

# INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

## INCLUSIVENESS IN AND THROUGH MUSEUM DISCOURSE

### Organizers:

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As civic institutions “in service to society” (ICOM 2007), museums are now going beyond the basic functions of collecting, exhibiting and interpreting cultural heritage, becoming primary agents of social inclusion and cultural change. This leads them to critically reflect upon their practices and seek innovative approaches: what strategies can museums adopt to be more inclusive and equitable organizations? How can museums establish positive relationships with socially disadvantaged people, or with people who are still under-represented in museum audiences? How can they innovate external communication also from the ethical point of view, using both digital and non-digital tools?

The Conference explores the strategic role played by museums in setting forth discursive practices of inclusion, tolerance, social equality, and, consequently, in pursuing ethical objectives also through the language they choose to adopt. While fostering reflection on the actual effectiveness of those textualizing processes favouring inclusiveness, the aim of the Conference is to underscore the linguistic potential of Museum Discourse in its imbrication with human rights discourse and pedagogic discourse. Such an imbrication actualize the museum as an agent of social change that appears as paramount in the new course of inclusive didactics.

A museum active in the cultural process through its “communicative actions” presupposes the study of its language and its construction of messages and “discourses”, explicit or hidden, in the displays, exhibitions, practices, community activities. From the perspectives of Linguistics, Discourse Analysis, Sociology and Sociolinguistics, Translation Studies, Anthropology and Anthropological Linguistics, as well as Curatorship proper, Museum Discourse will be approached as a process of communication and signification, leading to the construction of relevant social functions.

Forging closer connections, and developing greater mutual understanding between scholars and practitioners, can serve to strengthen both academic research and museum practice. Museum Discourse research can be applied to help shape museum practice, as results can be fed back in the form of recommendations to practitioners; vice versa, museum professionals can provide scholars with valuable insights into their practices, presenting case studies and relevant examples of written, oral, non-verbal and digital communication taking place in museum settings. As practising members of the museum discourse community, professionals serve as ‘specialist informants’ (Bhatia, 1993) to be consulted in order to gain access to data and provide feedback on research.