia and is housed in the first medical university in Brazil, which has now been relocated to another part of Salvador. My advisor for the project is the museum coordinator and professor of museology at UFBA, Marcelo Nascimento Bernardo da Cunha.

I went to the museum three times a week and spent time observing the exhibits, talking to the staff and the tourists and observing the school groups that received guided tours. The rest of my project was done outside of the museum at the different museums that have exhibits related to the representation of Candomblé and other forms of Afro-Brazilian culture. I also conducted a number of formal interviews with people who work with museums and Afro-Brazilian culture, more specifically Candomblé in Salvador.

When I first walked into a new exhibit space I spent a good amount of time observing the actually objects that were on display, the manner that they were exhibited and how this affected the way that people would come to understand both the objects and the people and cultures that they belong to. I spent a lot of time taking detailed notes on how the objects and exhibits were arranged because they served as the basis for my entire project. The arrangement of an exhibit is a way to understand how the people who put together the exhibits value and understand the culture they are showing as well as a way to understand how the viewer is going to think about and interact with the museum and the culture. I paid special attention to any text that was displayed along with the objects because this text is the only common information about the culture and objects that all visitors will receive during their time at the museum. Most of the text

displayed was originally displayed in Portuguese and translated by me for the paper. My research also included a fair amount of reading of secondary sources, in particular the masters and doctorate theses of my advisor, Marcelo Cunha. These works are also written in Portuguese and I did any translations found in my text as well.

I also spent some time in the Museu-Afro-Brasileiro talking to the people who came to visit the museum. I had five questions that I asked every tourist or person visiting the museum unguided. These questions tried to get an impression of their previous knowledge of Candomblé and Afro-Brazilian culture, what they learned in the museum and what they think about the importance of the museum to the city, and country. I always asked these questions as people were leaving the museum and unfortunately due to language barriers, I could only interview visitors who spoke English or Portuguese.

I also conducted seven formal interviews with different members of the museum community in Salvador. Two of these interviews were in English and the rest were conducted in Portuguese. I always came into each interview with previously constructed questions, yet I let them flow pretty freely and oftentimes left with different information than I thought I would get. For the interviews conducted in Portuguese, I made the translations during the interview and took notes by hand. Therefore the information collected is limited by both my memory of the interview and note taking and by my Portuguese skills, which are six weeks of formal classes, and two and a half months of language immersion.

Another component of my research was observations of school tours that were given by the museum's tour guide, André. These tours were usually an hour long and concentrated on the same parts of the museum each time. During the first tours I saw I was particularly interested in observing what parts of the museum was shown and how were they communicated to the audience. As time went on I became more interested in how each group related to the museum differently depending on their personal background. It became interesting to see how the museum transformed in the context of each group of students and their understanding of the material as well as their personal relationship with the themes.

I also visited a Candomblé ceremony because it is another public representation of the religion. I chose not to write up the entire experience of the ceremony as it is a religious event that is not particularly connected to my project. But I thought it was important to see how the religion publicly presented itself, as well as the part of Candomblé that is best known in the

country and probably the world. During my time at the ceremony I also spoke with a couple of members of the community about my project and visited their museum. The final component of my research was the observation of 35 interviews done by my advisor and the museum researcher with students from Salvador who wanted to work in the museum monitor project. During these interviews I sat at the table, introduced myself to each student and observed how they related to the general concept of museums, the specific theme of the museum and also learned about their personal backgrounds and connections in the city.

Overall my research methodology changed in each environment I worked in. In many ways I relied on my own interaction with the museum exhibits to help me understand their successes and their flaws. I also did not speak enough with the actual Candomblé community, whose representations I was studying. The methodology succeeded in producing many links between the places I visited and the people I talked to as well as helped me to keep myself organized throughout the entire period.

## INTRODUCTION

The museum in Western society has become something like a secular temple, a place used to reflect an image of Western society's imagined sense of history along side the "othered" histories of non-western societies. Museums have the ability to both endow a culture or community with prestige as well as to freeze it as primitive and "other". Sepulveda dos Santos reminds us in her article about representations of blacks in Brazilian Museums that in much of Brazil "important national institutes have no traces of black culture as a differentiated contribution to the nation" (54). In the larger context of the role of museums in Western thought, this lack can be translated into a literal lack of acknowledgement and memory of blacks in Brazil. The very history of representation of Candomblé in Bahian museums, says much about how the religion's relationship with Brazilian society has both dramatically changed and stayed the same. The first objects of Candomblé displayed publicly had been confiscated by the police, and today tourists still travel to Salvador in order to experience the sensual energy of Candomblé as depicted in the novels of Jorge Amado. It is important to think about the reasons why these different spaces of memory are created and who participates in them because they reveal much about the historical perceptions of these communities as well as the very ways in which they have been incorporated and/or marginalized in society. This paper is interested in the relationship that these museums and memorials have with the different communities that interact with and are represented by them. It is important to understand how different individuals make meaning from the exhibits so that we may understand the ways in which conceptions of Afro-Brazilian culture are challenged and reified in the museums. Furthermore because culture has become an increasingly important political and social tool for many black Brazilians, it is important to look at how these places of cultural memory and representation affect the way Candomblé, and more generally blacks are perceived.

My project also is relevant on a personal level. As an African American female, cultural representation has always been an important topic in my life. From the time I was a child the way that society imagined and spoke about blacks and especially black women, affected the way that I constructed and understood my own identity and place in society. The constant dissemination of images of blacks as oversexualized, uncultured, violent and primitive influences the way that many African Americans and Afro-Brazilians live out their every day lives in

society. Yet there are many people working to challenge and reconstruct these images through various different disciplines and social institutions. I chose to look at how the public representations of blacks in Salvador were constructed through the medium of the museum because of my background in museum education programs and my interest in art, and its social and cultural history. The Candomblé community proved to be a good way to focus my topic because of its importance in the historical construction and safekeeping of Afro-Brazilian culture and because of its prominence in museums in Salvador.

My original project sought to explore three different spaces of representation: the Museu Afro-Brasileiro, the sculptures of the Orixás at Dique de Tororó and a smaller museum in a Candomblé terreiro. What I discovered was that there was an unexpected complexity to the organization of dialogues of Candomblé within the museums of the city. Therefore this study has come to focus mostly on the Museu Afro-Brasileiro and what is at stake in the varying ways the different sectors of its public make meaning from its exhibits. This analysis is contextualized and complicated by looking at other representations of Candomblé found in the three other museums in the city, the Museu da Cidadã, a memorial at the Candomblé Terreiro do Gantois and the temporary exhibit “African Heritage” at the Museu Carlos Costa Pinto.

## SOCIAL RELEVANCE and BACKGROUND

Western culture has traditionally designated the museum as a place for cultural memory and representation, in which a distinct cultural hierarchy is established and perpetuated. The different manifestations of incorporation of non-western and minority cultures into the public realm over the past five hundred years are extremely diverse, including instances of successful diversification and horrific acts of voyeurism and extinction. The act of representing a non-western culture is always a political act that makes reference to the political, social and cultural history of both the dominant society and the non-western culture, the diverse number of communities that will either be represented or view the representation and the values of each of these communities. To understand what is at stake for Afro-Brazilian communities, their cultures and their political identities, as well as the larger conception of Brazilian patrimony in these spaces of public representation and memory, one has to be aware of the history and current state of ethnographic museum practice, the history of study of Afro-Brazilian culture as well as the relationship between the culture and the current movements for racial and ethnic equality in Brazil. Without this context it becomes impossible to understand the importance of the museum and the manner in which it represents the cultures and memories of its citizens. The museum is commonly thought of as a fixed place, which displays past cultures and objects. Yet I argue throughout this paper that it is actually a living space in which objects have the potential to become vessels of cultural and historical information as well as affect people's understanding of themselves and others.

George E. Marcus explains that museums are spaces of utmost importance in the organization of western identity because of their "role in making visible the foundational and originary narrative structure of western knowledge about the nature of the world" (Marcus in Pieterse, 2) As collectors and displayers of cultural, scientific and historical objects, museums actively create dialogues and silences about patrimonial identity, values and life. In fact, Marcelo da Cunha insists that through "representing a hegemonic discourse in its intertextuality, with artifacts to control the National identity, the museum constitutes a place where the patrimony is effectively manipulated and utilized as a political and authoritative tool" (Cunha "Teatros de Memórias", 22). For much of their history museums have been constructed and infused with the colonial mentality of maintaining national history and prestige by either choosing to display the riches of one's own culture or to document one's cultural and military

power by creating a monuments of imperialism, filled with the displaced and decontextuaize objects of others. The historical use of museums as a tool to create and instill as sense of identity, means that even today exhibits remain representations of “identity, either directly, through assertions, or indirectly, by implication...[they] are privileged arenas for presenting images of self and ‘other’” (Karp, 15).

In his essay entitled “Four Northwest Coast Museums: Travel Reflections”, James Clifford procures four different museums, all of which speak to the Northwest Coast Indigenous communities of Canada, in order to understand the different ways of creating representation and memory of a specific culture in varying museum settings. His work raises a number of questions about how museum exhibits work to construct, question and reconstruct both our own identities and the identities of other cultures through the creation of historical and cultural memory. Clifford’s essay seeks to examine how each museum, given its location, mission, size, access to information and curatorial decisions portrays the culture differently. He asks the reader to think about the communities that each museum attracts, the relationship between the museum and the people who it is talking about, how truths are created and presented, the narrative voice of the text, and the very manner of displaying objects in order to clearly show the reader that museums are in fact subjective and constructed places.

What becomes abundantly clear in Clifford’s essay is that these museums have made many strides from the traditional colonial museums. He writes that “no museum in the 1990s, tribal or metropolitan, can claim any longer to tell the whole or essential story about” any ethnic culture (Clifford 215). Today, we realize that culture is a highly complex web of norms, values, objects, spiritualities and daily realities. The museums that Clifford chooses to look at seem to be actively trying to keep up in an evolving mentality concerning museums and representation. He explains that

All four museums register the irruption of history and politics in aesthetic and ethnographic contexts, thus challenging the art-culture system still dominant in most major exhibitions of tribal or non-Western work. All mix the discourses of art, culture, politics and history in specific, hierarchical ways. They contest and compliment one another in response to a changing historical situation and an unequal balance of cultural and economic power (215).

The very fact that the museums that Clifford engages with are thinking about these issues is a huge step forward, towards a more critical museum exhibit and representation. Similarly, many of the museums that are discussed in this work are also beginning to think about these issues and

how they manifest themselves in the viewer's experience of the museum. Nevertheless, as Pieterse points out the museums, regardless if they have an intra or intercultural lens, still have much to accomplish: he writes, "colonialism is behind us, but repressed rather than assimilated. The critical assimilation of empire has not taken place in museums, nor, by and large, in other public media such as film or theater" (139). This means that despite lots of active and critical engagement between academics, communities and museum curators, the museum still remains a place tinted by the colonial mindset. The only way for the museum to disassociate from this framework is to actively engage with the preconceptions and lasting costumes from colonialism.

In the context of museums dealing with the African diaspora the history and reality of colonialism, slavery and racism still colors the manner in which the museums construct exhibits as well as the minds of the visitors who come to see them. Cunha writes,

African cultures, except references to Egypt, were always associated with ideas like "primitive", little development, inferiority, ignorance, and still, exotic, barbaric, magical, supernatural. These visions were transmitted through museum structures for expositions. Only in the second part of the twentieth century, with the surfacing of new ideas in the field of ethnography and history, are there revisions of these ideas, with critiques of the forms representations of cultures of the African continent and the cultures of the diaspora. ("Teatro de Memorias, 33).

Yet many of the recent changes in the practice of creating displays about the cultures of Africa and the diaspora are still highly problematic. David Scott speaks to the tendency of anthropologists to depict the cultures of the diaspora using the notion of continuities with either Africa or the experience of slavery. Scott argues that this tendency is "a distinctive attempt to place the "cultures" of the ex-African/ex-slave in relation to what we might call an authentic past, that is, an anthropologically identifiable, ethnologically recoverable, and textually representable past" (269). Many exhibits make reference to Africa and to slavery without thinking critically about what that reference means. It is important that museum exhibits communicate why the past of slavery and Africa is important to the understanding of the current culture in the diaspora rather than just call upon these experiences as cultural and anthropological roots for a people who often times seem to be without a respected cultural pasts. It is understandable that museums often look to educate a misinformed, Eurocentric public about the cultures and histories of Africa and of the diaspora. Yet these histories must be constructed as meaningful, both historically and for contemporary society. It is not enough for exhibits to just prove that they exist.

