Does the Musée du Quai Branly project tell more about the collection it houses or about France?

Cultures are meant to be in dialogue. The Musée du Quai Branly opens in June 2006
©musée du quai Branly (Paris, Place de la Concorde, Easter Island statue)

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Abstract

This thesis aims at studying the birth of a French national ethnographic museum, the Musée du Quai Branly, by looking at its political message which draws connections between: the equality of cultures, the universality of art and cultural diversity. From this perspective, the significance of the museum project in terms of representation in contemporary France is analysed.

The Musée du Quai Branly is meant to be about the "Arts and Civilisations of Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas," thus bringing the notion of a museum of 'the Others.' An attempt is made to show how the representation of 'the Others' is informed by some principles of the French nation-state facing a globalised world, at the same time that the museum project can be viewed as an answer to a culturally diverse French society.

This study focuses on two aspects: the Musée du Quai Branly as a political project, and the Musée du Quai Branly's first realisation, the exhibition entitled "Arts of Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas" at the Pavillon des Sessions, Musée du Louvre.

It is argued that the conceptual framework of the museum project twists the notion of change around tradition and continuity by representing cultural diversity through the homogeneity of universalism.

**Keywords:** France, nation-state, globalization, representation, 'We', 'the Others', art, 'primitive art,' ethnography, postcolonialism, cultural diversity.
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"I do not like abusive words like 'objective', 'value-free', and 'factual' in historical writing. I have not read many works which wrap their claims in these packages that were worth thinking about later. [...] If in fact we wish to write better histories we have to write more inclusive ones. And that is not primarily a theoretical question. It is a social one. To the degree that all participants in a history can tell their stories – the regionalist and the cultural administrator, the social scientist and those she studies, the museum administrator and the people whose cultures are on display, to that degree we have richer, truer, fairer and more passionate histories." Herman Lebovics, *Bringing the Empire Back Home: France in the Global Age*, Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2004, (Preface, XIII-XIV).
PART 1  THEORIZING THE MUSÉE DU QUAI BRANLY, PARIS: AN INTRODUCTION

1.1.0  PLACING INTO CONTEXT: A NEW NATIONAL MUSEUM IN CONTEMPORARY FRANCE

1.1.1  The Musée du Quai Branly's ambition

1.1.2  A new museum in a challenged nation-state

1.1.3  What is the thesis's aim and objectives?

1.1.4  Presentation of the thesis's structure

1.2.0  THE MUSÉE DU QUAI BRANLY: HISTORY, PURPOSE AND SPECIFICITY

1.2.1  The will of a president

1.2.2  A new era — a new museum: closing museums from colonial age

1.2.3  What is the museum's mission?

1.2.4  Which museum context?

1.3.0  BACKGROUND

1.3.1  Contextualizing the paper topic: a 'distanciation' process

1.3.2  Previous research on the Musée du Quai Branly

1.3.3  Theoretical and research background

PART 2  CONCEPTS AND REALITIES: A HARD LANDING?

2.4.0  A MUSEUM PAYING TRIBUTE TO THE ARTS OF AFRICA, ASIA, OCEANIA AND THE AMERICAS

2.4.1  Naming

2.4.2  Placing into concept

2.5.0  A MUSEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PAVILLON DES SESSIONS EXHIBITION

2.5.1  De-naturalising the exhibition display

PART 3  NATIONAL IDENTITY AND NATIONAL MUSEUM: EPISTEMOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND DEBATE IN FRANCE

3.6.0  A TRANSLATION OF REPRESENTATION

3.6.1  National identity, national museum and representation: from the object to the subject

PART 4  CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

4.7.0  FINAL WORDS
Nota bene

The translations from French to English are by the author with the original wording referenced in a note. Words in italic are highlights by the author unless indicated otherwise.
Part.1 Theorizing the Musée du Quai Branly, Paris: an introduction

1.0 Placing into context: a new national museum in contemporary France

1.1 The Musée du Quai Branly's ambition

In 1995, a steering group was set up to think about the place of "primitive art" in the French museum institutions. On 23 June 2006, a national museum dedicated to "the arts of Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas," the Musée du Quai Branly, is due to open to the public in Paris.1

"I wish that this museum will be the instrument for a renewed citizenship. [...] But I wish above all that it will be an instrument for peace which fully testifies of the equal dignity of cultures and human beings,"2 such are the words of President Jacques Chirac pronounced during a speech at the occasion of his visit to the Musée du Quai Branly jobsite in 15 October 2004.

