

## Slave Museums and a Site of Democratic Pedagogy: Engagement, Healing and Tolerance

**Authors :** Elaine Stavro

**Abstract :** In our present world where acts of incivility, intolerance and anger towards minority communities is on the rise, the ways museum practices cultivate ethical generosity is of interest. Democratic theorists differ as to how they believe respect can be generated through active participation. Allowing minority communities a role in determining what artifacts will be displayed and how they will be displayed has been an important step in generating respect. In addition, the rise of indigenous museums, slave museums and curators who represent these communities, contribute to the communication of their history of oppression. These institutional practices have been supplemented by the handling of objects, recognition stories and multisensory exhibitions. Psychoanalysis, object relations theorists believe that the handling of objects: amenable objects and responsive listeners will trigger the expression of anomie, alienation and traumatizing experiences. Not only memorializing but engaging with one's loss in a very personal way can facilitate the process of mourning. Manchester Museum (UK) gathered together Somalian refugees, who in the process of handling their own objects and those offered at the museum, began to tell their stories. Democratic theorists (especially affect theorists or vital materialists or Actor Network theorists) believe that things can be social actants- material objects have agentic capacities that humans should align with. In doing so, they challenge social constructivism that attributes power to interpreted things, but like them they assume an openness or responsiveness to Otherness can be cultivated. Rich sensory experiences, corporeal engagement (devices that involve bodily movement or objects that involve handling) auditory experiences (songs) all contribute to improve one's responsiveness and openness to Others. This paper will focus specifically on slave museums/ and exhibits in the U.K, the USA., South Africa to explore and evaluate their democratic strategies in cultivating tolerant practices via the various democratic avenues outlined above.

**Keywords :** democratic pedagogy, slave exhibitions, affect/emotion, object handling

**Conference Title :** ICCTDHM 2017 : International Conference on Cultural Tourism Development and Heritage Management

**Conference Location :** Madrid, Spain

**Conference Dates :** March 26-27, 2017