A desire to render these cultures equally as rich as European cultures also feeds the growing trend of exhibiting cultural objects of Africa and the diaspora as art. In her essay “Always True to the Object,” Susan Vogel expresses concern about the type of voices that museums adopt when speaking to African art. She argues that “we are too far from the voices of the original owners and makers, too locked into the perspectives of our own culture to presume to be faithful to the object in any exalted way,” therefore it is problematic to apply the authoritative voice found in the Western and science museum to the work of another culture (193). Yet, this method can also be problematic: Pieterse explains, “the art-culture approach tends to follow an assimilations exhibiting strategy, seeking to emphasize similarities between the aesthetic of the viewers and the makers of the objects,” which many times doesn’t exist (126). This dynamic introduces the question of how to speak about the cultural value of an object to a viewer that does not live in the same system of values and habits as the object. To exhibit an object without any context or cultural background is to let the viewer assume that the object exists within his or her own system cultural values. The museum must, and many have, begin to find ways to construct the voice and narratives that accompany the objects, voices that respect both the cultural gaps between the viewer and the object, as well as the viewer’s respect for and interest in critically engaging with and being challenged by another culture, as well as its objects, views, mores and values.

The question of how to give voice to cultures that are not fully understood and lived in by all of the communities that interact with the museum is one that frames the rest of the paper. The questions of who gets to create that voice, who gets to be included in the dialogue and who is silenced, are just as important critically engaging with and speaking to the strengths, weaknesses and affects of museums and other forms of public representation. The question of the museum’s audience, as well as its location also plays a large role in the type of dialogue created around the representation and memory of a culture. The museums engaged with Afro-Brazilian culture, and particularly, Candomblé in the city of Salvador are all relatively new. The Museu Afro-Brasileiro was opened in 1982, the Museu de Cidade was established in 1973, and the Memorial Mãe Menininha was created in 1992. Each museum still battles with issues of colonialism, preconceptions and prejudiced ideas about Africans and their descendents, representations of the history and relation between Africa, slavery and today’s culture, as well as the type of narrative voice used in the accompanying text. Much of the dialogues created around Candomblé and

Afro-Brazilian culture in these museums mirror the history of the anthropological study of Candomblé, which is greatly responsible for the growing respect, awareness and interest in the Afro-Brazilian culture and identity in Brazil and around the world.

Most scholars choose the work of Raymundo Nina Rodrigues as the beginning of the evolution of the relationship between Candomblé, academia and popular Brazilian society. Although there are earlier example of journalists who documented the growth of Candomblé and the reign of police terror that the religion underwent at the turn of the twentieth century, Rodrigues' academic perspective and interest in Candomblé, although still incredibly racist, was the first of its kind. Rodrigues' academic study of the houses of Candomblé was focused on discovering the "natural causes" of possession, which he viewed as a mental sickness connected to the "primitive mind" of the black race, who had not yet finished evolving. This racist view of Candomblé as a type of sickness was repeated in the work of Arthur Ramos who argues that the lack of control over the unconsciousness seen in Candomblé was not an evolutionary matter, but instead a sign of regression, which "could be overcome through education, learning to control the body and the unconscious...[by learning how] to embody civilization" (51). Robert Sansi locates academia's, and consequently, the public's focus on possession, sorcery and syncretism in Candomblé as direct results of these two anthropologists. Understanding their racist undertones helps to contextualize the way they are treated in museums today.

The 1930s and 1940s abandoned the more scientific study of Candomblé in order to explore the religion through art, both visual and literature by Jorge Amado, Carybe, Roger Bastide and Pierre Verger. These artists, many of whom were not Brazilian, came to depict Candomblé "with different eyes, seeing the 'passions', 'the hot blood' of black people with admiration, as an expression of vitality, of strength" (52) These artists also helped to set the tone and the visual imagery found in public discussion of Candomblé today. Verger and Carybe's consistent depictions of Filhos de Santos in trances, came to be the most common way that the different Orixás are depicted throughout Bahia, despite the fact that each Orixá is also associated with a number of symbols as well as Catholic imagery. Furthermore, these artists/anthropologists, inspired by the work of Melville Herskovits who saw Candomblé as essentially ethnic and best studied in light of its African influences, became increasingly interested in the continuities between Africa and Brazil, leading them to work with only the terrieros which they deemed to be "purely African." The connection between these artists and

Candomblé would go much deeper than intellectual interest. Amado, Carybe, Verger and Bastide both became Obás of Xangô at Ilê Ayé Opô Afonjá, the Terreiro of Mãe Senhora, bringing her house and the religion into a more respectful Brazilian and international spotlight. This focus on Candomblé became institutionalized with the founding of the Center for Afro-Oriental Studies at the Federal University of Bahia, a program which created an even stronger dialogue between Brazil and Africa by sending students to Africa and having African students study here. One Brazilian student, Juana Elbein, even became a full initiate in Candomblé, and wrote a book, which proposed to study Candomblé “from the inside out”. Her book, along with the many that would follow by initiates of Candomblé including Mãe Stella’s Meu Tempo é Agora, described “an extremely complex cosmology, a very sophisticated theological and philosophical system” (58).

Mãe Stella’s announcement in the 1980s that “during slavery syncretism was necessary for our survival, now its results and public manifestations includes Candomblé adepts and priests participating in church washings, going out on processions to Mass, etc., which undermines us as a religion and marginalizes Candomblé as something exotic, as folklore and tourism,” added even more strength to the connection between Africa and Brazilian Candomblé (Mãe Stella in Selka, 24). Mãe Stella announcement not only recognized the connection between the two continents but also warned against the identified the misrecognition of Candomblé as part of the Catholic religion, as a major culprit to understanding Candomblé as a sacred independent space where African cultural and religious traditions were preserved. Robert Sansi also rightly asserts that for many Candomblé houses and *povo do santo* this view “denies the complex process of historical construction of Candomblé, in which the give and take between Brazilian society and its public religion, Catholicism, cannot be so easily dismissed” (21). In the context of the public representations of Candomblé, the result of this tension between syncretism and purity can be seen in the complete omission of many houses of Candomblé that have not maintain the “pure African” religion, as well as a hesitation to speak to the syncretism despite its prevalence in Candomblé practices and the larger Afro-Brazilian culture today.

Despite these tensions, which have penetrated the representations of the religion, it is still hard to know the exact influence that academia has had on Candomblé today. Robert Sansi as well as other scholars such as Vagner Gonçalves da Silva, Véronique Boyer and Stefania Capone have all argued that “the elite of Candomblé practitioners in these more prestigious

Candomblé houses became increasingly influenced by anthropology and by this middle-class, international, intellectual culture.” On the other hand Michael Agier asserts that, “while anthropologists have contributed to the ethnic discourse of Candomblé leaders, their work has had little or no influence on the faithful; after all ritual apprenticeships involve hierarchical social relationships, oral communication, and gestures, not book learning.” Whether or not the work of anthropologists and intellectuals has influenced the actual beliefs and practices in Candomblé, they have influenced the public places of memory and representation of the religion. These spaces in many ways mimic the different conversations of Candomblé that have occurred in the past century, whether they focus solely on the world of the Orixás and the system of myths that secures it, or on the dialogue between the sacred and profane within a complex socio-religious system a.

Candomblé has not only been of interest to the anthropological community. It has also found its way into identity conversations in groups of Brazilians of African descent and by the larger Brazilian community and government. Both of these groups see Candomblé as a viable way to increase their cultural currency in order to reach out to the larger black population in Brazil in the fight against racial prejudice, or to continue to bring tourism to Brazil, and more specifically Bahia, through cultural allure. The impact of tourism on Candomblé and its representation is an incredibly serious issue that will continue to come up in the conversation about how and why Candomblé is represented in Salvador. Yet it is also important to recognize the attention the religion has recently received from other Afro-Brazilian movements, and the new meanings and values the representation of the religion has gained or reemphasized because of this exchange. Candomblé is not alone in being recognized as a culturally important tool for the social and political struggle of blacks in Salvador, other cultural communities such as afro blocos, capoeira schools, and the black soul movement have also become involved in the reconstruction of racial identity. In their introduction to the anthology entitled Black Brazil Larry Cook and Randal Johnson write,

as a form of identity politics, cultural practices may ultimately have a more profound and lasting impact than some kinds of more specifically political activities. Rather than being expressions of “innocuous nonconformity” or “manifestations of cultural tourism,” cultural practices which lead to the emergence of a new consciousness, even when in an apparently dispersive manner, may well be a necessary step in the development of more explicitly political organizations by helping to shape political and social awareness (5).

This re-appropriation and new awareness of Afro-Brazilian culture as the cultural property of all people of African descents in Brazil complicates meaning of places of representation and memory of the religion. They are not just places of strength, remembrance and respectful learning for the *povo do santo* and interested Brazilians and international visitors. They are also places that have the potential to endow a large sector of Brazilian society, who have historically been dislocated and marginalized, with a sense of identity, pride and a history of culture and resistance, which may eventually and hopefully led to a larger struggle for rights and representation in other realms of Brazilian society, including political, social and economic.

## THE POWER OF REPRESENTATIONS

The Museu da Cidade is located next door to the Museu de Jorge Amado in the historic district of Salvador, called Pelourinho. The museum occupies a brightly painted colonial house, which sits at the top of a hill abutting a small praça. The plaque at the entrance of the museum presents it as “a collection of paintings, sculptures, designs and tapestries [which show] the profound talent in Bahia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The influence of Africa in Bahian culture can be seen in the art that represents the Orixás, Baianas and slaves.” Upon entering the exhibition space, the visitor is confronted with a large quilt entitled “História do Brasil” by José Santos Freitas. The largest central patch depicts a Baiana, wearing the traditional long white skirt, white hair wrap and Candomblé beads around her neck. The other depiction in the central patch is an image of the large elevator that was built in Salvador to connect the lower and upper part of the city. In front of the elevator is a cathedral, two palm trees, a donkey, and many smaller women, dressed as Bainanas who carry large ceramic jugs on their heads. The caption reads “Vem, a Bahia, te espera”. It is important to think about this image before moving on to speak to other depictions of Bahian history and culture in the quilt. Who are these people that are being depicted in this patch? They are clearly black women but are they the Baianas of the turn of the twentieth century, who worked hard to help their families and communities survive despite the oppressive force of slavery, white supremacy, police brutality, and systemic social exclusion, does this image render the historical ties to a culture of resistance present?. Or does the text sever these women from their historical ties and instead links them to the growing tourism industry in Salvador. The image of these women has been taken and placed on postcards, in the tourist art that is sold on the beaches and in the streets of Pelourinho and even appropriated by the women who now walk around the Pelourinho to take photographs with the tourists.

The straddling of the line of the history of resistance and identity of a people and the tourist market is not only found in this image or in this museum. It is a characteristic that plagues almost every representation of Afro-Brazilian culture and religion. It is only through the context of an image, the way it is displayed, spoken about, and the other objects around it, that the viewer can begin to decipher what is created in respect for the culture and what is created for its commodification. The quilt is full of many different images of Bahia, in smaller patches that surround the larger one. There is a section of pictures of Brazilian fruits with their names, cacáu, manga, mamão, côco, written below them. Another patch shows a map of the state, another has

a white illustration of Nossa Senhora Aparecido. More problematic patches include a picture of morena mother nursing a well dressed white child, while two black babies sit naked on the floor below her. There is a patch with eight Orixás and their names displayed in their colors and popular outfits and another of capoeiristas in motion. Around the border of the quilt are a number of images of historical figures, most of who are white and connected to either the government or church. Unlike the other people depicted in the quilt, these portraits are given dates, names: signifiers of a historical place, time and importance. I am not interested in questioning the historical accuracy or cultural importance of these images to the Bahian identity. Instead I want to think about how the lack of information that would helps the viewer to contextualize and understand these images, affects the way the viewer takes in the quilt. I want to problematize the way it allows the art to nurse and help form fetishes and preconceptions about the cultural history and present of Bahia.