In April 2000, the Musée du Quai Branly’s first realisation opened at the Pavillon des Session, Musée du Louvre. The art exhibition, as indicated by its title, "the Art of Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas,"3 will be discussed throughout the paper in relation to the political discourse surrounding the museum project.

"[...] we have built new relationships with these countries, relationships based on understanding, mutual respect, dialogue and exchange. [...]"

The time had come to bring greater visibility to these new relationships, under the sign of recognition, sharing and fraternity. It is for this reason that I was keen that the early arts should in the year 2000 find their rightful place in the museum institutions of France."4 [Excerpts from Jacques Chirac inaugural speech at the opening of the Pavillon des Sessions, Musée du Louvre, April 2000.]

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1 "Conférence de presse du 4 avril 2006," Musée du Quai Branly.
dignité des cultures et des hommes, [...]."
3 'Art d'Afrique, d'Asie, d'Océanie et des Amériques.'
1.1.2 A new museum in a challenged nation-state

Nation, state, globalisation, museum and representation

The link between the birth of museums and the establishment and settling of the nation-state was developed by Tony Bennett making extensive use of Foucault's theory on control and power. The idea of nation-states seems to be eternal despite the ongoing process of 'globalization,' defined by Robertson as "the actual form of recent and contemporary moves in the direction of global interdependence and global consciousness." The emergence of the nation-state in the eighteenth century in the Western World is linked to the emergence of democracy. The birth of the individual elector required the assertion of a common 'national' identity to make certain that the political power corresponded to a defined population within a defined geographical space. In Europe, education systems as well as museums, participated in differentiating nations. In France, the Louvre was, in theory, opened to the public in 1793. Meanwhile the teachers of the French Republic were called 'the black knights of the Republic,' as they were spreading, while wearing a black smock, the same school curriculum in the French language through out France in regions where other languages or dialects were spoken; thus unifying the country through the language. Museums were the window of the nation, displaying: its treasures, its modernity and taking pride in showing how the French nation-state was at the top of an evolution scale. Therefore, one can well understand that both globalisation and the post colonial era nurture uncertainty and blur the clear-cut superimposition between a nation and a state. As Sharon Macdonald sums up, "Museums occupy an intriguingly paradoxical place in global culture [...]. Bound up with much that is heralded to be nearing its end – stability and permanence, authenticity, grand narratives, the nation-state, and even history itself – their numbers are growing at an unprecedented rate." Today, one can observe a new dynamic in museums in Europe and the creation of the Musée du Quai Branly is part of this movement.

5 Bennett, The Birth of the Museum, 1996.
7 See: "histoire du Louvre" at: www.louvre.fr
8 "Les hussards noirs de la République."
France: a challenged nation-state

"Heard about the guy who fell off a skyscraper? On his way down past each floor, he kept saying to reassure himself: 'So far so good...so far so good...so far so good.' How you fall doesn't matter. It's how you land." [Final quotation of the Film "Hate" by Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995, a film about France and its suburbs, ethnicity and exclusion]

In 1995, the black and white film "Hate" by Mathieu Kassovitz created a commotion in France. The film is a parable of the French political, cultural and economic situation. It depicts life in the suburbs and the clash of communication between the people living in the suburbs and the people representing the authorities, the police. It shows an ethnic France too often confined to the suburbs where skyscrapers were built around the city centre to accommodate immigrants. Therefore, the suburbs resonate with immigrants and ethnicity. This film is about social exclusion, a taboo topic in the country known as the country of the Declaration of the Rights of Human Beings and of the Citizen, with the universality of human beings for philosophical background. Segregation is thought as only existing across the Atlantic, where the notion of 'difference,' like in the United States of America, is understood as part of the contract of a 'living together.'

In fall 2005, France was the site of serious riots that originated in the suburbs of Paris and extended to large cities all over France. Cars were burnt and a state of emergency was declared by the French government utilizing the law n° 55-385, created when the now called 'war of Algeria', then a French colony, started.

