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The Rabinal Community Museum (Guatemala, Central America)

Arts-Based Research in Practice?

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Abstract

The rich, multimedia, multisensory and embodied experiences presented by the Community Museum for Historical Memory in Rabinal, Guatemala, tell the stories of war, genocide, survival, resilience, and hope for a brighter future of the community it represents. It is métissage in practice: a place of encounter between the old and the new, the commemoration of death and the celebration of life, the presentation of historic and scientific data and artistic experiences. It promotes "conspirational" conversations between foreign visitors, community elders, school kids, anthropologists, and artists. Thus, it is not only susceptible of study from an Arts-Based Research (ABR) lens, but it also could be considered as ABR in practice.

Keywords: Guatemala, Rabinal, community museums, Arts-Based Research.

The Rabinal Community Museum (Guatemala, Central America)

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Introduction

It is very important for me to clarify, from the very beginning, that I am not an arts-based researcher, nor do I intend to become one. I am a classically-trained anthropologist, with a clear preference for the Participatory Action Research (PAR) paradigm and a firm believer in applied social sciences as a way to impact the harsh realities of the vulnerable and the excluded. However, during my PhD studies in Norway, I came across Arts-Based Research (ABR), and I immediately thought it was an interesting theoretical and methodological perspective from which to understand one of my field sites: The Community Museum in Rabinal, Baja Verapaz, Guatemala.

In this article I wish to present the Community Museum as a network of people and activities that go beyond a mere exhibit, and that this network could be understood as an example of ABR in practice. My objective is to present some core con-

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cepts of ABR, be it the more classic ones, and then describe the museum and its activities, and how ABR could be seen as intertwined with these activities, and with the actors that carry them out.

It is only fair for me to say that I hold a close, personal relationship with this museum. I first knew of the initiative in the early 2000s, during my first trips to Rabinal. I got to know this magical community through a series of haphazard events which I hope to describe in future writings. Eventually, I did my undergraduate thesis about one of the most traditional handcrafts in the community, travelling almost every weekend, and eventually spending several months in the town center of Rabinal, doing ethnographic research.

Since then I have travelled to the township at least once a year, usually more times when I'm involved in a specific project. I helped out in organizing a cooperative, I have done fundraising for archaeological research, I have volunteered at the Community Museum, and even supported grass-roots political movements. Most importantly, since 2005, I have taken every single group that has taken my Cultural Anthropology course at Universidad del Valle de Guatemala (UVG) to Rabinal. A visit to the museum is always compulsory, and this has allowed me to witness the profound changes that this institution has undergone. I have also admired the continuity of the museum's vision through time.

This article is structured in the following way: it includes a brief summary of some key concepts of ABR and Community Museums. After this, I present a historical context and a comprehensive description of the museum itself. Finally, I expose my perspective on how this museum can be better understood through the theoretical and methodological tools provided by Arts-Based Research. I conclude that these tools are key to better understanding cultural phenomena form a rich, embodied and overwhelmingly human perspective.

The museum is a collection of artifacts, persons and sensory experiences. It invites visitor to engage in deep reflections about history, memory and heritage. This interaction involves colors, movement, smell, education, multimedia, feelings, and other rich stimuli, which is why I intend to expose the similarities between the museum's mission and focus and what I would propose to be ABR in practice.

Figure 1: My 2017 Cultural Anthropology Students at the Rabinal Community Museum.

ABR: some basic definitions and concepts

Throughout the University of Southeastern Norway's Spring 2018 Course "Arts Based Research in Education and Culture", facilitated by professor Biljana Fredriksen, I had the opportunity to explore several concepts that have either originated in the arts, or sociological concepts that have been used and expanded in artistic contexts, the most important one being ABR.

ABR as Social Justice and Métissage

So, what exactly is ABR? Simply put, it is the use of principles and procedures of art in conducting social research (Barone, 2012: 2). Leavy adds that there are at least three main sources for the current ABR movement: the study of the relationship between art and learning, the use of art as therapy, and the use of art as way of doing research, or the use of social research for art projects (2015: 12-19). Barone identifies at least two clear, defined purposes for ABR: enhance our understanding through transmitting subjective realities using art as a medium; and transcend the traditional epistemological dichotomy of objective / subjective knowledge (2012: 2-3). Leavy also reminds us of the similarities between qualitative social research and the arts, since practitioners in both fields do not simply gather materials and information and analyze them, they "compose, orchestrate and weave" them into something new (2015: 17).

