

Museums, Ethno-education and Anti-racism. The Exhibition *La consentida es: La familia negra* *(The favorite is: The black family)*

Ir a versión en español

DOI: 10.30763/intervencion.244.v1n23.23.2021 · YEAR 12, ISSUE NO. 23: 135-155

Submitted: 05.01.2021 · Accepted: 07.04.2021 · Published: 28.06.2021

Carolina Chacón Bernal

Curadora e investigadora independiente, Colombia

ca.chaconb@gmail.com | ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8928-4705>

ABSTRACT

This ESSAY problematizes a case of Afro reparation in a joint initiative between a museum and communities from the exhibition *La consentida es: La familia negra (The favorite is: The black family)*, curated collectively by artist Liliana Angulo and members of the Afro social movement organizations of Medellín (Colombia) at the Museo de Antioquia (MDA) during 2019. The text locates both coloniality and structural racism as problems that extend to the present day in Colombia and raises the complexity of the museum's decolonizing pretension, at a time when dissidence is used as an exchange good to cover up the colonial regime it still represents.

KEY WORDS

curatorship; decoloniality; Afro-reparations; anti-racism; activism; museums; Museo de Antioquia; Colombia

One learns to look a certain way in order to resist.
hooks (2003, p. 116)¹

With the intention of questioning the introduction of anti-racism and decolonial practices in the museum, this text is an analytical and critical exploration of how a collective curatorial experience can be a tool for the intervention of hegemonic narratives by communities located in the peripheries of coloniality.

¹ The author calls herself bell hooks, in lower case, as a political stance.

Intervención

ENERO-JUNIO 2021
JANUARY-JUNE 2021

Un caso de reparación y acciones antirracistas was a collective artistic residency within the program *Residencias Cundinamarca*,² led by Liliana Angulo together with members of Afro-descendant organizations in Medellín, which included the exhibition *La consentida es: La familia negra* (*The favorite is: The black family*), which will be a central case study during this analysis. Angulo is an Afro-Colombian artist who works collaboratively on historical reparation processes and Afro-descendant social resistance movements in Colombia, through projects that question the representations of Afro-descendants in historical collections, in both artistic and documentary works. The purpose of the residency and, in particular, of the curatorial exercise *La consentida es: La familia negra*, was to collectively question the Museum of Antioquia's (MDA) collection from an anti-racist perspective.

Critically analyzing that experience requires recognizing the epistemological matrix on which the hegemonic narratives of museums in Latin America are based: modernity/coloniality, as well as the forms of knowledge that have not been valued within those narratives. That is why the starting point of this ESSAY is a contextualized curatorial practice with a decolonizing perspective, in reference to the concept of *decolonial praxis* developed by Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui from a sociological perspective of image, in which, participation is not an instrument to the service of observation but rather, its presupposition, so that decolonization can only be realized through practice (Rivera, 2015, p. 21). An impossible approach from a different perspective to that of the first person that embodies the contradictions of investigating, as a peripheral subject, the values of coloniality, reproduced and embodied both from and within a museum.³

If we understand coloniality as a process that has spanned over five centuries, we can expose the current oppressions that make up a supposedly universal art system; one which does not dialogue with historically subordinated voices, whose knowledge has been cultivated in marginalization, and in which, based on "inclusion" policies, prolongs subordination and promotes the appropriation of resistant knowledges. In a context where cultural institutions are immersed in neoliberal logics, it is worth asking to what extent do exhibitions manage to be devices of historical reparation?

² *One case of reparation and anti-racist actions*. Editorial translation. The *Cundinamarca Residencias* program started in 2017 and is funded by Fundación Sura Colombia.

³ I was an associate curator at the MDA between 2013 and 2019. By situated context I mean of being a cis woman, a lesbian, a descendant of an impoverished peasant family, and activist from a rural background.

The theoretical approach of this analysis draws on decolonial and anti-racist thought that places practice, that is, collective action, at the center of legitimate forms of knowledge. This ESSAY deals with historical elements of museums in Latin America, a reflection on structural racism in Colombia and the collective experiences that were felt in a case of reparation in Medellín's museum context.

PROLONGED COLONIALITY

The process of conquest and colonization of the territory known today as Latin America has been the cornerstone of the *coloniality of power*, a concept coined by the Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano (1992) to describe the Modern/Capitalist power system that originated with colonialism at the end of the 16th century. According to Santiago Castro-Gómez,

Dussel shows that European modernity was built on a specific materiality created since the 16th century through the Spanish territorial expansion; this generated the opening of new markets, the incorporation of unprecedented sources of raw materials and labor forces, which allowed what Marx called the "original accumulation of capital" (Castro-Gómez, 2005, p. 47).⁴

In parallel, a process of racialization based on a supposed biological superiority of the conquerors over the conquered,⁵ "which placed some in a situation of natural inferiority to others" (Quijano, 2014, p. 778), began to operate through the colonial transatlantic slave trade system, which involved the physical and epistemological extermination of non-whites over an extended time, in the form of "cross-breeding and as a nationalist ideology throughout Latin America" (Wade, 2003, p. 274).

For Quijano, the institution of the coloniality of power, of knowledge and of being, was a repressive process that "fell, above all, on the ways of knowing, of generating knowledge, of producing perspectives, the images and systems of these, symbols, modes of signification; on the resources, patterns and instruments of finalized and objectified, intellectual or visual expression" (Quijano,

⁴ Editorial translation. All subsequent quotes where the original text is in Spanish are also editorial translations.