"Facing the risks of fanaticism and obscurantism, intolerance and identity fold, against those who advocate for confrontation, violence and hatred, I form the wish that the Quai Branly Museum carries far the humanistic message of respect, of diversity and the dialogue of cultures." [Excerpt from a speech by Jacques Chirac, 15 October 2004.]

1.1.3 What is the thesis's aim and objectives?
This thesis aims at studying the birth of a French national ethnographic museum, the Musée du Quai Branly, by looking at the political message which draws connections between: the equality of cultures, the universality of art and cultural diversity. From this perspective, the

10 La Haine (Hate), Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995.
significance of the museum project in terms of representation in contemporary France will be analysed.

The main question is threefold: How is it possible to create a museum whose ambition is to "be an instrument for peace" and an evidence of the "equal dignities of cultures" by displaying ethnographic objects? These objects are the treasures of past collecting that took advantage of unequal power relations and which are evidence of a sensitive colonial time. So far, how does the Musée du Quai Branly project fulfil these ambitions? Does the museum challenge the representation of national identity at a time when the nation-state is challenged?

In order to fathom the French answer, exemplified by the Musée du Quai Branly project, the objectives of this thesis are to understand the French context and the concepts at work in the communications of the museum project and in the display at the Pavillon des Sessions, Musée du Louvre.

Borrowing Sharon Macdonald’s theoretical approach to museums analysis, the author would like to look at the Musée du Quai Branly as a project in which social and cultural theories underline the reasoning and the conceptual framework of the "21st century French national museum." Likewise, these social and cultural theories are translated into the physical display and are performed. Indeed, museums in the "nation-statist" framework carry some significant political and social functions as they provide a common bond that allows the citizen individuals to think themselves as part of a community and to identify their peers. Therefore in the French nation-state, it allows for 'Frenchness' to be displayed and symbolically experienced. The museum framework challenges (through representations, symbols and rituals) the incapacity for all these individuals to actually encounter and acknowledge their social bond. Nevertheless this imagined community is challenged, and has been challenged for quite some time, through inputs of migrants and emancipation of social groups bringing different cultural and social references.

13 Ibid.
16 The adjective "nation-statist" is used by Sharon Macdonald and re-used by the author of the present paper.
1.1.4 Presentation of the thesis’s structure

The Musée du Quai Branly project will be viewed as a "museum-idea" rather than as a building sheltering objects. After McLuhan's expression "the message is the medium," one may consider the creation of a national museum as the message.\textsuperscript{18} The expression "museum-idea" is inspired by an article by Jean Davallon, "Is the museum really a media?"

"It is common to distinguish today (Peter Van Mansch, 1987) a 'museology of object' from a 'museology of idea.' The first one refers to museums whose functioning mode and presentation is based on the objects of the collection, the museology of idea rooting this functioning and these representations on knowledge and objectives, in brief, on what is also called a "concept."\textsuperscript{19} [Jean Davallon]

Indeed, in times of change the museum may crystallise the tension between tradition (museums as a nation-statist cultural tradition) and contemporary adaptation to new paradigms (like cultural diversity, for instance). While eighteenth and nineteenth century museums may be seen as an agent of the nation-state construction, it seems that contemporary institutions are under pressure to adapt to a future which is not defined and which may be already gone at the time of reaction.

**Part 1** introduces the focus of the paper: the creation of the Musée du Quai Branly, the discourse accompanying the project, the social and political context within contemporary France.

**Part 2** analyses the salient concepts of the project and makes a critical analysis on how the discourse accompanying the project is translated into the exhibition space at the Musée du Louvre, the Musée du Quai Branly's first realisation.

**Part 3** transfers from the museum scene to the French domestic scene by moving from (museum) objects to subjects, and back to objects. After denaturalizing the Musée du Quai Branly’s first realisation, it is noteworthy to consider that the museum project and its first realisation are contextualised by a self-perception of French national identity as much as it is

\textsuperscript{18} Davallon, "Introduction: Le public au centre de l'évolution du musée," 13. He evokes the "put into patrimony" of objects and how this brings a reconsideration of the museums evolution history from a museology of objects to a museology of idea.