Finley has established a specific genealogy for ABR that stems from postcolonial and postmodern tradition. He proposes a type of ABR that is morally and politically engaged and with great potential for contributing to social justice (2005: 681-682). The political is very present in arts-based research, since "social crisis suggests that the next phase in the development of arts-based research will bring into focus the potential for arts-based inquiry to confront postmodern political issues such as diversity and globalization and for its practitioners to implement critical race, queer, and postcolonial epistemologies" (Finley, 2005: 689). The relationship between social research and art is not a simple one, which is why Irwin (2004: 27-30) has decided to use the word *métissage* to describe the "life in the borderlands", in which artists / teachers / researchers who practice ABR are inhabiting. It is a space of interweaving of "knowing, doing, and making" (2004: 29).

ABR and Storytelling

Storytelling is not something new in social sciences. Most of the anthropological tradition rests on an epistemological viewpoint that privileges the stories of indigenous peoples and the diverse meanings that they might have from a societal and cultural perspective. Leavy has done important work in compiling different evidences in how arts and learning are related, even at a neuropsychological level (2015: 13-15). Barone and Eisner described narrative construction and storytelling as a form of expanding traditional ideas in education and in ABR. Thus, educators and social researchers alike, have employed diverse mechanisms regarding to how and why we use stories, such as ethnodrama, short stories and poetry (2006: 98-99).

The use of storytelling is fertile ground for what Barone calls "conspirational conversations", understood as a way of imagining possible and desirable futures (2007: 39) that question the status quo. Fredriksen has also emphasized the importance of involving all the senses of children in their learning processes (2011), and this is paramount to the way in which stories are told in the case study at hand, as we will discuss later on in this text.

Embodiment and Relational Aesthetics

A very important concept from arts-based research that can and should be explored through the case study in Rabinal is embodiment. Chadwick (2016: 54-56) is very clear in stating that embodiment, as a concept, has been present in several discussions since the 1970s. The problem, she says, is the difficulty of applying such a powerful concept to concrete methodologies. Fredriksen, building on Egan, states that learning, especially in children, is a "complex processes in which experiences, feelings, memories, imagination, embodied knowledge and communication with others are all brought into play to make sense of the world (2011: 67). This to me is a very concrete

approach to embodiment. We learn through the whole complexity of our experience, and not only through sight and sound, as is traditionally thought.

In this same line, Parsons explores the relations between art and cognition, and defies the traditional separation between feelings and knowledge (2007: 534). Embodiment, understood as a complete experience that transcends traditional conceptions of knowledge and knowledge-making, can lead to empathy, which is a very important competency in the study of culture, inter-cultural relations, historical memory, etc. Bresler states it best when she says that: "Empathic understanding involves resonance, an embodied state of mind that is cognitive and at the same time, affective and corporeal. I argue that artistic experiences in general, and music in particular, provide and important model for empathic understanding" (2006: 25).

Nicholas Bourriaud defines relational aesthetics as "a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space" (Bourriaud, 2009: 113). Vist adds that relational aesthetics allows us to understand art based on the relations that they represent or create (2017), thus giving artwork a whole new meaning.

It is my opinion that these concepts, relational aesthetics, embodiment, storytelling, métissage and ABR as a way to promote social justice, can all help us to better understand community museums in general, and the one in Rabinal, Guatemala, in particular.

Community Museums

The idea of community museums and ecomuseums has been around at least since the early 70s. In 1972, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) convened a group of experts in Santiago, Chile, to discuss the

nature and future directions of museums. From this meeting, the Santiago Declaration was drafted, approved and signed. One of the main points made in this declaration was that "museums are institutions at the service of society; they acquire, preserve, communicate and above all, ...present testimonies that are representative of the evolution of nature and man" (UNESCO, 1972). This declaration emphasized the social and community-level importance of museums.