⁵ Following Chukwudi Eze, a superiority constructed also on skin color, which "will form a pyramidal structure of power that will impose new ways of interaction between human groups. [...] since then there exists a 'chromatics' of power that over time will become more specialized" (quoted by Espinosa, 2018, p. 45).

1992b, p. 12). Sustained in the Cartesian separation of the subject from the object that founded modernity, a conception of knowledge was produced based on the separation between the person who knows and the object that is known, which gave rise to images of wild and natural otherness constructed in the chronicles of travelers located in the exteriority of European space: America, Africa and Asia (Castro-Gómez, 2005, p. 67).

Contrary to the commonly held belief that colonization ended in Latin America with the independence movements that occurred through the 19th century, the coloniality of power continues to this day: “from the formation of the nascent republics, what will follow is the installation of an internal colonialism, that is to say, one that is now carried out by the elites that succeeded and now take the place of the former invaders” (Espinosa, 2018, p. 37). These now conveniently have self-proclaimed themselves as the dominant class, of holders of the production of knowledge and representations, over Indigenous populations and Afro-descendants, whom they continue to exploit according to the nation-state European model, giving continuity to the pre-established colonial hierarchies (Quijano, 2014, p. 823).

MUSEUMS AS COLONIAL DEVICES

The reflections of the artist and curator Coco Fusco, in her text on the performance *Pareja en una jaula*⁶ (1992), made alongside Guillermo Gómez Peña, and researcher and curator Francisco Godoy’s doctoral thesis *La exposición como recolonización*,⁷ proposes interpretations of the “human zoos” as the first form of “intercultural performance” and as an “exercise for exhibiting former colonies”, situating them as the moment of formation of a racist and exoticizing vision through exhibition devices deployed throughout colonizers’ territories (Fusco, 2011, p. 320; Godoy, 2018, p. 48).

Linked to the establishment of nation-states in 19th century Europe, museums were born as tools to shape national and regional identities through fabricating the past, through collecting looted objects and thereby legitimizing colonialism (Borja, 2000, p. 35). Along these lines, anthropological and natural science museums with a Eurocentric heritage were constituted as a form of “visual technology” (Haraway, 2015, p. 132) whose function was the construction of the exoticizing and colonial view towards the objects

⁶ *Couple in a cage*. Editorial translation.

⁷ *Exhibitions as a form of recolonization*. Editorial translation.

Intervención

ENERO-JUNIO 2021
JANUARY-JUNE 2021

of the non-white, non-European, the peripheral or, as Fanon put it, "who are denied of their humanity" (Fanon, 2009, p. 220). Cases such as that of Sara Baartman (1789-1816), whose skeleton, brain and genitals were exhibited at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris until 1974, or the body of the Bushman male at the Museu Darder in Banyoles, Catalonia, in display case until as recently as 2000, are reminders of the museum's direct link as a symbolic space that exhibits racial supremacy and commemorates expropriation.

In Latin America, the Criollo elites of the emerging nation-states were not left behind. National and regional museums, also originating in the 19th century, were mechanisms for generating hegemonic identities. In Earle's words: "the generation of museums indicated the development of national sentiment among elites", and, together with monuments, they "are places where nationalism is made visible" (Earle, 2006, pp. 28-29). Despite the fact that the first museums in Latin America were founded in the decades following their independence with the aim of "safeguarding their own patrimonies, in the midst of the clamor for independence and apparent criticism of the colonial system" (Cartagena & León, 2014, p. 29), they reproduced a series of values associated with Eurocentrism and colonialism. These discourses were driven by Criollo elites who were interested in creating foundational narratives that, paradoxically, while seeking to move away from a colonial past, reproduced colonial narratives, hierarchies and logics in the name of the nation, among them, the privilege of representation: "Therein takes place the development of an idea of culture that opposes the concept of backwardness, of civilization to barbarism, instead building the modern space of otherness, creating and updating its own conditions" (Borja, 2000, p. 37).

Within this framework, in 1881, under the name of Museo y Biblioteca de Zea, the currently named Museo de Antioquia (MDA) was born in Medellín, the second oldest museum in Colombia and whose history and collection is inscribed with a colonial narrative. It arose from the union of collections prior to the legislative act of foundation,⁸ consisting of objects from mineralogy, zoology, botany (Herrera, 2019, p. 143) as well as bibliographic documents and objects belonging to, or relating to "illustrious men", linked to the process of independence: "This museum will collect and carefully maintain all objects that enhance the historical memories of the homeland and that can favor and stimulate the advancement of science and the arts" (Rivera, 2017, p. 45).

⁸ Fundamentally, the private collections of Manuel Uribe Ángel and Martín Gómez.

Intervención

ENERO-JUNIO 2021
JANUARY-JUNE 2021

The creation of the MDA is related to what the collaborators of the project *Un caso de reparación y acciones antirracistas* called “Illustrious slaveholders”. Its main instigator was the physician and intellectual of the regional elite, Manuel Uribe Ángel, also manager at both the Academia de Medicina de Medellín and the Academia Antioqueña de Historia, among others, institutions through which he and his intellectual circle, cultivated the notion of the *Antioquian race*, while they were “adhering to eugenic theories and the improvement of races both in the phenotypical sense, as well as the cultural sense” (Maya, 2014, p. 121).