\textsuperscript{19} Davallon, "Le musée est-il vraiment un media?," 111-112. "Il est de coutume de distinguer aujourd'hui (Peter van Mansch, 1987) la 'muséologie d'objet' de la 'muséologie d'idée.' La première renvoie à des musées dont le mode de fonctionnement et de présentation est fondé sur les objets de collection, la muséologie d'idée fondant ce fonctionnement et ses présentations sur des savoirs et des objectifs, bref, sur ce que l'on appelle encore un 'concept.'"
contextualising the latter. According to Sharon Macdonald, answering "how and why museums are able to act as manifestations of identity or sites for the contestation of identities," requires that we are "able to see our notions of particular identities, including 'national identity,' not as universal but as historically and culturally specific." 20

Part 4 concludes the thesis by confronting the political discourse of the project around cultural diversity with the display of a representational 'We,' through an art exhibition.

1.2.0 The Musée du Quai Branly: history, purpose and specificity

1.2.1 The will of a president

The birth of the Musée du Quai Branly dates to 1995, when the newly elected President Jacques Chirac established a steering group, lead by Jacques Friedman, 21 to submit proposals on how to give a proper place to 'primitive arts' 22 within French museum institutions. 23 A report was submitted to Jacques Chirac, and a new steering group, under the status of an association, was formed to act as a steering group for the proposed museum. On 23 December 1998, a decree created the Musée du Quai Branly as an autonomous public institution, governed by the Ministry of Culture and Communication and the Ministry of National Education, Research and Technology. 24 Article 2 of the decree outlines the museum project's mission:

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21 Jacques Friedmann attended the National Institute of Administration which is a prestigious grande école for training future government officials. He became a financial general inspector. He worked as an adviser for many different politicians and was a CEO for different companies such as Air France. For more information on Jacques Friedmann’s biography, see L'Expansion, "Jacques Friedmann, l’ami qui porte conseil".

22 The report by Jacques Friedman uses the term 'First arts'

23 See, "Rapport de la Commission "Arts Premiers" à monsieur le Premier ministre." It reveals that before a new museum building was considered, the commission first proposed to renovate the Museum of Man and to merge the collections from the ethnology section of the Museum of Man and the Museum of African and Oceanian Arts. It also planned on the Pavillon des Sessions antenna (provisory or permanent). Some names of the people who participated in the steering group are mentioned. See also, Viatte "Un musée pour les arts exotiques," interviewed by Krzysztof Pomian; as well as "the Musée du Quai Branly's web site, the "museum" section, then "genesis."

24 Decret n° 98 – 1191 du 23 décembre 1998 portant création de l'Etablissement public du musée du quai Branly. A decree is an executive administrative act which is signed by either the President of the Republic or the Prime Minister and therefore is not discussed at the Assemblée (legislative power).

For a more detailed information on the naissance of the project, see:
"The public institution has for mission to conceive and realise or to make one realise a museological and scientific original cultural ensemble, in charge of preserving and presenting to the public some collections belonging to the State representatives of the Arts and Civilisations of Africa, Oceania, the Americas and of Asia, as well as to allow the insertion within the environment of the ensemble." 25 [Decree no. 98-1191]

The banal formulation already carries the seeds of some strong principles and debates accompanying the structural foundation of the museum project that will be discussed later on in this document. (Especially, see: 2.5.2 New acquisitions: the case of the Nok and Sokoto cultural objects, 41; From the object to the subject, 48)

1.2.2 A new era — a new museum: closing museums from colonial age

The Musée du Quai Branly comprises the collections of two former Parisian museums: the Museum of African and Oceanian Arts and of the Museum of Man.26 Both museums, institutions from the colonial period, were in decline with low visitation. The museum of Man was created in 1937, and inherited from the ethnographic museum; while the Museum of African and Oceanian Arts was created after the colonial exhibition in 1931.27 The creation of a new museum, in place of renovating the Museum of Man and the Museum of African and Oceanian Arts, may reveal a strong desire to break from colonial history and its corollary, an evolutionist representation of the world. While the collection is retained, the new museum building gives the appearance of change.