The images presented in the quilt become three dimensional on the second floor of the museum. In an exhibit which works to commemorate the two hundred and fifty year anniversary of the independence of Brazil [through] reconstructing the social and domestic life of the nineteenth century.” What follows is a series of small scenes of domestic life using traditional Bahian dolls, called “bruxas se pano”. The scenes differ thematically, some show white women, in beautiful dresses lounging in gardens, or sitting nicely in chairs. There are a couple of scenes of black women taking care of white children. In the second room the scenes get more complex, one show a morena woman holding a white baby dressed in lace as she steps out of a carriage, which is held up by two dark skin men dressed in matching uniforms. The text reads, “for a long time the only mode of transportation for the women was to be carried by slaves. It was a privilege for the magistrates, doctors, and professors. It was an extravagance because not everyone could afford enough slaves to be carried.” Not only does every image in the exhibit depict black Brazilians enslaved and at the service of whites, the text provided by the museum idealizes the ownership of slaves and the use of slave labor, labeling those who had many as “extravagant” and “privileged,” rather than racist, inhumane and perpetuating a system of cruelty. The exhibit insists on presenting the colonial period in Brazil and its reality of slavery, yet it does so in a way that highlights and spreads the image of blacks as passive, and inferior to whites.

In his analysis of museum representations of Africa and its diaspora, Cunha points out that images of slavery are often depicted as a part of the notion of “order and progress,” where slavery is not problematized but instead shown as a natural practice without conflict and ignores any resistance that took place before the turn of the twentieth century, ultimately creating the image of passivity and the incapacity to resist (“Teatro de Memorias, 78). These images and ideas are incredibly powerful. They are informed by and help construct how Brazilian society thinks about a majority of its population, as well as how blacks in Brazil think about themselves. The display of a history of passivity in the black community in Brazil does not only obfuscate the truth by denying thousands of people and different cultural, political and social groups their role in the struggle for rights in Brazil, it also works to undermine any growing movements for change today. It is much easier to understand how black children, as well their families, can suffer from internalized racism, if the museum of their city displays a sculpture of a black man, with his pants around his knees getting whipped at the Pelourinho, without any dialogue about what this image means and the atrocities that this action invokes.

Yet stemming from the images described above, of blacks as passive slaves performing hard labor, is another school of members of the Afro-Brazilian religious community, academics, tour guides, educators and museum curators who are working to create spaces with a different image of Africans and their descendents in the city of Salvador and the country of Brazil. This more critical concept of museums and memorials, which work to produce more progressive, politically and culturally meaningful spaces of memory and representation still have their problems, as they continue to struggle within a historical racist system and attempt to reconstruct the very concept of the museum. As we explore these different spaces, the voices they create and those that they silence, it is important to think about how these spaces operate compared to the Museu da Cidade, as well as the different communities they are interested in building, the types of discussions that take place within their walls and the questions that arise from their exhibits and memorials. All of these places are constantly examining, and re-examining the question of how to represent a culture, a history of resistance, the continuities and changes of a people spread across continents, the individuals who gave their lives to the struggles and the living, ever-evolving reality and nature of these cultures today.

## THE AFRO-BRAZILIAN MUSEUM

The concept of the Museu Afro-Brasileiro was born in 1974, out of the work of the Federal University of Bahia, the government of the state of Bahia, and the town hall of the city of Salvador, as a part of a larger plan to build a center with courses and seminars on African themes, a place for the reception of African intellectual, the dispersal of grants the recruitment of professors for educational and cultural missions in Africa and the collection and presentation of African and Afro-Brazilian art (Cunha, “O Museu Afro-Brasileiro” 66). It is interesting to note the first drafts of the proposals for the museum, which was to talk about the ethno-geographic distribution of the cultures of Africa and the diaspora, their daily life and technology, their crafts, their vision of the world and their spirituality, describe a “daring and completely modern museum. With proposals of articulation of space that still today have not reached other institutions” (Cunha “O Museu Afro-Brasileiro” 69). Yet this museum never came to pass. Due to economic conflicts within the government and university as well as a large scale protest put on by the Bahian elite medical community who did not think it was fit to open a museum about African-Brazilian heritage in the building where the first medical school in Brazil was established. Therefore the museum was not opened until 1982.

The initial phase of the museum followed Pierre Verger’s ideas of continuities between Africa and Brazil. Juipurema Sandes, the museum researcher, explains, “although the museum was never quite the museum that he [Verger] imagined, you can see his ideas all throughout it” (Field Journal, 33). Verger’s notion of continuities has remained incredibly important to the way that the museum presents contact between the Brazilian and African cultures. Yet in its phase of remodeling that took place between 1997 and 1999, Marcelo Cunha and Sandes worked hard to also show how the African culture has changed and adapted itself to Brazilian society over the past five hundred years. Sandes spoke of the importance of showing how Brazil is influenced by Africa, as well as its cultural uniqueness,

Verger wanted to talk about how African Candomblé was. He thought that it gained value by being connected to the African culture. This is a racial discourse, one that says that all blacks share similarities. Now we are creating a cultural discourse. Where power is not found in ethnicity or race but instead in cultural distinction. Like the Indians, who have proved to the Brazilian government and society that they have a distinct cultural history that needs to be respected and preserved, the Afro-Brazilian culture should also be seen as something distinct that deserves to have its own place in the society (Field Journal, 33).

For Cunha the goal of the renovation was to display fewer objects in each room in order to highlight the fundamental parts of the cultures being discussed. There was also a huge project to change the way the objects were spoken about in the accompanying text, making sure to identify the elements of the artifacts that illustrate the cultural values and codes of the society. Like Sandes, Cunha felt as though it was most important to get rid of the confusion between the African and Brazilian culture that had occurred in the original exhibition, when the objects from the two different cultures were displayed together without proper contextualization (“O Museu Afro-Brasileiro” 117-119, Field Journal 39).

Today’s museum is composed of seven different small gallery spaces, each of which is given a specific theme. The first half of the museum is dedicated to different components of African culture, while the second speaks directly to Afro-Brazilian religiosity, with a focus on Candomblé. Every gallery space has mounted wall text that helps to orient the visitor historically and culturally; in addition a label, which gives its name, author, and date and community if applicable, accompanies every object in the museum. At times these texts also give a small amount of information about the object and its cultural uses. The museum provides translations of almost all the text, which can be received at the front desk and used throughout the entirety of the visit.

The first room in the museum has three large maps of Africa, one showing the different slave routes that were established throughout the new world, the second depicting pre-colonial Africa and the last is a map showing the different countries in Africa today. The texts of these maps provide the viewer with a background on Africa as well as on the connection between Africa and Brazil. The map, which shows colonial Africa, does not speak specifically about any one community or culture but instead works to instill a feeling of human history in the continent.

The African continent was the birthplace of the human species. Here all stages of man’s development are represented—from Australopithecus to Homo Sapiens—in an uninterrupted line of evolution. The agriculture revolution in Africa preceded that of other countries...for a long time, the western world believed that Sub-Saharan Africa did not have a history...in the pre-colonial period; people occupied sub-Saharan Africa in different stages of technical development. Their societies have never been static or isolated.

This text is the closest that the museum’s exhibit ever comes to forcing the visitor to acknowledge his or her preconceptions of the continent of Africa. By pointing out the continent’s importance not only because of its role in human evolution, but also because of its

technological advances and cultural and social diversity, the text attempts to reclaim a pre-colonial Africa, as both culturally and technologically important in human history and development. This notion of changing how the continent of Africa, and the many different cultures that exist there, is portrayed there came up in many of my interviews. Jaime Sodres, a professor of the history of art, Ogan of Candomblé and member of the team creating the new National Museum of Afro-Brazilian Culture in Salvador, explained, that “there is a preconception of primitivism when people speak of Africa. They think of a place without civilization. They think Africa is a past, it is never connected to technology. We have to change this” (Field Journal 51). The museum’s text about pre-colonial Africa begins to construct a different depiction of Africa, especially in its assertion that there were societies in Africa that were more technologically advanced than any other place in the world. This idea is picked up in the metallurgy section of the museum, which describes the method of metal work in Africa, called “Cera Perdida” to be both technologically advanced as well as an unique and skilled craft form. At the same time the museum fails to truly show the diversity of cultures in Africa, even of those cultures that directly influenced Brazil. The rest of the exhibits on Africa are arranged by theme, with hardly any differentiation between the cultures and cults represented. Furthermore each culture spoken of is done so without any specific context, so that it appears as though the society’s location in Africa and contact with other communities is of no relevance. In this way the museum suffers from its attempt to give voice to the entire continent of Africa given its limited amount of space and resources. Furthermore, like many other displays of African art, the museum struggles to display objects that are apart of a different and complex cultural system and therefore can only be understood through their original context, accompanied by their rituals of dance, singing, ceremonies, rhythms and food.

The next gallery’s central space is given over to a large installation of African sculptures and masks in the center of the room, while cases displaying objects related to traditional African clothing, games, musical instruments, and proverbial language border the walls. Many statues are accompanied by textual explanations that help to root the piece in a more culturally specific context, by explaining the natural forces and cult each is related to. It is through the sculptures that the first connections between Africa and Brazil come to life, as a brief scan of the names used in the labels, for example “Xangô” and “Yemanjá” are ones that are often seen around the city of Salvador and of course in terreiros of Candomblé. Yet nowhere in the text of the exhibit

is this connection formally made nor explained. Therefore despite the very different ways that these deities are spoken about in this part of the museum and the latter half about religiosity in Brazil, it is possible for the visitor to believe that the religions practiced on the two different continents are exactly the same. Paradoxically, it is possible for the similarities in deities to go completely unnoticed, especially because they are shown in two very different contexts: in the section about Africa we see the names of cults and deities appear without any specific reference to religiosity, while deities are only spoken about as religious figures in the later exhibits about Brazil.

Despite these critiques the museum succeeds in respectfully and knowledgeably displaying the cultural objects of African origin. Each display works to create a picture of a complex society, with its own mode of communication, spirituality, musicality and dress. With careful examination and sufficient time it is possible for the viewer to leave this section with a new way of seeing Africa and its cultural production. For example, the section on proverbial language, which speaks to the complex web of symbols used to recall the stories of the ancestors, help establish an awareness of a system of communication in a continent that usually associated with illiteracy. Furthermore, the exhibits create a basis for understanding the type of cultural that the ancestors of black Brazilians once knew, an action which re-forges a connection between generations which was partially severed by four hundred years of Brazilian slavery and Eurocentric government. Sandes explains that for many Brazilians of African descent, the power of what has survived in both Brazil and Africa despite the colonialism is overwhelming. For him, “it was important to show the African culture that was brought over to Brazil. Because the museum does want to speak to ideas of continuities and therefore they have to show the culture that existed in Africa that the people who were brought to Brazil would have known” (Field Journal 31). On the other hand, Marcelo Cunha has expressed a desire to change the way Africa is exhibited in the museum. For him the fact that the exhibit doesn’t talk about contemporary Africa is incredibly problematic: he hopes to see the museum move past the tendency to “situate the discussion of African and Afro-Brazilian culture in the past” (“Teatro de Memorias 95). He hopes that the museum “can work to bridge the gap between the pre-colonial Africa that was brought Brazil and the contemporary societies. By using texts, new images, and films in order to show the culture has changed and adapted and grown but also how it has retained a lot of the pre-colonial culture” (Field Journal 40).

Yet representing a more complex picture of Africa also requires changing the way some parts of the communities relate to the continent. Raul Lody, an anthropologist who specializes in African art and aesthetics explains that the ignorance seen in Brazil about Africa extends to the communities that feel very connected the continent, like Candomblé houses and afro blocos.

People remember Africa with everything beautiful, a happier place, with everyone looking the same, speaking the same, with a wealth of resources and knowledge. There is a sentiment, a wish to return to a place that never existed. We need to create an image of Africa that better tells the story of life there, and explains why the actual cultural, political and social reality is important to know, respect (Field Journal 41).

A museum that showed a more critical and complete view of Africa would also have to rethink how to show the connections between the two continents. To speak about Africa during the twentieth century, it might also be necessary to speak of the many intellectuals, dance troops, and Candomblé members who also kept the connection between the two continents alive by continuing to travel between the two coasts, creating and refusing the connection. Although there is a focus on making the museum a living place, as well as depicting the cultures as ever-evolving and rich, the way that the two continents are linked does not seem to be viewed in the same dynamic fashion. Even in the conversation about continuities and differences, the relationship between the two continents is also seen as one way, Africa influencing Brazil, and always through the idealistic lens of Africa as the sacred motherland, the perfect culture torn apart by colonialism and slavery. Even if the museum does not actively give voice to these ideas, the silences created around topics of poverty, conflict and modernity in Africa work to reinforce the different viewer's ideas about Africa, her past, her evolutions, and her challenges.