In 1984, the First International Workshop on Ecomuseums and the New Museology convened in Québec, resulting in a declaration that considered a need for new "museologies", especially those that were close to communities and the idea of social progress. The final document produced by this meeting stated that new organizational structures should be created within the International Council of Museums (ICOM) to tend to these topics (Mayrand, 1985: 201).

Since the mid-1980s to date the Community Museum movement has expanded to México and Central America (specifically in the cultural area known as Mesoamerica[2]). In 1994, the National Union for Community Museums and Ecomuseums was founded in México, and it has organized at least 15 formal meetings. In 2000, a continental organization took form, as the Latin American Network of Community Museums, with the participation of 12 Latin American and Caribbean countries. In Central America, at least 8 museums, including the one in Rabinal, are affiliated to this Union (www.museoscomunitarios.org).

Garlandini is clear to emphasize the new challenges that museums have in order to help make sense of a globalized world. In his opinion, museums should promote cultural diversity and interculturality (2017: 17-18). Others, like Morales and Camar-

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2   Mesoamerica has been defined as a cultural area that stretches from Southern México to Costa Rica. Several cultural markers have been used to define this area, but the main ones have to do with corn as a staple food, a general pre-colonial cosmogony and of course, a common linguistic origin. See Kirchhoff, 1967.

ena (2017: 366-369) emphasize the potential of community museums for creating a more equal playing field for indigenous communities and allowing for de-colonization. These ideas are compatible with what the global community museum movement is promoting and with what is happening specifically in Rabinal. In order to better understand the true nature of this fascinating case study, however, we must first delve into some general issues of contemporary Guatemalan history.

Background to the Museum: Civil War and its Effects in Rabinal

From 1960 to 1996 Guatemala endured a Civil War between leftist guerilla groups and the government, dominated by right-wing military dictators (at least until 1985) and with the geopolitical influence of the Cold War (Aguilera Peralta 1997: 135-150; Luján Muñoz, 2006: 329-409)[3]. The conflict was especially brutal in the early 1980s. During those years, the UN-backed Guatemalan Truth Commission (CEH) documented 626 massacres perpetrated mostly by State Armed Forces (either the Army or para-military groups) (CEH, 1999a: 252)[4]. These massacres involved the massive and indiscriminate killing of indigenous, non-combatant populations.

Rabinal, Baja Verapaz, is a predominantly indigenous township that suffered some of the most devastating consequences of Guatemala's Civil War, especially

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3   The first of these references comes from the General History of Guatemala, an anthology that brought together archaeologists, historians, ethnohistorians, geographers, anthropologists, sociologists and political scientists to work on a massive, multi-volume work on Guatemalan history, from pre-colonial times to the democratic transition in the 1980s. The second, by Luján Muñoz, is the summarized version of the more contemporary issues presented in the General History, and its author was the general editor of the first reference.

4   Commission for Historical Clarification, or Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (CEH), in Spanish.

between 1981 and 1983. The most conservative estimates point to at least 5,000 deadly victims (AAAS, 1996:3), which at that time represented a considerable percentage of the population[5]. Most of the victims were women, children and the elderly. Besides the people who died in Rabinal during those years, many others were traumatized through death threats, rape, displacement and forced military service and participation in paramilitary patrols, (EAFG, 1995[6]; CEH, 1999b: 45-72; Álvarez Castañeda, 2003: 19-23).

This community has shown great resiliency and has overcome adversity in many ways. Today, Rabinal is a vibrant township with a very rich cultural agenda including traditional dance and music, handcrafts and activities relating to the ancient religious brotherhoods or "cofradías"[7]. The post-war era has also brought about new opportunities for community mobilization, with at least three distinct types of organizations currently flourishing in the township.

First, a series of groups have organized around the Civil War. They seek reparations for victims and families, justice through the judicial system and the promotion of historical memory in schools and with young people. The second type of organization has to do with indigenous arts and crafts, and include collectives that promote

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5   In 2010 Rabinal's population consisted of 35,126 inhabitants (SEGEPLAN, 2011). The population in the 1980s was much smaller.

6   *Equipo de Antropología Forense de Guatemala*, or Guatemala Forensic Anthropology Team. Today they are a well-established foundation, and are at the forefront of locating, unearthing, identifying and returning the remains of the victims to their families.