25 "L'établissement public a pour mission de concevoir et de réaliser ou faire réaliser un ensemble culturel original à caractère muséologique et scientifique, chargé de conserver et de présenter au public des collections appartenant à l'Etat représentatives des arts et des civilisations d'Afrique, d'Océanie, des Amériques et de l'Asie, ainsi que de permettre l'insertion de cet ensemble dans son environnement."

26 The Museum of African and Oceanian Arts (Musée des arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie) and the Museum of Man (Musée de l'homme) closed on January 31st 2003. For more information, see, "Le palais de la porte dorée: une destinée haute en symboles." Also for a more detailed information see, James Clifford, The Predicament of Culture, the section entitled "In the Museum of Man," 135-145.

27 Only the ethnology collection from the Museum of Man was transferred to the Quai Branly, while the physical anthropology collection was sent to the Natural History Museum in Paris. This is not the author's mistake: this reorganization of collections could be further discussed in terms of the classifications involved.
1.2.3 What is the museum's mission?

The General Programme agreed upon by the Administrative Council on 28 June 1999, outlines the main ambitions of the project followed by more specific objectives under the categories of publics, collections, organisation, urbanism, and architectural project.

The main aims and objectives are as follows:

"The creation of a new institution [...] is the opportunity to develop an original project whose architectural concept answer demands of image, identity, urban insertion, and of functioning.

Whereas the majority of the great international institutions are confronted today with the need for going beyond the inheritance of the first contacts of the Western world with the other cultures and breaking from the post-colonial view, this new museum will propose a deeply innovative design in terms of scientific device and organization, as well as offer to the publics.

It means:

-to answer to the diversity of publics and offers
-to create a synergy of activities
-to develop a new way of practicing international relations
-to make exceptional collections accessible
-to propose a centre with resources for research and education
-to have a place for the expression of living cultures
-to inscribe mobility as a founding concept of the project
-to organise an adapted technical and administrative device"

28 "Programme général, approuvé par le conseil d'administration du 28 juin 1999," 4-6. "La création d'un nouvel établissement [...] est l'occasion de développer un projet original dont le concept architectural répond à des exigences d'image, d'identité, d'insertion urbaine et de fonctionnement. Alors que la plupart des grandes institutions internationales sont aujourd'hui confrontées à la nécessité de dépasser l'héritage des premiers contacts de l'Occident avec les autres cultures et de sortir du regard post-colonial, ce nouveau proposera une conception profondément novatrice à la fois en termes de dispositif scientifique et d'organisation, et d'offre aux publics. Il s'agit donc: de répondre à la diversité des publics et des offres, de créer une synergie d'activités, de développer une pratique nouvelle des relations internationales, de rendre accessibles des collections exceptionnelles, de proposer un centre de ressources, de recherche et de formation, de disposer d'un lieu d'expression des cultures vivantes, d'inscrire la mobilité dans le concept fondateur du projet, d'organiser un dispositif technique et administratif adapté."
This museum's main ambition can be interpreted as a will to create a rupture with a supposed 'confrontational past'. This echoes President Jacques Chirac's call for "peace" (See: 1.1.1 The Musée du Quai Branly's ambition, 8). It is therefore of interest to analyse, later in this thesis, how the museum answers to this heavy past/present and to consider the museum's interpretation of a 'post postcolonialism'. (See: A post-postcolonialism?, 26).

1.2.4 Which museum context?

The emergence of "the publics:" about the Musée du Quai Branly as a virtual museum

The virtual Musée du Quai Branly, if not physically completed, is virtually present on the internet. The virtual Musée du Quai Branly, as well as the new Musée du Louvre web site (the Musée du Louvre houses the Musée du Quai Branly's first realisation) shows a radical shift in terms of communication. Before the summer 2005, the Musée du Louvre web site was about the museum itself (its exhibitions, its collection, and when it was open to the public), and not about communication.29 Today, the Musée du Louvre, the Musée du Quai Branly, and other French museums, under the label "Museums of France"30 seem to have rethought their 'raison d'être.' The imagined undifferentiated French public, the absentee in the communication process, has become the publics composed of different individuals, with different needs and interests, and the museums appear to endeavour to be accessible and attractive to them, as demonstrated by their online interfaces. This new positioning of museums may be explained by the current commercial development of the sector and a will to attract different publics as they are synonymous to new consumers.31

New context, new laws

Both aspects of 'democratisation' and commercial development are encapsulated in the new law, the "museum law"32 promulgated on 5 January 2002. 33 Article seven of the law states that every museum under the label "Museums of France," should have services for the

29 In a transparency of intent, unheard of before in the French museum world, the virtual visitor of the musée du Louvre web site can learn about the new web site project and all the steps which ended up with the new web site launched in the summer 2005. The musée du quai Branly's web site was engineered by the company Gaya in 2002.