Not all of the silences created around the topics of slavery and colonialism are coincidental: it is of the utmost importance for both Sandes and Cunha, as well as the tour guide, André Louis Bispo, that the museum does not dwell on the violence committed against Africa and its descendants as well as the immense hurt and powerlessness slavery produced. André explained that he doesn't mention slavery on his tours unless a student brings it up. For him slavery "is not present in the story of resistance told by the museum" (Field Journal 17-18). Cunha adds, that we can no longer show images of slavery "without reference to the process of the organized struggle and resistance, seen in quilombos or insurrections" (Cunha "Teatro de Memoria" 75). The museum does mention slavery in its introduction and uses a map of the slave trade to explain both the vastness of the institution as well as show the location of the African societies that most strongly influenced Afro-Brazilian culture. Yet the tone of this text is both

forceful and critical of the practice of slavery, creating a different setting of the discussion of the institution than the Museu da Cidade. The text explains that there has been a record of slave trade in Africa since the first century, but that “the greatest demographic removal was a result of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The Portuguese expanded along African west coast-during the middle of the fifteenth century and reached its peak in the eighteenth. During this period an incalculable contingent of African was drained to the New World, not to mention those who died before and during the crossing of the Atlantic” the text both gives a sense of historicity of slavery and explains that despite the previous presence of a slave trade, the trans-Atlantic trade was an unusual and incredibly long act of inhumanity. Additionally the museum forces the visitor to also acknowledge the loss of lives of millions of skilled, young members of different African societies; creating a dialogue that does not just speak to slavery in the New World but also to its affect on an entire continent.

The topic of slavery also reappears in the hall that connects the discussion of African cultures and the discussion of Afro-Brazilian religions. A plaque with the famous drawing of the Brooks Slave Ship in the background briefly discusses the trip between Africa and Brazil that brought the African religions to this side of the world. Yet like the dialogue created around the slave trade, slavery is never the topic of focus of the museum or the history it tells, instead it talked about in a severely solemn tone in order to contextualize the birth of another culture. The treatment of slavery within this museum helps to provide a glimpse of a historical narrative that changes the way the history of African descendents is told. One that chooses to focus on stories of resistance rather than stories of annihilation, one that chooses to celebrate than grieve. There are a lot of challenging and complex themes that omitting an elongated discussion of slavery silences, yet the dialogue that is created has the potential to change the way that people think about blacks during the years of slavery as well as the image that blacks have of themselves. It is as André said, “Kids are raised thinking they are black and therefore they are inferior to whites, culturally, intellectually and financially, and therefore they must suffer.” Is it possible that the change in discourse about slavery in the museum may be a tool in order to change the ideas these kids have of themselves, their history and what their realities should be as well?

The museum’s representation of Candomblé is composed of three separate spaces. The first is a large wall with a collection of large photos of mães and pais de santo, accompanied by a long text and the throne for the mãe or pai de santo. The photographs recall specific names,

faces and terreiros of Candomblé, here, in Bahia. For some of the visitors these faces are familiar, for other they are just a collection of names. The text does very little to contextualize the human beings that helped to establish and keep safe the Candomblé religion, nor does it reveal any specific information of what that struggle entailed; there is no talk of police raids or syncretism. Instead what is provided is solemn respectful text, which reads:

Each photograph is the result of a search in old trunks and drawers by the religious community to ensure that the founder of his/her terreiro or in his/her absence, the most important priest or priestess of that house is represented in a museum, which the povo de santo immediately adopted as theirs...the amount of wisdom, leadership, and resistance that each one of the face here depicted symbolizes is a challenge to all those who are willing to get to know this culture better, either through bibliographic research, where there is already a vast amount of material, or by consulting the live encyclopedias which are the priest and priestesses of the Bahian cult. The team from the Afro-Brazilian museum, would like to express their gratitude for the precious donations and apologize for the absence of other equally as distinguished faces for reasons that are entirely beyond their will. We will nevertheless like to express our intention through these photographs of paying homage to each priest and priestess of the Candomblé of Bahia, all of them worthy of our utmost admiration

Although this text is mounted just as all the other text in the museum, it stands out in its voice and the information provided. Unlike the earlier texts about the African continent, this text takes a decidedly un-authoritative approach to speaking about the leaders of the Candomblé community. There is no attempt to explicate the role of the mães and pais de santos nor to move through the rituals of the religion. Instead the text challenges the reader to become engaged in a more meaningful way with the religion. The lack of specific information does not result in an superficial expression of gratitude. Instead the viewer is taken aback by the break in the museum's narrative structure, and made aware of the incredible importance of these individuals. It is in this moment that I believe the museum becomes a living organism, rather than a place that exhibits cultures of the past. There is nothing antiquated about this text and these pictures. Instead the religion lives, both in the faces of the mães and pais de santos and in the memory of the museum. It is a moment the presents Candomblé as a religion with tremendous strength and vivacity.

The next gallery speaks about the deities of Candomblé. The room exhibits the black and white photos by Pierre Verger of cult ceremonies both in Africa and in Bahia, as well as ironwork symbols relating to each Orixá. Finally in a glass case in the corner of the room is a series of dolls wearing the clothes of the Orixás from the terreiro Ilê Ayé Opô Afonjá. The issue

of representing the Orixás in public spaces has become an incredibly complex and layered debate. In the Museu de Cidade, fourteen mannequins are displayed, dressed as Orixás standing in a circle as if they were partaking in a Candomblé ceremony. These mannequins do not represent the actual Orixás or their meanings to the communities that believe in them, instead they depict the moment of the trance in a Candomblé ceremony. Even the eyes of the mannequins are partly closed and they lean forward, as in a dance. The Afro-Brazilian museum has a distinctly different goal in its presentation of the Orixás. The choice not to represent the actual Orixás through human figures, but instead through the symbols associated with each Orixá shows both a knowledge about the individual Orixás that goes past their stereotypical clothing as well as a respect for the non-human quality of the deities.

The text that accompanies each Orixá tries to communicate a little bit about each Orixá's story as well as meaning for the community. The Orixá Oxala is the first introduced in the exhibit. He is represented by a life-size metal interpretation of his staff and his fan, both of which are made in Bahia. Two of Verger's photos, taken in Nigeria in the 1950s, accompany the description. The text explains his importance as the Orixá chosen by Oludamare, the supreme god, to create the world. "He is known for his kindness and in Brazil his day is Friday and his followers dress in white colors. In Bahia many terreiros celebrate the ceremony called "Water of Oxalá" that remembers Oxalá's visit to her son Xangô." This text attempts to briefly create an understanding of the Orixá's importance to his followers as well as an image of how the Bahian Candomblé terreiro's interact with the deity. The amount of information given about each Orixá is much more detailed than any other museum in the city. Nevertheless this dialogue does help to keep the dialogues created about Candomblé focused on the Orixás, rather than the resistance of the *povo de Santo* or the worldview of the religion. Furthermore, the pairing of Verger's photos from Africa with the Afro-Brazilian deities works to both link the two continents and also create the impression that the religion in both places are the same. Many visitors are not aware of the cross-cultural pairing, as the captions for the photographs are in fine print. Accentuating the confusion is the fact that not every photo is Verger's, some photos depict Candomblé ceremonies in Brazil and are taken by Loero de Feitos. Although the exhibit is thematically organized, if the museum hopes to create a dialogue about similarities and differences it is important that these are well marked and explicated. There is a sense of continuities present in this area of the museum that is not necessarily untrue but definitely left unexplored or critiqued.

Carybe's carvings of the Orixás, which are displayed in the remaining galleries of the museum, are the best-known objects in the museum. In many ways this gallery breaks with the flow of the rest of the museum, it contains almost no text—except for an excerpt from the book “Carybe: Mural dos Orixás” published by the Bank of Bahia in 1979, which briefly describes each Orixá similarly to the manner that is found in most tourist shops and the Museu do Cidade. There is a small text about Carybe but the panels are treated as western art, as an object which does not require any aesthetic or cultural explanation. The three different depictions of Orixás in the museum, those accompanied by text and photos, the small dolls and Carybe's panels, beg the question, why and how should the Orixás be depicted in museums and how does this change the way that the visitor understands and values Candomblé as a religion. Sandes explains that the inclusion of Candomblé in the museum is not meant to explain the religion to the viewers but because Candomblé was instrumental in bringing and keeping safe African culture in Brazil.

The objects, photos, metalwork, dolls and wood panels, are all art, culture that is produced out of Candomblé. They are religious but they are also art inspired by the religion. Carybe doesn't depict Orixás like the mannequins in the Museu da Cidade...Instead he uses art and his imagination, as well as his experience in Candomblé to create an impression, a piece of art. (Field Journal 30).

Cunha views the role of the museum a little differently. For him speaking of Candomblé, or any object in the museum as pure art is problematic. He explained “these are not just decorative and artistic objects, they have implications that are larger than aesthetic. Its complicated because the African aesthetic is not the same as ours: their religions and how they used and viewed the object, is outside our points of reference. These objects reference other ideas outside of their simple external value” (Field Journal 37). The exhibit does bring together both of these ideas well. Displaying the dolls and Carybe's panels without much contextual information, letting their aesthetic values do the communication, while also giving some contextual information through the photographs of the Mães and Pais de Santo and the text about the different Orixás. Still for many viewers the museum is the vehicle through which the world of Candomblé is seen. Therefore the fact that the majority of the discussion of Candomblé is focused on the Orixás has an incredible effect on the way that the museum's visitors understand Candomblé. The museum and its exhibits are involved in a chain of representation that includes the visual history of the way Candomblé is understood, the preconceptions that people have of the religion, as well as the viewer's previous knowledge of the culture. Displaying images of Orixás, especially famous ones by Carybe and Verger, will always link the museum to the visual

imagery of the filhos de santos at “Candomblé festas” as well as the tourist imagery of Orixás, perpetuating connections in the visitors mind of “trances” and folkloric Orixás. These realities and their connotations as well as ways to combat them must always be consider when constructing a cultural or artistic narrative in a museum.

To understand how museums work as a link in a complex chain of social and historical signifiers and concepts, the museum must recognize that different people will make different meaning from the text and objects exhibited. Cunha explains that,

the room of visitors is heterogeneous, composed of diverse backgrounds, different economic and intellectual levels. When you put on an exposition, you assume that some individuals will understand all of your messages, being able to understand up until they think it is mundane. One the other hand, there are others who will be completely unaware of the exhibit’s significance, having a hard time comprehending.

Despite the amount of individual difference in the comprehension of the museum exhibits, the museum thinks of its public as comprised of smaller communities, with the assumption that within each community there will be similarities in the ways that meaning is made in the museum and that between communities there will be radical differences. Both Cunha and Sandes identified four different sectors of the public that visits the museum, the tourists who come to the museum without a guide, the tourists who come with a guide, the school groups and finally the Afro-Brazilian community (Field Journal 32). Those visitors without a guide see the museum much as it is described above. While the school groups who receive a tour guide who is hired and trained by the museum coordinator and researcher, experience an entirely different narrative. The narrative created by third party tour guides who bring the tourists into the museum is also different, as the guide has a different relationship with the story and objects in the museum. The fourth and final community is the people involved in Candomblé or other aspects of the Afro-Brazilian identity, including capoeira, blocos afros, and other political, social and cultural movements. Unfortunately, the relationship between these communities and the museum, which were so strong at the museum’s conception, has begun to fade. Nevertheless, both Cunha and Sandes expressed interest in reestablishing these bonds, effort has already been made to begin to do work with the religious and politically-minded afro-catholic sisterhood Nossa Senhora de Boa Morte (Field Journal 31, Cunha “Teatro de Memórias 100).

Yet discovering the different ways that each of these communities interacted with the museum proved to be more complicated than this list. For example there seemed to be a wide diversity within the school groups who visited the museum, despite André’s claim that ninety

percent of the students he gives tours to have no previous knowledge about Candomblé (Field Journal 18). Similarly, many African American tourists come to Salvador for the sole reason of experiencing Afro-Brazilian culture, while there are other contingencies of tourists who visit the city for its sun and beaches. Eventually a close look at the public of the museum revealed the many different possible dialogues that could be created in the museum. Some groups came very close to the museum's mission to respectfully show the continuities and difference in the African and Afro-Brazilian cultures and others left the museum with very little new information or perspective on the culture and its connection to the Bahian people and the city of Salvador.