7   These brotherhoods are well explained by the classic ethnographer Flavio Rojas Lima (1988). They basically consist of a group of older members of the community who are in charge of the image of a catholic saint. The nuclear family that hosts the image changes from one year to another, and the brotherhood is in charge of organizing the annual festivities to honor that saint, including cooking and distributing food, organizing traditional music and dance, etc. Rojas also emphasizes the political importance of these organizations in indigenous communities.

traditional dances, handcraft cooperatives and youth groups. Finally, several groups of Mayan Spiritual Guides, sometimes known as "Mayan Priests", have organized and acquired official status. They seek to promote traditional spirituality, protect the archaeological sites and promote the use of the native language (Maya Achí).

The Association for the Development of the Victims of Violence in the Verapaz Region (ADIVIMA[8]) began as the first type of organization. It was founded by survivors and relatives of the Civil War as a support group. It eventually advised the victims in judicial cases against the perpetrators and led the fight to obtain economic and social reparations from the State. In 1999, as a natural expansion of its work, ADIVIMA founded Rabinal's Community Museum, now called the Community Museum for Historical Memory[9]. The museum has constantly changed since its humble beginnings, and today includes three permanent exhibits, a library and community resource center, a gift shop, an auditorium and temporary exhibits.

The Rabinal Community Museum for Historical Memory

Today, Rabinal's Community Museum for Historical Memory, in the great tradition of ecomuseums and community museums, is less of a lifeless collection of artifacts and more of a lively, sometimes chaotic, open space for culture, art, historical memory and community-building. I will try to summarize the main activities done by the museum through its main components and relations with different types of actors. The following information comes from my own ethnographic observations and notes taken during the past 20 years.

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8   *Asociación para el Desarrollo Integral de las Víctimas de la Violencia en las Verapaces*, in Spanish.

9   For a more extensive history of the museum and its relationship to transitional justice issues, see McKinnon (2014).

Permanent exhibits

The three main exhibits have been more or less stable since the founding of the museum. The first exhibition consists of the photographs of many of the confirmed victims of the massacres during the Civil War. These photos were rescued from the Municipal Archives and were originally used for the official ID Card that the government issued (called "cédula" in Spanish), a very old-fashioned cardboard document with a black and white picture pasted to it. It was only valid if signed by the mayor of the town. As can be seen in the figure below, it is a very impacting room that confronts the visitor with the victims as real human beings, not only as historical characters. The room is dark, painted in blue and black tones, and the whole room centers on the pictures, with very little text to accompany them, except the full names and communities of origin of the victims. After going to the museum for many years, I have seen many visitors drawn to tears immediately upon entering the room.

Figure 2: Photographs of Victims of the Civil War, Rabinal Community Museum.

The second exhibition depicts the process followed by the families of the victims, including videos of their testimonies, pictures of the unearthing of the remains of their loved ones, videos of the traditional Mayan ceremonies done before reburial, and a description of the judicial and political struggles that follow in their search for justice, reparation and non-repetition. This exhibition consists of several videos, posters and texts, as well as a 3D map of Rabinal indicating all the places were the massacres occurred[10]. This room is painted in earthy colors, and the sound of the videos dominates the senses. During one of the clips, you can hear the prayers of the traditional Mayan priests during the reburial ceremonies. This exhibition is a bit more chaotic, in the sense that visitors have sound, video, photographs and plenty of text surrounding them completely. This exhibition also appeals to the more "rational" part of the visitor's psyche, since it explains in detail the scientific procedures done during the unearthing of the remains as well as the DNA testing and the interviews with the survivors, amounting towards irrefutable evidence of the genocide that occurred[11].

The final permanent exhibition is about the continuity and liveliness of Maya Achí culture. It contains handcrafts, costumes for some of the traditional dances, musical instruments, as well as archaeological artifacts. The bright colors and vigor-

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10 Rabinal consists of several ecosystems, ranging from dry forests very near sea-level, to coniferous forests in the highlands. Travelling from one community to another by foot can take at least a day. Maps are thus very appreciated, especially this 3D model developed by the museum with styrofoam and other simple materials.