30 Label "musées de France"

31 For more details on the commercial development of French museums, see the dissertation by Varichon, "Faut-il avoir peur du développement commercial des musées?"

32 "loi musée"

33 Loi n° 2002 – 5 du 4 janvier 2002 relative aux musées de France. As for the term 'democratisation', it has been used in France since the creation of a Ministry of Culture with at its head André Malraux, and it means that the great work of arts should be accessible to every French citizen.
The ensuing article states that museums, while publicly funded, are allowed to sign conventions to receive private funds in favour of their development. Another law, dated 1 August 2003 encourages, through tax deductions, the patronage of institutions of public interest, such as public museums.

Though a long-standing practice in Anglo-Saxon countries, this massive change towards both museums' accountability to the publics and private funding in French cultural institutions is a recent development. A press release from the Ministry of Culture and Communication announced that the 2001 law concerning the "Museums of France," contains four objectives, one of which is: "to redefine the role and the position of museums relative to the society expectations, by being an actor in favour of the development and cultural democratisation."

1.3.0 Background

1.3.1 Contextualizing the paper topic: a ‘distanciation’ process

This paper is also an attempt to look into some discrepancies between a field of study, in this case the museum studies field, largely dominated by the Anglo-Saxon world and the particularities, not to say the peculiarities, of the museum world and its practices, in my home country, France.

As a political scientist, I am particularly interested in the link between state and culture and the system of representations in cultural institutions. I have come to know much about the new National Museum of World Culture, Göteborg, formerly the ethnographic museum, because it houses the International Museum Studies (IMS) programme. Through my experiences in the programme, I have become more receptive and sensitive to the birth of other museums, especially ethnographic museums.

In a paradoxical way, my distance from my home country has allowed me to look at French museums and especially at the Musée du Quai Branly in a reflexive way. Many things could no longer be taken for granted, and they were put into parallel with other practices and conceptual frameworks. This allows for a positive critical analysis of the Musée du Quai

In a sense, attending university in Great-Britain, then in Sweden and living in the United States of America provided background fieldwork from which I could rethink national identity and (national) museums practices.

1.3.2 Previous research on the Musée du Quai Branly

Two major written works discuss the project of the creation of the Musée du Quai Branly, Paris. Both authors published in 2004 with no reference to each other. Valentina Lusini, doctor and researcher in the methodology of ethno-anthropological research at the University of Siena, Italy, published a book which was part of her PhD thesis, entitled: *Gli oggetti etnografici tra arte estoria. L'immaginario post coloniale e il progetto del Musée du Quai Branly a Parigi.*" Her work was published in Italian, which limits the present author’s possibility to take full advantage of the research. For this reason, the author exchanged a regular correspondence with Valentina Lusini. The reading of the Musée du Quai Branly project from the "postcolonial imaginary" perspective presents a major interest for this paper. The central focus of her research is "to analyse, from an historical point of view, the development of the non-European arts in the Western aesthetic discourse, and in particular in the French context." Her book aims at highlighting the central questions of the debate by giving an account of the events and the references and by proposing a reflection on the museological contents. She considers that the Musée du Quai Branly project is both "a political compromise" and "a cultural synthesis." Her book is thus a valuable in-depth research and analysis of the Musée du Quai Branly. It allows the present author to make a more punctual research and analysis from a different perspective, that of a political scientist and a museologist, using Sharon Macdonald's theoretical approach to museums and Herman Lebovics' analysis of the link between the French state and culture. From this perspective, it will be argued that the museum project manages the challenge of locking an/one interpretation and a re-presentation of ethnographic objects while at the same advocating for cultural diversity and peace.

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36 Lusini, email to author, 27 December 2005. "[...] analyser d'un point de vue historique, le développement de la perception des arts non européens dans le discours esthétique occidental, et en particulier dans le contexte français."