The museum gives the majority of its resources to the groups of students who visit during the week with their schools or community organizations. All of these students get into the museum for free and receive a guided tour from one of the tour guides who have completed a yearlong course in museum monitoring taught by the Museu Afro-Brasileiro and the Museu Eugênio Teixeira Leal/Memorial Do Banco Econômico. Everyone involved in bringing the school groups to the museum thinks of the exchange as incredibly important both for the museum's mission and for the student's education and cultural backing. Oftentimes it is the group's first time in a museum and the students are coming from a Eurocentric education, despite the fact that over ninety percent of the students who visit are of African descent. Paula Santos explains that even the students at the best schools in the city know the capitals of almost all of European countries and of the United States and Canada, yet they don't know that Africa is a continent. Even though the Afro-Brazilian culture surrounds the city and the majority of people who live in "popular neighborhoods" interact with it, in the religion, the food, the dance "the majority of the people, they still don't have a good understanding of this culture's connection to Africa" (Field Journal 45). Therefore for the students to come to the museum and learn that their culture has direct connections to Africa is incredibly important.

On every tour that André leads of the museum, the connection between the African cultures and Brazil is made in front of the first object talked about. André begins his tours near the African masks, completely omitting the maps of Africa and the topics of slavery and colonialism. He always explains that these are not just masks and sculptures. They are objects used in ceremonies and parties that work as symbols for nature, animals and human characteristics. He always compares one of the ceremonies to Carnival, which seems to be more of an attempt to create a connection between the two cultures than to communicate a fact. When

André speaks to the proverbial language section, which displays different quilted symbols that represent stories passed down from one generation to the next, he always asks the students where in our society today do we have symbols that represent different ideas and people? Culling together a number of answers, from soccer jerseys to state flags, to the symbols that represent the afro blocos. These simple connections become much stronger as the group moves over to the music section to discover that most of the African instruments displayed have Brazilian counterparts. As the groups travel to the metallurgy section, the way that the two cultures are tied together changes once more: André explains how the African deity Gu, who was the deity of agriculture and war, became transformed into the Afro-Brazilian Orixá Ogum, who's power is also associated with iron. André is always careful to say that these deities are the same, but they are thought about differently on the two sides of the Atlantic; the symbols of each have changed over time yet the meaning remains the same.

André also expands on these ideas in front of the statue of Exu, found in the section with descriptions of the Orixás. Here he begins to deconstruct syncretism and its effects on Candomblé. He begins by speaking about how Exu is the son of two other very important Orixás, Iemanjá and Oxalá; he is also the god of travelers, streets and crossroads. He asks the kids what the image of Exu makes them think of, and they always respond, the devil, due to his long tail, pitchfork and ears. André then explains that Exu is not the devil at all but that he is associated with death and wandering, therefore when Catholics who were prejudice against Candomblé heard about Exu, they wanted to take away his power by associating him with the devil. It is important to understand that to the *povo de santo*, this image of Exu is not bad at all, instead it is a way of representing his power. He explains that it is not the only way to represent Exu and that it comes out of the contact between Catholicism and Candomblé. Every tour that André leads deals with the different ways that African and Afro-Brazilian culture mirror one another. His tours deconstruct the idea that Africa is a distant continent and brings the culture, which so many Brazilians think of as primitive and inferior, incredibly close to the culture of the students in the groups. His tours don't necessarily make these connections because they are inevitable conclusions for any museum visitor. Every time André references the link between the two continents, it is because he is making a considerable effort to construct the message that the museum hopes to communicate.

The narrative that André disseminates during his tours of the museums is powerful not only because it clearly constructs a framework that communicates the museum's interest in showing the continuities and differences between the two cultures, but also because it also works to critically engage the students in rethinking about their notions of black culture and identity. Personally André, who was raised within a Candomblé Terreiro by his white grandmother, believes the museum should not be a place to talk about race: he explained that the museum tells "our history and you don't have to believe in Candomblé to understand this. It is not just about the religion but about the culture that give birth to and maintained the religion" (Field Journal, 17). Yet for many of the professors of the groups that visited the museum, the visit often is seen as a way of exposing the students to different representations of black identity in Salvador. A professor of a group of students between the ages of 13 and 16, who are currently learning about resistance over land rights, explained that for the kids coming to the museum is an issue of internalized racism and rethinking the European mindset that is taught in schools. For her bringing the kids to the actual museum is necessary in order to help them understand and identify with Afro-Brazilian culture, "you can tell the kids everyday in a classroom that Africa has a rich culture but when the students leave the class and see the objects and history, they understand in a completely different way" (Field Journal, 28).

Many of the professors of the groups I observed aided the students in making this connection, especially in groups where that already had some background or link to Afro-Brazilian culture. During André's tour with students from the community program Steve Bikos the professor would often participate in the tours, actively asking the students to challenge their preconceptions: in the metallurgy section he reminded the students that the work displayed are example of the immense amount of technology found in Africa. Adding, "if people try to tell you that there is no technology in Africa you can respond 'no, I went to the Museu Afro-Brasileiro and André showed me'" (Field Journal 50). Another group of women from a program that helps women leaders of community programs learn how to talk about ethnic identity also saw the museum as living proof of the complexity and splendor of African and Afro-Brazilian culture. What was important for these women was the concept of fertility and matriarchy in African cultures. The group leader honed in on the image of Yemenja, the goddess of fertility in the Xangô cult in Africa as well as in Candomblé, as figure who could aid in the group's understanding of the different symbols of female power and respect and how they traveled across

the ocean. André took the time to explain to the women how the different African clothing was used to identify the different cults that people were a part of, the deities that they identified with and the position of power in the society. He explained that although Candomblé women did not use African clothes, they use the French colonial style, but they still have the same symbolism that the clothes had in Africa, even if they look completely different. By working together André and the leader communicated a history of the appropriation and re-appropriation of powerful symbols in order to illustrate how women in Brazil were able to continue to communicate and maintain ideas and symbols of power. For these women, like the children who will now associate Africa with technology, the discovery of this new history can easily be translated into a deeper respect for blackness and mother Africa.

The different ways that these two groups chose to relate to the relationship between African history and culture and present day Brazilian identity illustrates the different paths of communication opened up by the museum. In both of these cases, through the eyes of these different groups, the museum reached a new level of potential. During these tours the museum momentarily became what Raul Lody describes as ‘a collective memory,’ “connecting to our previous experiences and knowledge to the story or image presented. A memory that is always experienced individually but also helps to locate an individual’s understanding in a larger web of cultural understanding, participation and identity” (Field Journal, 31). André was successful in achieving the museum’s main themes, while also allowing the tours to relate to the specific areas of interest and needs of the group. This brings up two important points: the first is the many different levels of meaning that exist in the museum, which are constituted by innumerable factors, including previous knowledge, personal identity, interest, time spent in the museum, who else is in the museum, ability to look closely at objects and ask questions. Every group of students that entered the museum experienced it differently, their background were different, their teachers were different, their attention level was different and André always related to them in a different way. Secondly, each group also revealed a different component of what the museum had to offer the community, whether it was to explain the role of Candomblé in maintaining African culture in Bahia, or to illuminate the importance of women in these societies, or to explain how., through the process of syncretism, appropriation and racism, the African goddess Iemenja is now illustrated throughout the city as a white, blond-haired, blue-eyed woman.

Through the museum monitors program the museum also works with another community of students in the city, most of who come from low-income, single parent, black neighborhoods. The students participate for a year in a program which teaches about museum monitoring in partnership with the Museu Eugênio Teixeira Leal/Memorial Do Banco Econômico. As a part of the application process each student sits for a five to ten minute interview with Marcelo Cunha, Juipurema Sandes and the program coordinator in order to discuss their lives, understanding of museums and motivations for participating in the program. Overall, what these interviews expose is the large disconnect between the youth, especially those who are of African descent, and the museum of the city. Although some of the twenty-seven children interviewed for the program said that they had previously gone to a museum, none could remember the name or topic of the museum visited. The majority of the students, except for one who had looked the information up on the internet, struggled to define the role of a museum monitor in more detail than, someone who watches the objects and people in a museum. More interesting was the impression, or lack there of, that the students had of Africa. Many called it poor, and hungry. Very few spoke to the fact that blacks in Brazil are African-descendants and none named a single aspect of Afro-Brazilian culture that was brought over from the continent.

It is impressive to think about these conversations in relation to André, who completed the program and now works daily at the Museu Afro-Brasileiro. Although André was born within the Candomblé community in Salvador, he left Candomblé when he was a child because “Candomblé does not have a lot of space in the larger society.” He spoke about how working at the museum reintroduced him to a lot of the ideas of Candomblé, provoking him to read and process more information about Afro-Brazilian and African societies. He eloquently explains that his time at the museum gave him “the strength to say this is my history, the story of my mom. It is not just folklore about Africa but also about me. To know that it was my ancestors that created this” (Field Journal, 20). André’s story of working in the museum is evidence that the museum can impact the way that people of African descent, and even members of the Candomblé community think about their own history and its relationship to Africa. Furthermore it provides a lens into the potential of the museum monitors program to drastically change the way the students conceive of museums, of Africa and of their own individual identity. The special attention the museum gives to teenagers and students of the community not only works to spread cultural knowledge, but also to change the image of museums as elite places of learning,

bringing a new community into contact with museum as an educational space but also a place of collective memory.

The museum is also a destination for many of the tourists that come to Salvador every year. These tourists comprise a different community that interacts with the museum, a community of people who come to Salvador for different reasons from different backgrounds. Juipurema Sandes spoke briefly about the different ways that the tourist communities interact with the museum. For some of the better tour guides in the city the museum is also used to illustrate the connection between Africa and Brazil. However, their methods continue to focus more on how slavery and the different locations of the slave trade helped to fuel this connection (Field Journal 32). Paula Santos' tour of the museum with 15 American students followed this model. The map at the museum's entrance of the slave routes was used as the foundational tool for the exploration of the entire museum, fusing the idea of cultural influence and transference with the notion of slavery and colonialism. Yet Paula's story was still not a story of detriment and passivity. The very survival of African culture, as well as its use in acts of resistance and freedom such as the selling of acaraje and establishment of Terreiros by freed slaves, is a testament to the strength, spirituality and persistence of Africans and their descendents in Brazil (Field Journal 2-3). Paula explains that not only is it "its impossible to talk about the preservation of culture here without talking about slavery" but also "you cannot talk about the city without talking about how social and economic conditions are still based in slavery" (Field Journal). For her there has to be a constant balance of speaking to the conditions created by the inhumanity of slavery and the resistance that has existed here in Brazil for five hundred years, and can still be seen today.

Many tourists have trouble relating to the museum and the story outside of the perspective of colonialism and slavery because it is the Eurocentric view of the colonized Americas that they have been raised with. The bigness of the slave trade and the process of colonization left such a large impression on a couple visiting the museum from Ireland, that they found it difficult to speak about their experience without referring to these concepts. When I asked about their impressions of the museum, the woman explained that she had known that Salvador was the center of trade and slaves but she was surprised to see so much of the African culture in the city now. She added, that she was "disgusted at herself for not knowing" (Field Journal, 26-27). The couple who had visited the museum unguided, still only saw the cultural

links between Africa and Brazil as a result of slavery and colonialism—a fact that does not necessarily negate their understanding of and respect for the cultures displayed in the museum but instead serves as an example of how the museum and its narrative manifested itself completely differently in their visit, than in the visits of the school groups. Another group of tourists from Sao Paulo has a completely different impression of the museum. The family of three women was spending a week in Salvador and was passing their time visiting the different museum in the city, the Museu Afro-Brasileiro happened to be on their list. One woman explained that it is necessary for “African heritage to have a place that remembers the religion. And for Bahia and the black people here to have a place that makes their traditions important.” Her comment casts the museum as only important for the black community and creates a disconnect between the culture shown in the museum and larger Brazilian society (Field Journal, 27).

The discussion of the ties between racial communities and the museum has a long history, which has involved different perceptions of the role of the museum in representing the culture of the city of Salvador. In 1981 and 1982, the journalist José Augusto Berbert de Castro wrote a series of articles about the proposed museum. In one he asked,

A question that needs to be asked: why the “museum of the “negro”? I remember visiting in Paris “The Museum of Man,” without distinction of race. Is there not a bit of racism still in this attitude?...In Bahia the land of blacks and white is here, it has been established, the ‘Museum of *Negro*’ is, evidently, talking about the “Museum of whites.” While this is not a face, its going to seem like we are preserving black culture is because it is becoming extinct. We all know that this is not true, it’s enough to look around to recognize the presence of *negra* in our customs, the culinary dress. Here arises the difficulty. If what is in the museum can be encountered in our society, then why the museum? If the culture is not extinct, but is developing, than why the museum? In Santa Catarina there would be a good answer. In Bahia, this state where you can encounter the culture on whatever corner, in whatever terreiro, in the Mercado Modelo, in the rehearsals of traditional carnival groups (in Cunha “O Museu Afro-Brasileiro” 90).