Thus, the MDA’s collection was inscribed without much opposition in a regional discourse of the nation, contributing to the generation of identity constructs which placed Antioquians as “superior”, even before the rest of the country’s other inhabitants. Its hybrid and relevant current collection⁹ is evidence for the authoritative role it has played in the production of this narrative about the past. When reviewing, for example, the exhibition policies of objects related to the Conquest, those belonging to men adhering to eugenic theories or the representations of Afro-descendants in relation with artists, also Afro-descendants, registered as authors in the collection, the persistence of its remaining coloniality within the present day is evident.

THE COLOR OF POWER/KNOWLEDGE

At the end of World War II, the term *race* began to be replaced around Europe as a result of the rejection generated by the guilt caused by the Nazi genocide. Swept into this guilt were both the generalization of the Marxist paradigm that established *class* as the foundation of all social inequalities —making other forms of oppression invisible— and the ideology of miscegenation, which for a long time concealed the inequalities based around race (Viveros & Lesmes, 2014, p. 26).

The introduction of the term *ethnicity* as a way of naming the differentiation between some populations perceived and treated as different, attempted to replace the term *race*. Throughout the 1980s, new policies that had to account for multiculturalism began to have an effect on several Latin American countries which, at the end of that decade, even led to constitutional redefinitions (Viveros

⁹ The MDA’s collection is made up of over 5,000 objects, including archeological pieces, historical objects related to independence processes, colonial art, 19th and 20th century Antioquian art, contemporary art, and the largest collection of Fernando Botero’s works.

Intervención

ENERO-JUNIO 2021
JANUARY-JUNE 2021

& Lesmes, 2014, p. 14). The legal implementation of multiculturalism in Colombia began with the Constitution of 1991, which declared the existence of a multiethnic and multicultural State. This implementation has not ceased to be problematic, to such an extent that, although the State has been forced to implement public policies with a differentiated approach, it has also generated essentialisms and cultural differences that ultimately feed back into discrimination, exclusion, marginalization and social and economic inequalities (Mosquera, 2007, p. 215).

Faced with the question of whether or not Latin American societies are racist and if so in what ways are they so, Mara Viveros and Sergio Lesmes reflect on the complexities that studies, and struggles in general, against racism have experienced when “Latin American intellectuals and political leaders pointed out that [this] was the problem of other countries such as the United States or South Africa, where segregation and racial violence have marked their history” (Viveros & Lesmes, 2014, p. 17).

Ever since the *Third World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance*, held in Durban in 2001, the states laid out their commitment to fight against racism, recognizing enslavement and the slave trade as crimes against humanity. In this context, discussions on Afro-reparations and affirmative actions, took place (Mosquera, 2007, p. 230). For Claudia Mosquera and a group of like-minded intellectuals and activists, the descendants of slaves are a group to which the Colombian State must make reparations, for the following three reasons: firstly, due to the economic benefits obtained from the work of enslaved people; secondly, due to the way in which the State racialized the national geography, making Afro populations the areas of greatest poverty today; and “the last reason has to do with the way in which the Colombian State safeguards a *neutral national memory*, without thinking that it can never be unique” (Mosquera, 2007, p. 236).

Currently, Afro-descendant communities in Colombia continue to be minoritized, racialized and impoverished in a colonial *continuum* of a country that still does not recognize its own inherent structural racism. A nation engulfed by internal conflicts —despite two separate processes of demobilization of armed groups—, alliances between the State and cartels, the implementation of neoliberal policies that aggravate the inequality gap by violently and systematically dispossessing racialized communities —Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants and rural communities— from their territories. Against this backdrop —or rather in spite of it— social

Intervención

ENERO-JUNIO 2021
JANUARY-JUNE 2021

movements from black, Afro-descendant, *Raizal* and *Palenquero*¹⁰ communities, have worked tirelessly in the defense and vindication of their individual, collective and ancestral rights generating, in cultural terms, visibility for their contributions that the nation-building narrative omitted, assuming that these had been long since eliminated during the process of enslavement.

The reason for demanding reparations are made through national memory is directly linked to the museums and the very narratives that they safeguard. In the Colombian museological field, there are at least three projects of note, preceding *Un caso de reparación y acciones antirracistas*, which have not only addressed the racial problem but which have, from their privileged positions within the production of discourses about the past, tried to address their “uncomfortable heritages” by investing resources and dedicating spaces for the realization of projects surrounding the affected communities.

In 2008, when Cristina Lleras was the museum’s art and history curator, the Museo Nacional de Colombia mounted the exhibition *Velorios y santos vivos. Comunidades negras, afrocolombianas, raizales y palenqueras*¹¹ (Museo Nacional de Colombia, 2008). Through a participative action-research methodology, the exhibition managed to involve different cultural and academic institutions as well as a group of representatives and professionals from Afro-Colombian grassroots communities,¹² all with the aim of taking one of the most significant steps towards permanently including Afro-Colombian communities in the Museo Nacional’s narrative of the country.

In 2013 the MDA realized *¡Mandinga sea! África en Antioquia* (MDA & Universidad de los Andes, 2014, p. 11), a curatorial project by Adriana Maya and Raúl Cristancho on the presence of communities from the African diaspora in the territory of the current department, which included processes of Afro collectives displayed in the exhibition and a woman of African descent in the curatorial team.

¹⁰ The *Raizal* population is the native population of the islands of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina, descendants of the union between Europeans (mainly English, Spanish and Dutch) and African slaves. The *Palenquera* population is the Afro-Colombian population whose ancestors self-liberated themselves as Spanish slaves during the xvii and xviii centuries, establishing settlements or *palenques* (Ministry of the Interior, 2015).

