

«A state of shock is what results when a gap opens up between events and our initial ability to explain them. When we find ourselves in that position, a great many people become vulnerable to authority figures telling us to fear one another and relinquish our rights for the greater good. [...] Round the world, shock political tactics are being used to generate crisis after crisis, designed to force through policies that will destroy people, the environment, the economy and our security. That extremism isn't a freak event – it's a toxic cocktail of our times» (N. Klein 2017)

The term *migrant* «appears shorn of context, without even an *im*- or an *em*- attached to it to indicate that the people it describes have histories or futures. Instead, it implies an endless present: they are migrants, they move, it's what they do»



D. Trilling, "How the media contributed to the migrant crisis", in *The Guardian*, 1 August 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/aug/01/media-framed-migrant-crisis-disaster-reporting

## Language shifts...

- OMC (Open Method of Coordination) group of EU member states experts, *How culture and the arts can promote intercultural dialogue in the context of the migratory and refugee crisis*, 2017 (https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/4943e7fc-316e-11e7-9412-01aa75ed71a1/language-en)
- M. Vlachou (ed.), *The inclusion of migrants and refugees: the role of cultural organizations*, Acesso Cultura, 2017 (https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/librarydoc/the-inclusion-of-migrants-and-refugees-the-role-of-cultural-organisations)
- Voices of Culture -Structured Dialogue between the European Commission and the cultural sector, Brainstorming Report *The role of culture in promoting inclusion in the context of migration*, 2016 (http://www.goethe.de/ins/be/pro/voc/VoC\_full%20report\_Final\_klein er.pdf)



## Fortress Heritage





- many museums across Europe were founded in order to represent, validate and celebrate national, local or group identities
- the very notion of "heritage" ("inheritance") seems to refer to something that is attained once and for all by birthright, rather than developed by individuals throughout their lifetime

«One can become a cultured person; one can learn to understand and appreciate art, music, or ballet; as Bourdieu has shown, one can accumulate cultural capital. In that sense, at least, culture is arguably a democratic concept, still heavily influenced by Enlightenment values, despite the practical inequalities that lie in the way of its acquisition and control. But one cannot acquire a heritage: it is given, fixed at birth. Heritage claims an essential, and ineradicable, difference between someone born in a village, or a country, or a faith, and someone who has chosen to make their life within that social and cultural framework; and that distinction, paradoxically, disadvantages the person who has freely chosen an identity, making a conscious commitment to a place, a group or a set of values. In this world, a migrant can only ever be an honorary member, an affiliate whose status, whether welcomed or merely tolerated, is always at risk of revocation»

F. Matarasso (2006), «History defaced: heritage creation in contemporary Europe», in S. Bodo, M. R. Cifarelli (eds.), *Quando la cultura fa la differenza. Patrimonio, arti e media nella società multiculturale*, Meltemi, Rome



«Tolerance should really only be a passing attitude: it should lead to recognition. To tolerate is to offend» (J. W. Goethe)

«It is time that governments, agencies concerned with heritage, cultural bodies and artists, among others, began to rethink how heritage is imagined, defined and interpreted. Otherwise, and notwithstanding the rising calls for immigrants to "integrate" better or adopt largely unspecified European cultural values, it is difficult to see how to avoid, intentionally or unintentionally, creating divisions within society ... between those who belong and those who do not, those who can speak and those who cannot»



# Re-imagining "heritage" in Italian museums...



"TAM TAM - The Museum for All"



"Factories of Stories"



"Twelve storytellers in search of an author"



"Brera, another story"

#### Find out more on:

www.patrimonioeintercultura.ismu.org www.patrimoniodistorie.it Heritage as the "neutral" remains of the past (heritage as CONSERVATION)

or

Heritage as a resource for reflection, self-questioning, interaction, recognition, representation and self-representation, personal growth, community cohesion (heritage as CONVERSATION)?

CulturalBase Consortium, *Cultural Inclusion: rethinking (museum) heritage, from conservation to conversation*, policy brief produced in the framework of the project "CulturalBase – Social Platform for European Heritage and European Identities" and edited by S. Bodo, European Commission - DG Education and Research, June 2017 (http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/policy\_briefs/2017\_policy%20brief\_inclusion\_def.pdf#view=fit&pagemode=none)

## Intercultural spaces?



How can museums become places where not only the understanding of "European heritage" is deepened or mutual knowledge / tolerance are promoted, but also where participative, cross-cultural, creative encounters can take place, new connections between people and heritage be facilitated, new knowledge systems, awarenesses and relationships created, and diverse/inclusive heritage communities initiated?