This type of reaction to the museum is not unusual. It highlights the extreme need to correct the distorted idea that museums are spaces to present extinct cultures. A museum can be a living organism that not only can represent a developing and evolving culture but also can do so in a way that allows for multiple images and perspectives of the city. The museum can at once be a place that helps to show the African heritage that penetrates into different aspects of Brazilian culture in which both black and white enjoy, a new reading of the history of Brazil that does not concentrate solely on slavery and colonialism, as well as a place where African descendents can

reconnect with and gain self respect from a cultural display of their heritage. It does more than José Augusto Berbert de Castro , the tourists from Sao Paulo, Ireland, student interns, or school groups from Salvador can perceive individually. It creates the space to relate to and remember a culture that has been historically marginalized and isolated in a different environment. A respectful and educational environment. It is a museum that at once was created to expand the tradition of museums in Salvador being “basically white museums, that speak and preserve the patrimony of the Brazilian elite” (Cunha “O Museu Afro-Brasileiro” 91), in order to speak of the excluded, the majority, the blacks, but to anyone who is willing to step into the front door. One way that this task is accomplished is by correcting the common habit in Brazil of explicitly labeling any cultural items that are European with their place of origin, while denying the contribution of other continents by ignoring their role and thinking of them as purely Brazilian (Field Journal ). This often results in the propagation of Samba and Capoeira as Brazilian rather than Afro-Brazilian, a process that disassociates as well as diminishes African society from the national narrative.

## REPRESENTING THEMSELVES: Memories by the Candomblé Community

The Museu Afro-Brasileiro and Museu da Cidade are not the only places that bring the public in contact with Candomblé and Afro-Brazilian culture. It is not hard to find dance classes, rodas de capoeira, and bloco afro rehearsals within the city of Salvador. Candomblé is usually directly accessed through their festas or ceremonies, which are in most cases open to the public, and have become increasingly popular as more and more people become curious about the religion and the tourism industry in the city continues to grow. One group of American tourists at the museum asked for a recommendation of a good place to book tickets to a Candomblé ceremony, not understanding that these ceremonies are free, open to the public and can be accessed without a travel agency. The cooptation of trips to Candomblé ceremonies is partly a result of the way Candomblé has been constructed in the past, with a focus on the Orixás and the dances and trances of the *filhos de santo*. Paula explains that when people in her groups ask to go a ceremony she always finds herself warning them “that it is not a show. The ceremony is very repetitive and the people are not putting on a show for others to watch. The people are praying. The ceremonies are very long and they aren’t explained. So I want them to go without being misled. I want them to go respectfully” (Field Journal, ). In many ways the opening up of Candomblé ceremonies has become another avenue for people to get to know the religion and for the community to present itself to the public. It is a way of representing the religion outside of traditional museum space in a way that asks the public to enter and respectfully share the *axé* of the house. Melissa Santos explains that terreiros are open spaces that anyone can enter, unless a private meeting is taking place. “They are open because the power of *axé* is stronger if it is shared between more people. So the house opens its doors and shares its food and its history with the community. If you have a lot of power, *axé*, you need to share it” (Field Journal, 25). Although ceremonies share pieces of the culture with the public, they are not arranged for public viewing. As Paula Santos remarks, they are times communitarian spirituality. Recently the Candomblé community has begun to construct other spaces of communal memory that are at once didactic and respectful; places that present Candomblé in a different way.

The Terreiro de Gantois is located on the top of a steep hill in a working neighborhood in Salvador. Often spoken about as one of the more “purely African” Terreiros, its priestesses, costumes, ideas and ceremonies are referenced in many museums and scholarly articles. The terreiro itself is a single story building that sits before a small semi-circled praça at the entrance

of the community. At five in the afternoon on the day of the Festa de Oxum, the Orixá of sweet water, the terreiro comfortably fits into the neighborhood landscape, as small children run around in its praça and men gather for beer and conversation at the small store across the street. Although the terreiro blends into the community, the community blends into the terreiro as well. The street of the terreiro is named after Mãe Menininha, who was the Mãe de Santo of the house for 64 years and had an immense influence on both the Candomblé community and the city of Salvador. In front of the terreiro there is another plaque dedicated to her as well, which remembers her as the “mãe of mães.” Before even entering the museum located within the terreiro, which is also dedicated to Mãe Menininha, the visitor sense a different tone. The museum is not located in a tourist center and it does not have any of the pretenses of the fancier museums in the city. It is in the house where Mãe Menininha lived and the people who knew and loved her, her filhas de santos, constructed it. Walking into the museum does not raise questions about whether the displays are art or cultural or whether the museum is a museum of blacks or a museum of whites. Instead the visitor wonders what was said in these rooms, and what was done. Its not a history lecture about continuities and differences, it is standing in the middle of a history.

One room in the museum reproduces Mãe Menininha’s bedroom,<sup>1</sup> with her photos, images of catholic saints, radio, and bed. The room is free of contention over which parts of Candomblé are shown, and how to depict Orixás, as the room is not only about Candomblé, it is also about a person, a woman who was a part of Candomblé but also a human being with feminine clothes, jewelry, music. Cunha points out that the personal narrative created in the museum breaks “the tendency to create archetypes—biana de acaraje, capoeirista, mãe de santo who are usually presented in an anonymous form—creating the sense of African-descendents are diluted and shaped in a generic room called folkloric and cultural manifestations” (“Teatro de Memorias” 105). The room and the museum as a whole contain very little text, with absolutely no explanation of the religion and its rituals. This too is a reminder that the museum is not just for the public but also for the *filhos de santo*, who do not need the religious descriptions. Nevertheless, without any knowledge of Candomblé it seems possible to understand the

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<sup>1</sup> During my time in Salvaodr the museum was closed. Before the ceremony at Gantois a *Filha de Santo* let me observe the single room described above. In his dissertation Marcelo Cunha gives a full description of the entirety of the museum which helped me contextualize the one room I saw.

immense amount of respect and adoration that this community has for its leader, simultaneously for those who knew her it most conger memories of her presence and her love. Yet this museum is also a constructed place, and the placement of each object in the museum is a deliberate choice, an assembled representation and re-memory of the Mãe. It chooses to tell certain stories about her and to hide others and must be aware of itself as a public space of communication. Melissa Santos, who is a *filha de santo and* wrote the text for an exhibition about the Mães de Santos in the Museu Carlos Costa Pinto, explains, “it is a big responsibility to decide how to present a community. What to say and how to word it” (Field Journal, 26). This feeling of responsibility is a reminder that even when people are representing communities they belong to and people they loved, a specific narrative gets created that dictates a framework within the process of re-memory can take place.

From August to November 2008 another exhibit, which remembered the mães de santo of Candomblé, was open to the public in Salvador. The exhibit entitled “African Heritage in the Bahian Universe: A Daughter of Liberty,” was shown at the Museu Carlos Costa Pinto located in Victoria, the wealthiest neighborhood in Salvador. Built in the American colonial style, the museum’s permanent collection is comprised of over 3,000 decorative art objects from the late 17<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and focuses very little on Afro-Brazilian culture. The mostly colonial decorative art collection, along with the expensive café, beautiful landscaping, fountains, circular driveway, tall iron-gate and 24-hour guard-post mark the museum as part of the white elite institutions that have historically worked to preserve a certain image of Bahian and Brazilian culture in the museums of the city. It is also one of the city’s most recognized museums, which owns a beautiful and educational collection. The temporary exhibit, told the story of resistance of the Bahian mães de santo through their jewelry and clothes, and text written by Melissa Santos. The intersection of communities created by the exhibit, which was conceptualized and executed by members of the Candomblé community and located within the larger-Brazilian, and more specifically white elite community, is one that Melissa finds gorgeous. “It is a white museum,” she explained, “...and in the exhibit our ancestors are being honored, in a place that they weren’t even allowed to visit when they were alive” (Field Journal, 20). The exhibit, in many ways, becomes an interesting representation and memorial to explore: it is both of the community and for a completely “other” community. It raises new questions about how power, respect and information create and shape representations and understanding of the culture.

The bridging of these two communities not only brought many people who have never seen Candomblé to a respectful, didactic and elegant exhibit, it also brought people of Candomblé into a world in which they never thought they could enter. The different reactions of the mães whose terreiros were represented in the exhibit illustrate the different impacts that public representation and recognitions can have. Some mães had a more personal relationship with the exhibit, touched to see the objects of their family and their ancestors displayed with such care, “like they display the clothes of Portuguese royalty” (Field Journal 22, 21). Others saw the exhibit as a continuation of the struggle for resistance; “an important step for a city that is supposed to be a black city, but really is a white city, a symbol of the beginning of change” (Field Journal 22). For others the exhibit was able to create new ways of remembering and relating to the past: at the gala opening Mãe Resigne cried when she saw the large picture of the mãe that initiated her. She wanted to have her picture taken next to the large photo as a way to commemorate her own initiation, which took place over sixty years ago (Field Journal 20). These women saw the exhibit as powerful not because they had not previously understood the strength of Candomblé, or because they had not believed that Candomblé and its leaders deserved to be remembered in the museum. The exhibit was able to provoke such emotions from the some of the most respected women in Candomblé today because memory and representation are powerful forces that compel even those who know the culture inside and out to reconsider and reconnect with what is being shown.

The exhibit is comprised of two rooms. The first displays many different sets of Candomblé outfits and jewelry owned by the different mães de santo over the past century, the room also has two walls with large mounted photographs of fourteen mães, two trunks that store more cloths used by the houses, as well as two fully dressed mannequins who lead the visitor into the next room. The visitor is guided around the room by a series of projected excerpts of text on to the white walls in between the display cases. Every outfit and piece of jewelry is displayed in a case that sits within the wall, with back lighting and labels giving the name of the owner, and the house she served over. All of the clothes feature beautiful lace patterning, embroidered skirts, and beautiful beaded necklaces. Many of the pieces use silver and gold thread, creating a more luxurious look. No two pieces of clothing are the same, each is a slightly different color and is constructed in a unique lace pattern, yet there is also a calming regularity to the exhibit, as each set of clothes is made up of the same pieces: lace top, skirt, jewelry,

sometimes a bata. There is a feeling a rituality and tradition in the room: a sense of a highly regulated, developed and treasured culture. The room raises the question, what can be learned about these women through their clothes? What do are clothes say about who they are and what they believe in? For the curators of the exhibit, the clothes are so meaningful that they become the vessels through which the entire culture is communicated. A viewer without background knowledge of Candomblé, only tools for creating meaning are the clothes, the jewelry, the photos of the mães, the knowledge that all of these objects have been, for some reason collected in a museum and the text.

The text introduces the exhibit as “a small part of the immense history of blacks in Bahia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,” which shows “an aesthetic composition totally related to a mystic universe, which was inserted, serving like instruments, into the acquisition of freedom.” Throughout the exhibit the text does give the viewer some contextual information about Candomblé in Brazil: explaining that houses of Candomblé were the center of diffusion of the habits, costumes, liturgical practices and provision of faith for “negros” as well as different originals of Candomblé: ketu, jeje and Angola, which represent the yorubá, ewe/fon and Bantu. Nevertheless the amount of text in the exhibit is considerably less than that of the Afro-Brazilian museum and every sentence builds a bond and structure the way that the visitor understands and remembers the religion. The text locates the dress of the mães in a social and spiritual web, connecting the mystical with the fight for freedom, the jewels with the keeping safe of rituals and behaviors and the skirts with the African cults. Yet it does not explain how or why this world was necessary in Brazil. There is no mention of enslavement, nor any reference to syncretism, or the violence prejudice that the religion had to face. The text is concerned with instead constructing a picture of the immense amount of influence that these women had within the Candomblé, Afro-Brazilian and global communities. This is done through speaking to what is saved, and succeeds without referencing what was lost. Every viewer will then understand the exhibit different depending on his/her individual connection with the religion and with the cultures that were guarded and cared for from it. In a moment of poetic honesty one text reads:

Inside of the religious and liturgical spaces of the religions of mother Africa, these elements signify much more than their visual appearance. The action of dress, and at times self-decoration, could be understood as a personal donation to an Orixá, vodum or nkisse, a protection, or a preservation of knowledge.