¹¹ Wakes and live saints. *Black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal and Palenquero Communities*. Editorial translation.

¹² The project was led by the Ministry of Culture, through the Museo Nacional de Colombia and the Dirección de Etnocultura, together with the Facultad de Antropología and the Grupo de Estudios Afrocolombianos of the Centro de Estudios Sociales (CES) of the Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

In 2018, the Museo del Oro, in partnership with the Banco de la República de Colombia, held its first exhibition on the slave trade: *A bordo de un navío esclavista, La Marie-Séraphique*¹³ (Red Cultural del Banco de la República de Colombia, 2018). From the perspective of Bertrand Guillet and Krystel Gualdé, French curators at the Musée d'Histoire de Nantes and the Château des ducs de Bretagne, the exhibition accurately demonstrated the reality aboard the French ship of enslaved people from the 17th to the 19th century, and had a Colombian input in the project, led by a team of researchers from the Museo del Oro, who introduced samples and data on the slave trade in the Spanish colonies. However, none of them, neither the French nor Colombian, belonged to or were descendants of Afro communities.

Those cases of exhibitions relating to racial issues brought up questions that are the basis of my reflective exercise: is the exhibition format, even when it has the collaboration of Afro communities or features curators of African descent, still a Western, white, excluding and insufficient means of reparation for the history of black communities? To what extent do the exhibitions manage to be devices of historical reparation?

POWER SHIFT? A CASE OF REPARATIONS AND ANTI-RACIST ACTIONS¹⁴

Un caso de reparación, by Liliana Angulo, was conceived in Madrid within the framework of ARCO Colombia 2015, as part of the residency in the project *El Ranchito*, in collaboration with Matadero Madrid and FLORA arts + natura. The research project's main focus was the review and digitization of archives from Spanish institutions that were linked to the history of colonial extraction, especially from the Royal Botanical Expedition. This work continued later that same year, in the context of the Encuentro Internacional de Arte de Medellín MDE15, organized by the MDA. Here the archival review was carried out in the museum's collection and in the his-

¹³ *Aboard a slave ship. La Marie-Séraphique*. Editorial translation.

¹⁴ This residency took place between February and March of 2019 at the MDA, between artist Liliana Angulo and participants and collaborators from the following organizations: Red Nacional de Mujeres Afrocolombianas Kambirí; Consejo Comunitario Vereda San Andrés-Girardota; Vamos pa'l Otro Lado; Memorias, Saberes y Ancestralidad en San Andrés; Movimiento Cimarrón; Corporación Afrocolombiana de Desarrollo Social y Cultural Carabantú; Flor de Milho, Quilombo de Artes (Brasil); Red de Multiplicadores para la Prevención del Racismo, la Discriminación y la Xenofobia; Centro de Estudios e Investigaciones Sociales afrocolombianas (Ceisafrocol); Colectivo Ampliado de Estudios Afrodiaspóricos de la Universidad de Antioquia (Cadeafro-UdeA); Grupo de cantadoras de Música Ancestral Orula; Colectivo Aguaturbia, Wi Da Monikongo.

Intervención

ENERO-JUNIO 2021
JANUARY-JUNE 2021

torical archives of Medellín and Antioquia, this time in the form of a collective action from Afro organizations in the city. The purpose of this review was to search for objects and documents related to the colonial period and specifically to the history erased from official records of the untold narrative of enslaved people and their exploitation in colonial projects.

Medellín, the capital of the Antioquian department and Colombia's second largest city, is known internationally as "the narco capital" but has recently begun to become known also as "the miracle city," since it has emerged from the violence and chaos of its past to position itself as an example of social urbanism, transformation and innovation. It is within the historical center of this paradoxical city where criminal gangs dedicated to drug trafficking (and many other types of informal or illegal activities necessary for the survival of the most impoverished) coexist together with civic, communitarian, artistic and cultural initiatives and where also, in a building made somewhere between Art Deco and Brutalist styles, the MDA is also located.

In the last two decades, the MDA has gained recognition for its commitment to social transformation through culture, with works that have been developed from a variety of divergent perspectives and that, since 2016, have materialized in the Macroprograma Museo 360 "to generate actions that have a positive impact on the dynamics and problems present in the center of Medellín and the communities that inhabit it" (MDA, 2021). Within this, based on my own line of curatorial research and in dialogue with the guidelines of the area's department,¹⁵ I developed projects to do with the politics of decolonization from a number of viewpoints —feminist, anti-racist and sexual dissidence— for temporary exhibitions, as well as public art and mediation programs that seek to incorporate historically marginalized communities.

It was in this curatorial line that the invitation came for Liliana Angulo to develop, in collaboration with the Afro communities of the city, an artistic residency. *Un caso de reparación y acciones antirracistas* took place within the frameworks of two of Museo 360's programs: *Residencias Cundinamarca* and *La consentida*. The first is a residency program for contemporary artists who work in collaboration with specific social groups in the city center, and the second, an exhibition program that seeks to generate new perspectives on the collection through a selection of works that det-

¹⁵ Nydia Gutiérrez was the Chief Curator from 2012 to 2018.

Intervención

ENERO-JUNIO 2021
JANUARY-JUNE 2021

onate the curatorial discourse.¹⁶ Giving continuity to the process initiated in Matadero Madrid and MDE15, *Residencias Cundinamarca* included: a Laboratorio de Etnoeducación, which furthered collective research on the presence of Afro-descendants in local archives and which later formed the curatorial committee for the exhibition *La consentida es: La familia negra*, which was accompanied by an academic conference; two versions of *Cine Foros* in Plaza Botero; three activations of the space *La esquina*, and an open call to the city to carry out *anti-racist actions*.

