MUDEC (Museo delle Culture, Milan) presents the project Exposure, which is centered on a reflection on the public display of artworks of art and, in particular, on the vitrine, which is virtually synonymous with the European museum. This problematic becomes particularly acute and different when it comes to ethnographic collections, such as MUDEC has. The project breaks the traditional spatial and temporal structures of the exhibition and develops in several episodes: in October 2023, in the central space of the museum designed by David Chipperfield Architects, the Mexican artist Marianna Castillo Deball (b. 1975) created a new large-scale installation of 7 elements based on the study and interpretation of textile artifacts from the MUDEC collection. Due to their fragility and specific condition, as well as their initial fragmentation, they rarely leave the storage, and Deball's gesture of rescaling, creating extreme visibility, and "capturing" the glass atrium becomes an important point of reference for the entire project.

Aiming to change the usual spectatorial routes within the museum itself, the second episode of Exposure evolves in the permanent collection of the Ethnographic Museum through a series of interventions by video artist and filmmaker Theo Eshetu (b.1958). Especially for the exhibition Eshetu created the multichannel video installation *Crocodile on the ceiling* he reinterprets in a personal way the phenomenon of the Wunderkammern.

For Eshetu, the most emblematic element of the Wunderkammern is the taxidermied crocodile: it can be found hanging from the ceiling not only in collections such as that of Manfredo Settala, but also in Italian churches such as the Sanctuary of the Madonna delle Grazie in Curtatone (Mantua).

According to the artist, "the origins of the connotation of crocodiles as guardians of treasures are shrouded in mystery and may have roots in their presence in the workshops of wizards, alchemists and apothecaries. These crocodiles represent strength, fierceness and ancient knowledge and their presence within sacred spaces emphasizes the connection between the natural and the heavenly worlds. It plays a role in the shift from the alchemist studio to religious spaces as carriers of knowledge". Eshetu also suggested turning some objects 180 degrees in the permanent collection. As if testing the viewer's alertness, Eshetu invites us to wake up from our habitual gazing at objects in the vitrine.

Core of the project and another episode develops in for the temporary exhibitions halls and is related to a series of questions to the history and essence of the vitrine in the museum and especially in the ethnographic museum. How the architecture of the vitrine itself determines the display of objects, how traditional European classifications and taxonomies are formed, and to what extent they are able to reflect the original contexts and origins of objects. The vitrines in the space, which were kindly provided by various public Italian institutions for the exhibition, become "containers" within which the logic of European taxonomies is taken to its absurd limit. The vitrine is also interpreted as a repository of valuable objects, but the exhibition proposes many different answers to the question - what do we consider valuable, what is responsible for our perception of "value"?

One of the symbolically important elements in this exhibition is Candida Höfer's (b.1944) photograph Ethnologisches Museum III 2003 - museum curators dressed in protective suits long before the pandemic are working inside a storage with ethnographic objects. The situation of fear, danger, and total distrust between subject and object is in many ways characteristic of many museum collections. Project Exposure in this sense becomes an

attempt to restore this fragile trust and to start an open conversation about many aspects of contemporary museum life.

A separate part of the exhibition is related to the use of the shop window in fashion retail, a context particularly important in Milan, and in this sense the project presents the works of various artists and designers who have been involved in window decoration at the Rinascente department store and it becomes de facto evident that the shop window has never been an additional tool to increase sales, but a means to create a situation of desire, in fact an imaginary space.

Logically swapping historical perspective for a contemporary one, the project continues to explore the life forms of the vitrine in the contemporary museum and in the practice of contemporary artists. Mark Dion’s (b.1961) cabinet with glass objects found in a Venetian lagoon or Damien Hirst's (b. 1965) vitrine with cigarette butts inside (Dead Ends, 1994). To what extent does the vitrine as a spatial and ideological structure determine our perception, up to what point does it fulfill only a storing function, and when is it possible to overcome it?

In this regard, the final highlight is a new work by the Italian artist Monia Ben Hamouda (b.1991), which is in essence a manifesto and calls on the viewer to look beyond the museum and museum convention and symbolically returns us to the physical sensations of the objects in the collection: by using spices that have a smell and color, she seems to restore the fragile memory not of the museum modus of the objects' existence, but of their original origin and use.

Artists featured in the exhibition: Monia Ben Hamouda, Mark Dion, Sam Durant, Theo Eshetu, Damien Hirst, Candida Höfer, Giancarlo Iliprandi, Gene Moore, Roberto Sambonet, Albe Steiner.

The exhibition is also enriched by a rich program of events that allow us to reflect on some of the key concepts of the exhibition.

There will be practical workshops and face-to-face meetings with internationally renowned professionals, museum directors, lecturers and university researchers.

From March 2024, a series of key themes will be explored through talks: cultural appropriation, the exhibition of bodies; theft and illegal activities involving works of art; the ambivalence of the display case, which safeguards, protects and preserves the object, while at the same time depriving it of its function of use and its cultural and ritual value.

Thanks to the consolidated collaboration with the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) in Los Angeles, MUDEC will host the international symposium "Public Art Inside Out" (7-8 May 2024), which will focus on themes related to public art: these include the role of pedestals in monumentality , a device which, like the vitrine, enhances the value of objects and catalyses the viewer's vision.

Finally, the ‘Exposure’ project will be illustrated in the second issue of the magazine "MU - MUDEC United", which, in keeping with its editorial style, will propose in-depth articles on the theme of the exhibition.

Event Information:

Address Via Tortona, 56 - 20144 Milano

Website https://www.mudec.it/exposure-arte-culture-moda-dentro-e-fuori-la-vetrina/

Date March 1st– September 8th, 2024

Opening Times Monday 14.30 – 19.30, Tuesday – Wednesday – Friday – Sunday 9.30 – 19.30, Thursday – Saturday 9.30 – 22.30. Last entry one hour before closing time.

Institution Information:

Address Via Tortona, 56 - 20144 Milano

Website https://www.mudec.it/

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