The text is carefully constructed to both provide information to the viewer as well as limit his or her access into the world of Candomblé. By cluing the viewer into the spiritual, symbolic and historical complexity of each object displayed, the text helps to endow the objects with power, with cultural meaning. Yet at the same time it separates the world of the viewer from that of Candomblé, severing links that could become voyeuristic or turn the complex web of symbolism into a folklore that can be understood through simple symbolic translations. By recalling mother Africa, the deities, as well as the actions of those involved in liturgical spaces the passage achieves a level of nuance, history and contemporaneity that strikes every viewer no matter his/her comprehension of the religion and its spiritual, social and historical roles.

For Melissa Santos the museum, its text and the arrangement of objects take on a different meaning. She explained the careful sequencing of clothes, which relates to the set hierarchy within a house of Candomblé, within the religious space communicate one's role and place within the family and community. "These traditions," she remarked, "are important because they mark the sacrifice that is made to become a part of a Candomblé house" (Field Journal 21). Just because traditions are important does not mean that need to be explicated for the public. Information was purposely left out of the text and traditions were carefully referenced so that only those who are a part of the religion can pick up on. There were photos of people who some visitors have never seen before and others have loved and learned from. This is permissible: the exhibit is not about tradition for tradition's sake; instead it speaks to tradition in order to communicate a larger message about the role of Candomblé in society. For Melissa, the exhibit is mean to show,

the importance of the black females who kept the traditions of Africa alive in terreiros. They worked hard after slavery to keep their houses with money and resources. During slavery they sold things on the street to buy the freedom of other enslaved women. Now they are fighting in new ways, but they have the resistance and the exhibit aims to recognize the work that Candomblé women have done (Field Journal 21).

To get weighed down in explaining the different traditions, symbols, deities and individual stories, would be to take up the space created especially for the pondering of a story, tradition, lifestyle of resistance and heritage. Furthermore, by safeguarding the details of the religion, the Candomblé community is taking control over the way that they are perceived, represented and known by society. There is very little talk in the exhibit about the Orixás, or the ceremonies of Candomblé. The exhibit does not mean to reflect on or add much of the information about the

religion that is already in the public sphere. Instead it is concerned with telling its own story, celebrating its own history and constructing its own view of the present.

Although the vivacity of Candomblé is woven throughout the entire exhibit—in the consistent use of the present tense, the photos of current mães de santo, the connection between the clothes displayed and the clothes worn today in Candomblé houses—the living legacy of Candomblé comes alive in the second gallery, where photographs, dresses, and jewelry made by contemporary artists who have been inspired by Candomblé are displayed. The room recalls the jewelry, fabric, and passion that is displayed in the first gallery but livens it up with modern styling, artistic photographic angles, and fiery colors. At first glance the room recalls Jorge Amado's call for artist to explore Candomblé for its 'passions', 'the hot blood' of black people (Sansi 52), especially in the warm colors, sensual poses in the photos and daringly tight and low cut fashion designs. Yet the room also depicts the way in which the spirit, ideas and traditions of Candomblé have influenced other aspects of Afro-Brazilian society. One of the designers does not belong to Candomblé but receives her artistic inspiration from Oxum. Therefore she often give her dresses, with a retail value of over \$20,000R, as an offer to Oxum in order to thank him for her new ideas. This act reverently combines modern fashion with an old Candomblé ritual, and serves as one example of Candomblé's ability to renew itself and adapt to different cultures, different uses, all the time (Field Journal, 21, 23). Yet, of course, the connection between Oxum and the fashion is not explicated in the room. Creating a space for the viewer to make its own connections between what is shown and Candomblé. The room provides a spectrum of reactions, from intrigue to reverence to misunderstanding.

The very dynamism of the exhibit, its ability to take on different meanings with different viewers while always expressing a deep sense of respect, awe and love for the women it evokes and remembers, begs the visitor to ponder the power of self representation. Like the memorial to Mãe Menininha, this exhibit has a more personal tone, and opens itself up to both the community it represents and the general public. Yet it also gains power from its location, from the incredible amount of resources that went into displaying the different objects in the exhibition. It makes the decision to not let its traditions be consumed by the general public, but it also chooses to display clothing and jewelry that served both utilitarian and cultural purposes outside of their original contexts, as art. In many ways the exhibit mirrors the collection of porcelain vases that are stored on the other side of the museum in its use of glass cases, spot lighting and lack of text

explicating to individual objects. On the other hand, the very manner in which the text is written, the care put into how every sentence and image is constructed raised questions about the text in the rest of the museum, which lacks the emotion and attentiveness of “African Heritage” (Field Journal 25). The exhibit was groundbreaking in its opening of the world of museums for many members of the Candomblé community who believed that they weren’t allowed to go to certain parts of the city, as well as by taking the powerful images and messages of the Candomblé community out of the terreiros and into the public realm (Field Journal 22, 20)

“African Heritage” and the memorial to Mãe Menininha pose serious questions about public representation and the participation of the Candomblé community in deciding how and where they are going to be shown to and understood by the larger society. There is an acknowledgement made throughout the entire exhibit that different audiences are going to experience these objects and culture in varying ways, yet like the Museu Afro-Brasileiro and Memorial Mãe Menininha it demands a certain bottom line of respect. These museums are each working in their own ways to create commemorative spaces that construct new ways of battling preconceptions and ignorance about Candomblé and African heritage in Brazil. These museums, despite their flaws, have proved to be powerful vessels of communication and change. By entering into conversations with the different spaces of representation and memory, it becomes easier to understand the impact that each display, object, text, and gallery can have on the way that people approach, think about and change their relationship with Candomblé.

## RETHINKING REPRESENTING AND REMEMBERING

The process of rethinking the way in which Candomblé and the Afro-Brazilian culture is remembered and represented is complex and just beginning to develop. There are still a lot of changes that need to be made in the manner that information is exchanged in the different communities that come into contact with one another and the Candomblé community. In many ways this requires the deconstruction of the very idea of a museum as elite, archaic, and exclusive. Exhibits need to play with the possible types of voice and tone they create as well as the different models of object display used. Furthermore, rethinking representation includes rethinking the very organization of museums. The ethnographic museum can no longer be a model for showing representation as it will always recall its historical use as a place to display the spoils of colonialism. Cunha adds,

You can't just have a museum of science, or a museum of art, or a museum of history because each of these disciplines makes reference to another. Museums should talk about themes and not disciplines. Our world is no longer about disciplines, there is too much communication between disciplines; everything is rooted in a larger and more complicated context than one discipline can show (Field Journal 39).

Creating a more complex context is also another important part of changing representation. Prejudice and hatred always stems from ignorance, and the museum must find a way to expose and deconstruct this ignorance. André's tours worked to do this by acknowledging them verbally: he often would stand in front of the photographs of mães and pais de santo and explain that voduns are not voodooos, and that these men and women fought to preserve and pass on a religion despite the immense amount of prejudice in society. The memorial to Mãe Menininha works against ignorance through a personal narrative, which humanism as well as complicates the ideas commonly associated with Candomblé by illustrating her as a spiritual leader, as well as mother, and a woman with likes and dislikes. The very presence of the "African Heritage" exhibit in the Museu Carlos Costa Pinto is a step in the struggle against preconceptions and racism, as it actively fights for the right to speak about these women within the elite Bahian community. All of these manifestations continue the legacy of resistance of Candomblé. They refuse to let the stories of the development, history and vivacity of a culture go untold.

And there are plans to take further steps, create other places in which Candomblé is represented and remembered. Jaime Sodres is planning on developing a national museum, which will speak directly to the history of resistance of the African diaspora. The concept of memory

is going to take on a prominent role in the museum, as a way to both connect the different communities who visit and actively tie the history of these cultures to the present day lives, experiences and identities of the visitors. He explains that in order to create a museum of living memory a new model of representation must be constructed: “the visitors can’t leave the museum without adding to the museum, creating their opinion, their own link in the society. The museum has to be a place that values the individual memories that make the group identity” (Field Journal 54).

There are also other ways of creating public access to different types of representations and memories of Candomblé. Paula Santos created and now leads a culinary tour of Salvador, called “African Origins of Bahian Cuisine,” which communicates the history of resistance and the connections between African and Brazil through a trip to the market to look at the different types of food available, a cooking lesson and full Bahian lunch at a Candomblé terreiro. Paula explains that the tour is not religious, but instead seeks to introduce groups to the world of Candomblé in another way, that still demands respect and that the visitors follow the rules and structure of the religiously arranged space. Similarly, Melissa Santos organizes trips every couple of months for residents of Salvador who are not members of the Candomblé community to spend a weekend at a terreiro, interacting with its members, listening to different presentations and talks of invited guests and learning to share and be in the space of the terreiro. Melissa explains that the

trip was meant to grow respect for the religion and to let people see Candomblé as a place of resistance. Many Evangelical and Catholic people thought Candomblé was a place of the devil. People were scared that they would do a ceremony, but it wasn’t about the ceremony, it was about the way that people live life in Candomblé (Field Journal 23). By the end of the trip, there was a new understanding of the religion and of the common humanity of people through the experience. Both of these trips into the terreiro exemplify other avenues of establishing communication, telling a history, educating a public and fortifying a sense of community.

The way that Candomblé is exhibited, learned about and remembered is also tied to a larger struggle for public, social and political recognition of the resistance, humanity and power of the Afro-Brazilian community. Raul Lody explains, “man is always political. And the decisions that you make, which object you show and keep is a political question. The relationship between the visual and the political is very complex theme and very important to be

aware of. Because in a museum you are representing a people, just like as a president you are representing a people” (Field Journal 44). By telling the story of Africa, and its relationship with the Afro-Brazilian culture and the history of resistance, many museums, historians, and artists are attempting to establish and add to the very identity of black in Brazil. This is why Melissa believes that these exhibits and dialogues “don’t need to go inside all of the rituals,” instead she suggest that they expose the philosophy and values of Candomblé.

Candomblé was one of the first religions to talk about saving the environment because all of our Orixás are connected to nature. We can’t exist without nature, without respecting others. These are the things that need to be expressed. People want to know about the ceremonies, the things that go on behind closed doors. So we need to be very careful about what we share and what we don’t share. What is going to be respected and what is going to be stolen (Field Journal 24).

These exhibits need to consider what is going to be gained by the visitor as well as the community depicted from each object displayed and each fact presented in the museum or space. This is why André, Cunha and Sodres all hope to expand the museums, so that they are not only focused on the deities and leaders of the Candomblé community, but also think about how this culture has manifested itself in food, dance, art and modes of commerce. Afro-Brazilian culture is not solely composed of Candomblé, but also includes samba, capoeira, acaraje, and other religious sects. Representing Candomblé is a good way to start talking about Afro-Brazilian culture, because so many movements are based in the religion: Ilê Ayé, and the Black Movement grew out of Candomblé. And today there are many famous black activists who are not apart of a Candomblé houses but do look to the philosophy and the history of the religion as guidance (Field Journal 24).

If Afro-Brazilian culture is displayed in a manner that affirms the connection between mother Africa, the struggle of resistance, the food, dance and music of Brazil, the religiosity, and the political movements, the museums could have the power of changing what is valued, who is given a voice in society, and how different sectors interact with one another outside of the gallery walls. Sodres explains,

If you construct the idea that what is best in our culture and society is European and that Africa was just a bank where they brought lots of people over to Brazil to work, the society will be filled of ignorance. Because Africa wasn’t just a place with black people, it was a culture. Today there are African descendents all over the world still constructing culture. That’s why we have to have aspects of negritude, of the resistance of women. (Field Journal 52).

Believing that the African culture and its diaspora is something worth actively loving, celebrating and partaking in, is also a form of a resistance. Recognizing and valuing the unique culture of Africans and Afro-Brazilians, as well as the specific set of historical and social factors that gave rise to the culture, is not just important for the black community. In order to create and sustain change, whites in Brazil must also enter, learn from, accept and love the African roots and Afro-Brazilian culture as well. Museums are important sites where this work can be structured and accomplished. And as respect and perhaps love of the Afro-Brazilian culture grows, what will be revealed is that “loving blackness as political resistance transforms our ways of looking and being, and thus creates the conditions necessary for us to move against the forces of domination and death and reclaim black life” (bell hooks 20)

## CONCLUSION

This study revealed the very complex process of constructing a meaningful representation of Candomblé within museums as well as the way that museum visitors understand information, especially of cultural and religious topic. There are many questions that each curatorial choice raises as well as thousands of different possible responses, interactions and ways of understanding each gallery that I visited. By considering just a few of these questions and museum experiences I hoped to reveal the importance of both the institution of museums as not only a cultural but also educational tool as well as the power that they have in created and recreating the way that people remember and think about religious and non-western cultures. Furthermore I hoped to have linked the museum as an educational and cultural institution to the struggle for political and social rights and representation in society. It is important to remember that museums are not objective spaces, they are constructed within a web of representations that is at once aesthetic, prerogative and political.