The members of the Laboratorio de Etnoeducación were people from the Afro organizations originating from Aburrá Valley, Carabantú and Kambirí, people with whom the artist had already worked with previously and who, by extending the invitation to other organizations or people throughout their trusted networks, were able to configure a group with a clear profile for activism and anti-racist work.¹⁷

The Laboratorio de Etnoeducación had six sessions: 1) Establishing the initial agreements for the development of collective curatorship and the logics of operational and museological policy at the MDA, 2) Visits to the conservation and restoration workshop, accompanied by talks with staff from the museum's mission areas: curatorship, collections and education, 3) Tours of the permanent galleries with a critical perspective on Afro community representation, 4) Proposals for works by members of the laboratory, accompanied by clear arguments and criteria for the work being consented to, 5) Discussions around the definition of possible conceptual axes, the works that would make up the rest of the exhibition, and the layout and other exhibition aspects, and 6) The conceptualization of the academic agenda and its mediation parameters (Figure 1).

The approach to the concept of *ethno-education* in the laboratory and the residency, starting with its inclusion in the Colombian educational system's legislation,¹⁸ was recognized from the Afro

¹⁶ The residency extended to the exhibition format of *La consentida* thanks to the Laboratorio de Etnoeducación, an offshoot of the project that became the workspace in which the agents of the city's Afro organizations and Liliana Angulo developed the curatorial research for the museum's collection. This later gave shape to the exhibition *La consentida es: La familia negra*.

¹⁷ Members of the Laboratorio de Etnoeducación: Abelmy Casas Mayolo, Karen Sánchez, William Murillo Valencia, Manuela Córdoba Arango, Connie Mena, David Cabezas Galindo, Edgar Rúa, Edith Yamile González Patiño; Deyanira Valdés Martínez, Arnobia Foronda Tobón, Daniela Giraldo Hoyos and Duván Londoño, Yesenia Liseth Becerra Rentería, Ramón Perea Lemos, Ángela Jiménez Cano, Aris Panesso Ríos, Ronal Moya, Aimer Ruiz Rivadeneira, Geany Asprilla Rentería, Inajara Diz Santos and Stephanie Moreira, Claudia Monagut Mejía, José Eulícer Mosquera Rentería and Liliana Angulo.

¹⁸ Although ethno-education is recognized and integrated within the General Education Law of 1994 of the Colombian State as "that which is offered to groups or

Intervención

ENERO-JUNIO 2021
JANUARY-JUNE 2021

FIGURE 1. Visit to the conservation and restoration workshop with the Laboratorio de Ethnoeducación team (Photo: Yuliana Quiceno, 2019).



perspective, as a pedagogical experience for the construction of spaces for the transmission and construction of collective knowledge in two senses: from the museum to the Afro communities, where the laboratory sessions involved teaching them about the structure of the museum's operation and the specifics of each of its areas, and from the people who made up the laboratory back to the museum and the public, by leading the academic cycles, exchanging ideas with the museum's education team and conducting curatorial research for the exhibition *La consentida*, which would leave behind both a new knowledge about their own afro history and an anti-racist perspective reflected in the collection's many objects. Meanwhile, the residency itself put pressure on more fundamental issues: inequality, social justice, concentration of knowledge, cultural policies, institutional response, socialization of knowledge, among others (Angulo, 2019).

This project was an opportunity to test the Museo 360's macro-project's premise of "working with the communities" and "giving a voice to those not included", since it implied opening its collection to the critical views of the city's Afro social movement. This could be seen as pushing the discourse itself to the very limit or an exercise in *realpolitik*, as well as the supposed opportunity to leave

communities that make up part of the national story and that have their own culture, language, traditions and autochthonous customs. Education that must be linked to the environment, to the productive process, to the social and cultural process with due respect to their beliefs and traditions" (Ministry of Education, 2021), fundamentally linked to Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities, there are no fundamental conditions to guarantee its execution and compliance.

Intervención

ENERO-JUNIO 2021
JANUARY-JUNE 2021

a record of these testimonies in the collection and history of the museum.

One of the most heated discussions of the process revolved around deciding what would be the central work in *La consentida*. A first proposal was to present the phrase: “In the Museum of Antioquia there is no work that represents the Afro community” or, to just leave the space empty and blank, representing that, despite the fact that the largest and most exhaustive exhibition on the presence of Afro-descendants in the region had been held there (*¡Mandinga sea! África en Antioquia*), the debt to the Afro community remained neglected.

Although there are a number of works by Afro-descendant artists in the collection—evidently, in a smaller percentage than there are from white artists—they did not represent what the collective wanted to tell about themselves. Objects or documents, such as the contract of sale for a slave named Calisto, were re-victimizing¹⁹ and in no way representative. The hegemonic history contained in the collection clashed with the vision of the present that the project was trying to summon, thus evidencing the exclusion of the narratives that the hegemonic official history had sustained and reaffirmed up to that moment.

Although there are two works in the collection by Rodrigo Barrientos (Medellín, 1932-Paris, 2013), the artist had not been identified as an Afro-descendant by the teams responsible for the museum’s collection and curatorship. It was only thanks to the research carried out by Sol Astrid Giraldo for the curatorship of the redisplay of the *Colonial and Republican* room—which coincided with the development of this residency—that the racial origin of this Antioquian painter, forgotten by the history books of local art, was identified. In this way, Rodrigo Barrientos’s 1958 painting *La familia negra* went from being thought as an external representation to a self-representation.