37 Ibid. "Compromis politique" et [comme] "synthèse culturelle."
The second major work about the Musée du Quai Branly, is the book *Bringing the Empire Back Home: France in the Global Age* by Herman Lebovics. He develops a well researched and non conventional history of French cultural policy. He explains how the French 'civilizing mission,' carried abroad, especially in the French colonies, was actually 'imported' to France, and how the same conceptual framework and attitude was used to bring 'culture' emanating from Paris to the rest of France. In his reading of the history of French cultural policy, he emphasises the link between French ideology on republicanism and universalism and how France deals with the supposed post colonial time and its effects. The last chapter of his book is titled "The Dance of the Museums." Herman Lebovics testifies of the current change in the French museum world with the disappearance of some museums and the birth of new ones. He focuses on the Musée du Quai Branly project and problematises it in the aftermath of the theory he developed in the four previous chapters. His theory of the (inter)relation between the French state and culture, also developed in *Mona Lisa’s Escort,* will be used to place the Musée du Quai Branly project into context.

1.3.3 Theoretical and research background

As the topic is on museums, representation, identity and nation-states, with a focus on a French ethnographic national museum, the work developed by Sharon Macdonald is of major importance. Yet, it is also important to be aware of the particular understanding of the identity paradigm used in this theoretical framework. Marcus Banks' work, *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions,* allows for positioning Sharon Macdonald's work on identity as being influenced by Ardener, who thought in terms of majority/minority identity leading to "certain classificatory schemes." These "classificatory schemes" are of interest, as the Musée du Quai Branly is presented as breaking from "the evolutionist programme" by moving towards an aesthetic display, which does not necessarily escape the 'classificatory scheme,' as this classification is looked into in this thesis.

While the principle of theorising the museum offers a general reading grid, the specificity of the Musée du Quai Branly as an ethnographic museum requires an understanding of this kind

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39 'Mission civilisatrice.'
of institution and the issues at stake: colonial history, acquisitions, presentation and representation, as developed in works by James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture, Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*[^43]; Sally Price in *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*[^44]; Gonseth, Hainard and Kaehr (editors) in *le musée cannibale*.[^45] Bearing in mind these specificities, Valentina Lusini notes that although there is a common trend concerning the historical and anthropological museums in Europe built around a formulation centred on "the world cultures" concept, the museum projects are very different in terms of intentions and realisations.[^46] Laurier Turgeon and Elise Dubuc underline the importance of context (national, historical, political, and cultural) to be able to fully understand a reshaped or a newly created museum.[^47]

On the theme of cultural diversity, the work by Jean-Loup Amselle, whose translated version is entitled, *'Affirmative Exclusion: Cultural Pluralism and the rule of Custom in France'*,[^48] contributes to this thesis as it focuses on France, as does the work by Herman Lebovics.[^49] Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau and Achille Mdembe have made more recent contributions on the theme.[^50]

In order to fulfil the paper's aim, a discursive analysis has been undertaken. Therefore, information, analysis, and research have been collected from different sources: The Musée du Quai Branly’s web site and the President of the French Republic’s web site, press releases of different organisations working with museums and heritage, different articles in journals, newspaper articles, etc. As well, some documents have been collected as they were written by individuals from within the museum institutions concerned with the Musée du Quai Branly project. They may reveal competitive ideas concerning the principles that should run the new museum. The thesis first identifies a dialectic before moving to a discursive and critical

[^43]: Clifford, *The predicament of Culture, Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, 1988


[^46]: Lusini, email to author, 27 December 2005.


analysis of the museological choices in terms of communication with the public and in terms of representation.

Since the project of the Musée du Quai Branly captivated attention, the author had access to published interviews and recorded speeches from a day of information given by professionals working on the Musée du Quai Branly project. The interviews were conducted by an historian and an ethnologist (Krzysztof Pomian and Julien Guilhem).

For the preparation of this thesis, the author visited, during the winter 2006, the first realisation of the Musée du Quai Branly, the exhibition "Arts of Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas," at the Pavillon des Sessions, Musée du Louvre, Paris. The exhibition space was first apprehended as a whole before the author could pay particular attention to the display technique and the information available to visitors.