This topic is one that constantly needs to be returned to as society's ideas about representation and the different cultures evolve and new trends and methods of creating museum exhibits are established. A study of the way that museum displays affect different populations of the African diaspora could also be done as an intercultural study, which would not only help to understand the different ways that cultural representation affect communities with different political, cultural, and social manifestations, it would also help to understand the similar ways that Eurocentric thinking and society has attempted to control the images of these societies and each culture's manner of resisting elite society's consumption and power. Within the context of Salvador, Candomblé and Afro-Brazilian culture, more questions need to be asked of the members of the Candomblé community about how they want to be publicly represented. Similarly, the issue of commodification and folklorization within these religions also needs to be more systematically addressed. The umbrella of public representation is also very large and therefore similar studies can include tourists art, the use of the language of Afro-Brazilian deities and culture in street and restaurant names around the city, as well as the display of artistic representations of the culture in public parks, praças and other centers. One other avenue that needs to be explored is the representation, or lack there of, of the majority of Candomblé houses in the city in public representations in Salvador. Questions concerning why these houses are

omitted as well as how their omission affects the way Candomblé is understood by the general public.

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## VOCABULARY

Baiana: referring to anyone from Bahia; used most commonly in reference to the *bianas* of *acaraje*, who are women who sell *acaraje*, fritters of seasoned black eyed peas, on the streets and dress in a more traditional white outfit, with a skirt and wrap their hair.

Candomblé: an Afro-Brazilian religion derived in large measure from the Yoruba culture of Nigeria.\*

Filho do Santo: a formally initiated member of a Candomblé terreiro.

Mãe do Santo: the head priestesses in Candomblé; it is usually a role reserved for women, but there are instances of *pais do santo* as well.

Negro/Negra: an ethnic identification, which actively references the African decendency of the person.

Ogan: an officer of Candomblé ceremonies.\*

Orixás: deities of the Yoruba tradition; each represents an archetype of divine energy.\* In the Banntu and Ewe traditions the deities are referred to as *vodums* and *nkisses*.

Povo do Santo: people associated with the Candomblé community, including those who are formally initiated and those who have a more casual identification with the religion.

Terreiro: consecrated land used for Candomblé ceremonies; generic term used for Candomblé congregations.\*

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\*Definitions taken from Baker, Kim. Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1998. 269-270

## APPENDIX:

1. Could you have done this project in the USA? What data or sources were unique to the culture in which you did the project?

There was no way that this project could have been undertaken in the United States because all of the institutions and people who I was working with were culturally and historically linked to the process and history of representation of Afro-Brazilians in Brazil, and more specifically Salvador. The museums I visited spoke directly to the communities in Bahia, Brazil and were run by Brazilians.

2. Could you have done nay part of it in the USA? Would the results have been different? How?

If the project had been undertaken in the United States or included any part of the culture in the United States the project would be very different. The findings may not have been drastically different because the treatment of images of African descendents and their cultures is somewhat similar throughout the world. But the specific context and issue would have been drastically different but because the treatment and understanding of race and Afro-Brazilian culture is fundamentally different than that of the U.S. Therefore, a project with the same thesis in the United States would be dealing with a different history and therefore a different working environment.

3. Did the process of doing the ISP modify your learning style? How was this different from your previous style and approaches to learning?

This ISP was a drastically different way of learning for me. I have never conducted field research before, I am definitely used to reading secondary sources and doing critical analysis of cultural documents, but I have never extended that work into a project of my own creation. I have never had to really sit down and construct interview questions and then carry out the interviews and process the information given. It was really interesting to learn from other people, and hear their experiences one-on-one. I also realized how important human contact was in the process of learning and communicating ideas. My work at the museum, the analysis of cultural representations, was much more similar to what I do as a critical and culturally theory concentrator. I also had previously worked in museums and had experience with educational programs, so this part of my project was also closer to my academic background.

4. How much of the final monograph is primary data? How much is from secondary sources?

A good part of my research was getting a solid idea of how my questions fit into the larger dialogues about museums and the political/social role of Afro-Brazilian culture in Brazil. Therefore I did a lot of secondary reading and included a good spread of what I read into my monograph. That said, the majority of my monograph is composed of my own analysis, observations and descriptions of the museums and other locations I visited as well as the interviews I conducted. Formulating ideas about these experiences and tying them back to the secondary reading that I did in order to keep the social relevance and importance of this issue, as well as its multidisciplinary ties, was really important in writing my monograph.

5. What criteria did you use to evaluate your data for inclusion in the final monograph? Or how did you decide to exclude certain data?

It was really hard to evaluate and exclude information when I was writing the monograph. I spent a lot of time thinking about the points I wanted to get across to the reader, and the themes that were really important to me and then used these to find really great examples in my notes. Also I read through the interviews and pulled out quotes that exemplified the essence of my interviewee's ideas, really rung true to me or expressed an idea that I hadn't yet thought of and chose to include these parts. There was also a lot of data that I collected early in my project that lost its relevance as my ISP unfolded and evolved.

6. How did the drop offs or field exercises contribute to the process and completion of the ISP?

The drop offs were really helpful in getting me accustomed to hearing people talk for a long time in Portuguese, while taking notes. They also taught me the importance of showing real and enthusiastic interest in a site when you are there because it creates a much more engaging and productive interview. The drop-offs also helped me to get used to introducing my project/goal and myself for the visit. They also were important in giving me the confidence to be in a big city that I didn't know and ask for help and directions to find out where I needed to go and how I could get there.

7. What part of the FSS most significantly influenced the ISP process?

My community project prepared me and really influenced the manner in which I went about my ISP process. For my community project I was often frustrated by my lack of background

knowledge about the places and people I met before I went into the field. For my ISP I made sure to walk into all of the different situations as prepared and well read as possible. I also made sure to keep and save all of the contact information of the people I met so that I could contact them if I needed to. The community project also taught me the importance of taking good notes during interviews; I often found during my community project that I couldn't remember large chunks of my interviews. Therefore, I always had a pen and a paper when I was out and about in the field for my ISP.

8. What were the principal problems you encountered while doing the ISP? Were you able to resolve these and how?

One of the biggest problems I had during my ISP was the fact that my interviewees would often forget or cancel our scheduled meetings for interviews. I think that this is kind of inevitable when you are working with very busy people, who are involved in three or four projects simultaneously and you are asking them to take the time out of their day to meet with you. I got to speak with just about everyone who I had formally planned to interview, so it that regard it was fine. It did limit my ability to go back and conduct follow up interviews, read the material they suggested before I had to write-up my project, and schedule interviews with other interesting people related to my project that they offered to put me in contact with.

9. Did you experience any time constraints? How could have these been resolved?

I experienced a lot of time constraints but I think that it is the nature of the process. I think one problem was that I was still gathering completely new data at the end of my time in the field. Consequently, I had less time to really process and think about how this data relates to the rest of my project. This could have been resolved by working to do most of my bigger interviews earlier in my ISP period, so that the last couple of days could have been spent gathering up the loose ends of my research and processing what I had learned.

10. Did your original topic change and evolve as you discovered or did not discover new and different resources? Did the resources available modify or determine the topic?

My original topic did change and evolve over my ISP period. I originally wanted to just focus on three specific places of memory and representation but with the coaxing of my advisor I spent the first week of my project visiting museums all over the city in order to build a contextual framework in which to view the other spaces. I became captivated by own of the temporary exhibits in the city and spoke the one of the women who helped put it together. This exhibit,

which I had not previously known about, became incredibly important to my project. I also found it important to talk about how the museum I was working at and this exhibit were very different than the other representations of Afro-Brazilian culture in the city. Because of time and access restraints as well as the reorientation of my project I was not able to get such a good idea about the view points of the other communities I wanted to look at in my project. And although they are still fixtures in my paper, I feel like my final project takes a different approach to how it compares and speaks about each space.

11. How did you go about finding resources: institutions, interviews, publications, etc.?

I used a lot of the contacts of the director of my SIT program, Bill Calhoun. Two of my interviews were with people who the program had already made contact with. I also called up a couple of organizations, introduced myself and asked if there was someone there who could speak with me. My last source of information came from the people who visited the museum as well as who were involved in other programs at the museum. My advisor also gave me his dissertations, which were on a similar subject and provided me with a lot of background information as well as a different perspective on my project.

12. What method(s) did you use? How did you decide to use such method(s)?

I did a lot of informal interviews with people who came to visit the museum. I also did formal interviews, which were pre-planned and consisted of me sitting down with the person with a list of previously prepared questions and just having a conversation. I also spent a lot of time in each museum/memorial, just writing down observations of what I saw and how people were interacting with the space. Finally I observed tour groups that came into the museum that I worked at in order to get a sense of how these school children were creating meaning from the museum as well as how the tour guide choose to present the museum.

13. Comment on your relations with your advisor: indispensable? Occasionally helpful? Not very helpful? At what point was he/she most helpful? Were there cultural differences that influenced your relationship? A different understanding of educational processes and goals? Was working with the advisor instructional?

My advisor was most important in making me feel like the questions I was asking in my research and my overall topic was incredibly relevant. In the beginning he was really helpful in forming the plan of my first week and after that he became a little more hands off but still really helped me stay focused. I did not meet with often or have very many long conversations with him, but it

was amazing how similar our interests were. He also gave me some of his own writing which became really important to my research. There were some cultural differences, but they didn't really get in the way of work together. He was the perfect advisor for the project.

14. Did you reach any dead ends? Hypothesis that turned out to be not useful? Interviews or visits that had no application?

I feel like I did not guide a couple of my interviews very well and therefore a lot of the information I hoped to get from people, I never received and a lot of the information I got is only tangentially related to my paper. But all of my interviews were incredibly interesting and passionate and I rather let the people talk about things that they are passionate about than force answers out of them. I think that I had a couple of ideas about why museums were presenting certain things in particular contexts which were highly related to my relation with Afro-American culture and did not necessarily pertain to Afro-Brazilian culture. Nevertheless, learning that these ideas were wrong and that the two cultures have very different historical trajectories was a huge part of my own personal growth during my ISP.

15. What insights did you gain into the culture as a result of doing the ISP, which you might not otherwise have gained?

I learned a lot about the relationship between culture, identity and politics as well as the history of African descendents in Brazil during my ISP. This information and the parallels in the United States that it brought up is some of the most important things that I learned during my time in Brazil. Furthermore, I learned how to ask people for help in Brazil, which taught how compassionate and willing to explain things Brazilians are. I also learned a lot about the discrepancies in opportunities, education and access in Brazil. I met many children who had never been to a museum before, never learned about Africa before, and furthermore felt like these sources of information were not even open to them because they are black and poor.

16. Did the ISP process assist your adjustment to the culture? Interaction?

I think it asked me to interact with people in Brazil, individually, in a way that I had never done before. It was challenging to express my academic and intellectual ideas in Portuguese to people who were experts in the fields. But it was an important growing experience.

17. What were the principal lessons you learned from the ISP process?

I learned a lot about how important representations are in how people think about themselves, their cultures and others. More important I learned how to talk about these ideas with Brazilians.

I learned how powerful the Afro-Brazilian identity can be in helping to change the way that blacks in Brazil think about themselves and then demand that other change the way that they think as well. Mostly I learned about the strong history and present day culture of black resistance in Brazil, and I became completely enamored and inspired by the force in which African descendents in Brazil have influenced their countries culture, been devastated by white supremacy and violence, and are still working on creating fronts of resistance today.

18. If you met a future student who wanted to do this same project, what would be your recommendations to him/her?

I would recommend that they did some research on the temporary projects going on in the city because they often have more things going on in the community and people who are excited about the exhibit. I would also recommend that they get in touch with my advisor because he has done a lot of thinking about this idea. I think it might also be more fruitful to think about a single specific community to research in relation to the museum, it was often hard to focus on the large number of communities that I came in contact with.

19. Given what you know now, would you undertake this, or a similar project again?

Yes. I think it is an incredibly important project that can be done almost all over the world. It is really important the people start evaluating the cultural institutions in which identity is constructed in and communicated through, now that we are living in a highly global, postcolonial world, where we are constantly coming into contact with people and representations of people, who are different from us.