Together with the laboratory’s collective, we noted the scarcity of information on Rodrigo Barrientos’s career and his contributions to Colombian art. In the book *Geografía del arte en Colombia 1960*, the historian Eugenio Barney Cabrera (1963, pp. 157-159) mentions his work; his portrait appears in the painting *Homenaje a Cano*, by Jorge Cárdenas, and finally, in 2013, his work participated in the exhibition *¡Mandinga sea! África in Antioquia*, in that same museum (Figure 2).

¹⁹ Processes through which violence is reproduced again on people who have already been victims.

Intervención

ENERO-JUNIO 2021
JANUARY-JUNE 2021



FIGURE 2. Some participants in the curatorial process *La consentida es: La familia negra*, alrededor de la obra del Maestro Rodrigo Barrientos, de izquierda a derecha: Liliana Angulo Cortés, Geanny Asprilla, Manuela Córdoba, Connie Mena, David Cabezas, Edith Gonzáles, Doña Deyanira Valdés, Yasira Vanessa Borja, William Murillo y Aimer Ruiz (Photo: Liliana Angulo, 2019).

In a sense tantamount to Linda Nochlin's question in her text entitled: "Why have there been no great women artists?" (2001), the question about the absence of works by artists of African descent in the collection of this museum is worth asking,²⁰ which in turn even questions their suitability and possibilities for professional training and insertion into the artistic field. Following Moxey (2013, pp. 37-51) and his approach to the multiplicity of modernity in relation to the South African artist Gerard Sekoto, in the case of Barrientos we could ask ourselves where in time his work could be placed with respect to the impossibility of participating in the temporal progression of the modernist art narrative, in the universal, Latin American and even Colombian history of art. Perhaps the time of this work is a different one, one not associated to Western modernity.

²⁰ According to the 2005-2017 national census, Antioquia's department (region) had the second largest Afro population in the country. By the 2018-current day census, it had dropped to fourth place, with 312,112 people who recognized themselves as Afro-descendants (Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística [DANE], 2019).

Two temporalities with the same historical and epistemological origin cross both the marginalization of Barrientos' work and his own very existence in the history of 20th century art. On the one hand, modernity was made possible by coloniality, that is, by the expropriation and exploitation of colonies in Asia, Africa and America by European countries. This fed the idea of "discovery", an idea from which the West built the foundations for establishing a hierarchical relationship between the North and South, at the cost of the enslavement to which the artist's African ancestors were subjected. On the other hand, the progressivism and Eurocentrism responsible for installing the colonial project cemented the discipline of Art History, even if they excluded those contexts of otherness that did not fit their narrative (Moxey, 2013, pp. 24-25). Barrientos embodies the memory of his ancestors' colonial time and suffered exclusion from a "universal" history of art that, in accordance with the hegemonic narrative, did not acknowledge this Medellín painter's artistic works.

The exhibition of the painting *La familia negra* by Rodrigo Barrientos in *La consentida* was deposited in the museum's archive, and in the software of *Colecciones Colombianas*, for future research,²¹ thus legitimizing its inclusion in institutional history. Its six curatorial axes: *Ancestral inheritances and power*, *Memory and historical reparation*, *Genealogies of racism, slavery, extractivism and oppression*, *Representations of the Afro Antioqueños*, *Resistance, marronage and the struggles for freedom* and *Hegemonic representations*, revealed the colonialist remnants of racialization were present, not only in the collection, but also in the very structure and functioning of the museum (Figure 3).

CONCLUSIONS

In general terms, this exhibition and its critical review of the collection created a relevant space for racialized people to look back at the visual technology that has historically exhibited or represented Afro objects or people from a white perspective. It also brought to light research on historical reparations, memories, struggles and resistances of Afro communities in the museum. Due to the lack of elements that the participants could really recognize with as their

²¹ Computer tool that facilitates inventory, registration and classification, as well as the control over the inventories of all of Colombia's museums' collections. The curatorial script of the exhibition *La consentida es: La familia negra* was included in *Colecciones Colombianas*, thus guaranteeing that the stories, interpretations and research of the collectives will enter into the exhibitional history of museums in Colombia.

Intervención

ENERO-JUNIO 2021
JANUARY-JUNE 2021

FIGURE 3. View of room *La consentida es: La familia negra* (Photo: Corporación Afrocolombiana de Desarrollo Social y Cultural Carabantú, 2019).



own and through which see themselves represented, works from outside the MDA's collection such as those of the Archivo del Consejo Comunitario de San Andrés de Girardota, and other materials belonging to this ancient *Palenque* community (Figure 4), were included as an exception to the initial agreement.

FIGURE 4. View of the exhibition room with the installation of the Archive of San Andrés de Girardota in the exhibition room of *La consentida es: La familia negra*, taken on March 16, 2019, Museo de Antioquia, Medellín, Colombia (Photograph: Julieta Duque; source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/museodantioquia/49380134542/>; license: Creative Commons by Museo de Antioquia licensed under [BY-NC-SA 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/)).