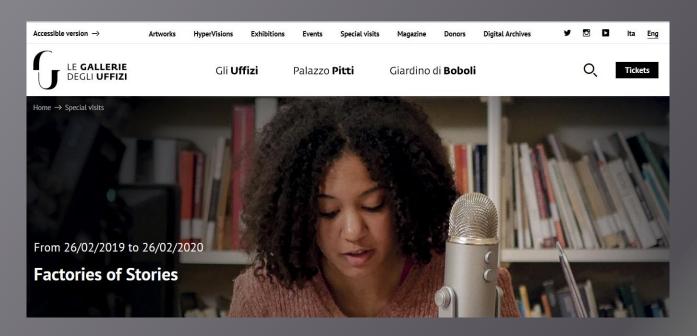
# New heritage communities: to reshape museums as shared spaces



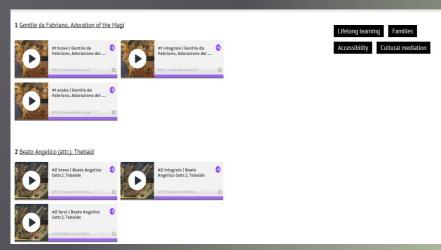
«A battle is being fought today in the public squares, at political conventions, on the television, in the opinion pages: a battle of storytelling about migrants. Stories have power, much more power than cold numbers»

S. Mheta, "Immigration panic: how the West fell for manufactured rage", in *The Guardian*, 27 August 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/aug/27/immigration-panic-how-the-west-fell-for-manufactured-rage)

# "Factories of stories" - Storytelling at the Uffizi Galleries







# "Factories of stories": the key questions





- could the Uffizi Galleries go beyond the rationale of "social inclusion" and the goal of "integrating migrants", by working towards a "cultural innovation" approach to the interpretation of collections?
- could wider, more diverse and inclusive heritage communities be initiated, based not so much on nationality, ethnicity, religious beliefs, as on a shared process of meaning-making?

"Factories of stories": what is it, who are its main actors, who is it for?

It is an audio trail interweaving the story of 12 artworks of the Uffizi collections with personal tales, touching on universal themes such as family, friendship, prayer, journey...

It actively engages a diverse group of storytellers: 4 museum operators and 8 citizens with an immigrant background

It is addressed to *all* visitors (as well as non-visitors, through its availability on the Uffizi website and major podcasting platforms such as Spotify): young, adult and elderly; Italian and with an immigrant background; tourists, frequent visitors and individuals who never set foot in a museum

## "Factories of stories": what are its key goals?

Promote the access and cultural participation of non-visitors such as citizens with an immigrant background, while at the same time providing frequent museum visitors with new insights into the collections

Diversify programming through the active involvement of citizens in participatory practices of interpretation and meaning-making

Enable the intercultural and inter-generational contact and exchange between visitors

Foster a closer relationship between the Uffizi Galleries and Florence citizens, both "old" and "new"

"Factories of stories": further, "under-the-radar" goals...

Provide an opportunity for the professional development of museum staff

Help operators involved in education, outreach and access start working in better synergy with curators

Address and dispel reservations about participatory interpretation practices

# Why storytelling?

It is a crucial dimension of human relationships

It is a universal language

It casts a more evocative and personally meaningful light on otherwise "revered" and "distant" museum objects

It builds a bridge between *History* and *stories*, triggering new conversations

# Key features of our work

#### Allowing *time* for storytellers to:

- expand their skills of observation and description
- expand their ability to listen: the group as a "sounding board"
- recognise the urgency of the story they want to tell
- identify the heart of that story, and carefully choose the images and words to convey it
- experience a genuine opportunity for self-representation

#### Interweaving *History* and *stories* so as to:

- allow personal narration and historical/scientific content to nurture each other, and become one
- translate expert knowledge in a way that is not only accessible, but also evocative and meaningful to everyone

#### Working in group:

- listening to one another
- respecting the opinion of others
- acknowledging that each storyteller has an important contribution to make to the group's experience
- being able to change one's own perspective

#### Promoting wider, more diverse and inclusive "heritage communities"...

... based not so much on identity fault-lines, as on collaborative meaning-making and a shared sense of belonging/ownership

### Kuassi's Spring



# Are museums as "intercultural spaces" about...

- enhancing the "literacy" of individuals with an immigrant background in a country's history, art and culture ("filling cultural deficits")
- compensating their past misrepresentation in museums in the eyes of "native" audiences
- promoting cultural self-awareness
- or rather about triggering a bi-directional process which is dialogical and transformative on both sides ("natives" and "migrants"), and in which all are equal participants?

«The Magi set out to find a faraway village in an unknown country, only guided by a star. Possibly they were rich, surely not too poor, otherwise where did they get the gold,



frankincense and myrrh they carried as gifts?
We know they most likely came from the East, a land rich in wealth and wisdom. A miracle which was not repeated in Kivu, on Nuba mountains, in Palestine, Israel, Iraq, Syria, Casamance or somewhere else.

The young men arrived from faraway lands with tanks, explosives and sophisticated guns, which made them so arrogant in exporting democracy, suddenly realise that all their gifts are worth nothing. They lay them down in front of a child. A child too little to understand, and yet, with his touching, living presence, he represents all that matters in life: HOPE»

Museum mediator Dudu Kouate in dialogue with Gaudenzio Ferrari's *Adoration of the Magi*, Brera National Picture Gallery ("Brera, another story" project, 2012-2014)

### Simona Bodo



www.patrimoniodistorie.it (online November 2019)



www.patrimonioeintercultura.ismu.org