However, what we can be concluded, is that this proposed exercise of inverting old power dynamics was only partially successful, since within its internal daily operation, and despite declaring itself as a space ready for openness, the museum did not cease to *enforce* its authority over its new supposed collaborators. My own attempts to reverse these power relations were restricted to that “permissive” and limited framework that governed the residencies, and could not extend beyond them: for example, they ultimately

Intervención

ENERO-JUNIO 2021
JANUARY-JUNE 2021

had no effect on the policies of acquisitions for collections or even on the clarification of racial hierarchies within the museum. Presently, when everything is susceptible of becoming an exchange good, anti-racism, feminism and sexual dissidence are, even in cultural institutions immersed in neoliberal policies, politically correct and desirable positions —as long as they do not alter the dominant power structures.

Even so, from a curatorial perspective, progress was made in terms of making the hegemony of the institutional narrative more flexible. In an exercise of changing the way we look at objects in a museum's custody, it was people from the black communities who interpreted the collection, positioning themselves as the producers of knowledge. The recovery of the artist Rodrigo Barrientos' work, forgotten in a country with an exclusionary historicist tradition of Modern/Colonial art, acted as a historical reparation of his legacy and memory.

Considering that, due to the collection's limitations, the exhibition was not an exercise in self-representation, nor was it a display in which collaborators could imagine and propose from scratch the objects, practices and cultural productions with which to tell their story within the museum, it turned out to be the other anti-racist actions developed alongside the residency that provided more possibilities for repairs than the actual exhibition itself²² (L. Angulo, personal communication, March 2021), and that which, temporarily altered the museum's hierarchical logics, configuring freer and, inevitably, more conflictive formats.

The question remains as to who should be responsible for promoting anti-racist actions and reparations since clearly, it should not fall solely on the shoulders of the collectives of racialized people. Historical reparations and actions to amend for past wrong doings must be carried out in a synchronized manner, both by the State and by the institutions, in conjunction with Afro-descendant social movements. Neither the institutions alone, speaking *for* the Afro-descendant communities, nor the communities without the committed involvement of the institutions, will be able to bring about profound changes in the current conditions of structural racism.

²² These actions consisted in the development of academic programs, film forums in public spaces, activations of *La esquina* and other anti-racist initiatives that proposed open dialogues and public debates on fundamental concepts that cut across the history and existence of Afro-descendant communities in the city. Thus, cultural events such as performances, concerts of traditional music, literature, plastic arts, gastronomic exhibitions, dance, cinema, photography by Afro cultural representatives and academics made up the museum's programming throughout the period of the residency (MDA, 2021).

Museums must address the “uncomfortable” heritages they guard, when these stories embody a history of violence that continues to be perpetuated through narratives that usurp the knowledge and marginalized histories in a colonial logic and assimilationist attitudes towards difference. It is therefore key to understand that gestures implicitly charged with authority, such as “giving voice” or “allowing self-representation” are not enough, since they perpetuate power asymmetries, instead of conceding the privilege over to social movements of vindication and justice, in order to discuss what Afro-reparations really require and involve.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Liliana Angulo and the leaders of the Afro-descendant organizations in Medellín.

REFERENCES

Angulo, L. (2019). Propuesta de proyecto para Residencias Cundinamarca. Documento de trabajo.

Barney, E. (1963). *Geografía del arte en Colombia 1960*. Bogota: Imprenta Nacional.

Borja, J. (October 26, 2000). El objeto-monumento y configuración de la identidad nacional [Conference memory]. *Museo en tiempos de conflicto: un debate sobre el papel de los museos frente a la situación actual* (pp. 35-42). Bogota: Museo Nacional de Colombia, Ministerio de Cultura. Retrieved from [http://www.museonacional.gov.co/elementosDifusion/publicaciones/MNC%20Museos%20en%20tiempos%20de%20conflicto%20junio%2030%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.museonacional.gov.co/elementosDifusion/publicaciones/MNC%20Museos%20en%20tiempos%20de%20conflicto%20junio%2030%20(2).pdf)

Castro-Gómez, S. (2005). *La poscolonialidad explicada a los niños*. Bogota: Instituto Pensar, Universidad Javeriana.

Cartagena, M., & León, C. (2014). *El museo desbordado. Debates contemporáneos en torno a la musealidad*. Quito: Ediciones Abya Yala.

Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística [DANE]. (2019). *Población negra, afrocolombiana, raizal y palenquera*. Republic of Colombia. Retrieved from <https://www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/boletines/grupos-eticos/presentacion-grupos-eticos-poblacion-NARP-2019.pdf>

Intervención

ENERO-JUNIO 2021
JANUARY-JUNE 2021

Earle, R. (2006). Monumentos y museos: la nacionalización del pasado precolombino durante el siglo XIX. In B. González & J. Andermann (Eds.), *Galerías del Progreso. Museos, exposiciones y cultura visual en América Latina* (pp. 27-64). Buenos Aires: Beatriz Viterbo Editora.

Espinosa, Y. (2018). Las negras siempre estamos desnudas. En Colectivo Ayllu (Ed.), *Devuélvannos el oro* (pp. 32-49). Madrid: FRAGMA.

Fanon, F. (2009). *Piel negra, máscaras blancas*. Madrid: Akal.

Fusco, C. (2011). La otra historia del *performance* intercultural. In D. Taylor y M. Fuentes (Eds.), *Estudios avanzados de performance* (pp. 311-342). Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Godoy, F. (2018). *La exposición como recolonización. Exposiciones de arte latinoamericano en el Estado español (1989-2010)*. Badajoz: Fundación Academia Europea e Iberoamericana de Yuste.

Haraway, D. (2015). *El patriarcado del osito Teddy. Taxidermia en el Jardín del Edén*. Buenos Aires: Sans Soleil Ediciones.

Herrera, D. (2019). El síndrome de Valéry. Apuntes sobre las colecciones fundacionales del Museo de Antioquia. *Revista Gráfica*, 16(1), 133-154.

hooks, b. (2003). The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators. In A. Jones (Ed.), *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader* (pp.94-105). London: Routledge.

Maya, A. (2014). Ideologías del blanqueamiento en Antioquia y formas del racismo asimilacionista. In Museo de Antioquia y Universidad de los Andes (Eds.), *¡Mandinga sea! África en Antioquia*. Medellín: Fondo Editorial Museo de Antioquia & Universidad de los Andes.

Ministerio del Interior. (2015). *El enfoque diferencial para comunidades negras, afrocolombianas, raizales y palenqueras víctimas del conflicto armado*. Republic of Colombia. Retrieved from https://gapv.mininterior.gov.co/sites/default/files/cartilla_enfoque_diferencial_afro_final_2.pdf

Mosquera, C. (2007). Reparaciones para negros, afrocolombianos y raizales como rescatados de la Trata Negrera Transatlántica y desterrados de la guerra en Colombia. In C. Mosquera, & L. Claudio (Eds.), *Afro-reparaciones: memorias de la esclavitud y justicia reparativa para negros, afro-*

Intervención

ENERO-JUNIO 2021
JANUARY-JUNE 2021

colombianos y raizales (pp. 213-276). Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Facultad de Ciencias Humanas. Centro de Estudios Sociales (CES).

Moxey, K. (2013). *El tiempo de lo visual. Imagen en la historia*. Barcelona: Sans Soleil Ediciones.

Museo de Antioquia, & Universidad de los Andes (Eds.). (2014). *¡Mandinga sea! África en Antioquia*. Medellín: Fondo Editorial Museo de Antioquia & Universidad de los Andes.

Museo de Antioquia. (2013). *¡Mandinga sea! África en Antioquia*. Retrieved from <https://www.museodeantioquia.co/exposicion/mandinga-sea-africa-en-antioquia>

Museo de Antioquia. (May 31, 2021). *Museo 360*. Retrieved from <https://www.museodeantioquia.co/museo-360>

Museo de Antioquia. (March 12, 2021). Un caso de reparación y acciones antirracistas, Residencias Cundinamarca. Retrieved from <https://www.museodeantioquia.co/noticia/un-caso-de-reparacion-y-acciones-antirracistas-residencias-cundinamarca>

Museo Nacional de Colombia. (2008). Velorios y santos vivos: comunidades negras, afrocolombianas, raizales y palenqueras. Retrieved from <http://sinic.gov.co/sites/velorios/veloriospre.html>

Nochlin, L. (2001). ¿Por qué no han existido grandes artistas mujeres? In K. Cordero & I. Sáenz (Eds.), *Crítica feminista en la teoría e historia del arte* (pp. 17-44). Mexico: Universidad Iberoamericana, Programa Universitario de Estudios de Género de la UNAM, Conaculta-Fonca.

Quijano, A. (1992a). Colonialidad y modernidad/racionalidad. In R. Blackburn & H. Bonilla, *Los conquistados: 1492 y la población indígena de las Américas* (pp. 437-449). Quito: Ediciones Libri Mundi, FLACSO.

Quijano, A. (1992b). Colonialidad y modernidad/racionalidad. *Perú Indígena*, 13(29), 11-20.

Quijano, A. (2014). Colonialidad del poder, eurocentrismo y América Latina. En CLACSO (Ed.), *Cuestiones y horizontes: de la dependencia histórico-estructural a la colonialidad/descolonialidad del poder* (pp. 777-832).

Intervención

ENERO-JUNIO 2021
JANUARY-JUNE 2021

Buenos Aires: CLACSO. Retrieved from <http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/clacso/se/20140507042402/eje3-8.pdf>

Red Cultural del Banco de la República de Colombia. (2018). *A bordo de un navío esclavista, La Marie-Séraphique*. Retrieved from <https://www.banrepcultural.org/exposiciones/temporales-museo-del-oro/la-marie-seraphique>

Rivera, J. (2017). Colección fundacional del Museo de Zea (Hoy Museo de Antioquia), 1870-1905. *Quirón: Revista de Estudiantes de Historia*, 4(7), 39-52.

Rivera, S. (2015). *Sociología de la imagen*. Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón.

Viveros, M., & Lesmes, S. (2014). Cuestiones raciales y construcción de nación en tiempos de multiculturalismo. *Universitas Humanística* 77(77), 13-31. Retrieved from <https://revistas.javeriana.edu.co/index.php/univhumanistica/article/view/8077/6416>

Wade, P. (2003). Repensando el mestizaje. *Revista Colombiana de Antropología e Historia* 39, 273-296. Retrieved from <http://www.scielo.org.co/pdf/rcan/v39/v39a09.pdf>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR**Carolina Chacón Bernal**

Independent curator and researcher, Colombia

ca.chaconb@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8928-4705>

Master in plastic and visual arts by the Universidad Distrital de Bogotá, Colombia. Master in contemporary art history and visual culture by the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM) and the Museo Reina Sofía, Spain. Collaborator of the Independent Curators International (ICI). She was associate curator at the Museo de Antioquia, Colombia, between 2013 and 2019. Her most recent publication is the review "Can museums speak in tongues?" for *H-Art, Journal of Art History, Theory and Criticism* (January-June 2021). Among her fields of research are artistic practices, communities and social participation; museology; archival processes and documentation of artistic processes; art and activism, as well as gender studies, anti-racism and decoloniality.