11 There is currently a movement of genocide denial, promoted by a small, but well-funded right-wing movement in Guatemala. They are discrediting the facts by saying that those who were killed were members of guerilla groups (when in fact we know most were non-combatants, especially women and children), or that most of the massacres were perpetrated by the guerilla groups (the Truth Commission has proved that more than 95 % of the atrocities were committed by the army or para-military forces), or that the skeletal remains that have been found correspond to older burial sites (DNA testing has disproved this).

ous nature of this exhibit sharply contrasts with the somber ambiance of the previous two rooms.

Several things should be said about handcrafts and traditional dances in Rabinal. In previous work I have described the ethnographic and historical importance of the "jícaras", a handcraft that involves a very complex process, including the lacquering of the final pieces with a wax that is obtained from a domesticated insect (Llaveia, sp.).

It is believed that this handcraft has been done more or less in the same manner for centuries, and probably since pre-colonial times (Álvarez Castañeda, 2003).

Traditional dances are also a vital part of Rabinal's everyday life. They are usually associated to the syncretic cult of catholic saints through the cofradías, and they are danced regularly throughout the year. A recent dissertation established that to date, there are 17 active dances in the township, with the *Rabinal Achí* being the most important one (Dávila, 2020: 105). This dance was formally declared as World Intangible Heritage by UNESCO in 2008, and it also has a very ancient origin. It tells the tales of the Lord of Rabinal and his epic battles against the Lord of the neighboring Kaqchikel people. Several scholars, including Breton (1999) and Van Akkeren

Figure 3: Attire Used for Traditional Dances of Rabinal on display at the museum.

(2000 & 2003) have studied this dance from different ethnohistoric, ethnographic, linguistic and artistic perspectives. Both handcrafts and traditional dances are a central to the third permanent exhibition, and in my opinion, are presented to convey a message of survival and cultural vitality, despite the recent history of violence the people from Rabinal have endured.

I do not intend to summarize all the temporary exhibitions that have been curated during the past 19 plus years. I will limit myself to describe a couple of them that have especially caught my attention. One was an exhibition of wooden masks, hand crafted by local school kids, through an after-school program aimed at teaching them about traditional dances. During several afternoons, the children would go to the museum and hear the stories behind traditional dances, and they would learn the process of carving and painting the masks. As shown in figure 4, this exhibition turned into a focal point of the museum, since the kids wanted to revisit the place in order to see their own artisanship on display.

Figure 4: Temporary Exhibition of Masks Produced by Schoolkids, Rabinal Community Museum.

Another interesting temporary exhibition had to do with gender issues. It was named "The Jobs that Women Do". It consisted of photographic essays conducted by young people from the community regarding different jobs and occupations by women. Some of the pictures were pretty stereotypical and traditional, and had to do with domestic work. But many others were more nuanced in their nature and depicted professional work and unusual jobs for women (at least in Guatemala) such as car mechanics or community policing or working as a private security guard.

Other exhibitions have dealt with handcrafts, oral tradition, the pre-colonial history of the township, archaeological sites and Mayan Spirituality. These temporary exhibitions usually include an active participation by the local schools as well as volunteering by the elders, who are the experts in traditional culture.

Library, Community Resources Center and Research Initiatives.

The Community Museum in Rabinal differs from other similar initiatives in the fact that it strongly promotes research. This research is usually done by locals, sometimes even secondary-level school children. This policy has resulted in the editing and publication of several leaflets and formal books containing historical testimonies, rigorous descriptions of traditional dances, descriptions and photographs of the different processes involved in making handcrafts, and detailed maps of archaeological and sacred sites. These books are available for purchase, as well as for local use within a small library / Community Resource Center. This center was one of the first access points to the Internet in the early 2000s in the whole town, and since then is an important asset for local researchers, high-school students and teachers. This outreach work done through participatory methodologies ensures strong ties between the community and the museum, it and requires high level of engagement among the participants.

Memory, heritage, and celebrating survival.

Drawing from multiple conversations with the museum directives and inferring from the contents of the main exhibitions and other activities, it is clear that the museum has three main objectives. The first one is to account for the genocide that occurred during the late 20th Century. In different conversations they have always emphasized that their aim is justice and non-repetition, never vengeance. Being such a small community, victims and perpetrators have long lived as neighbors, and the reconstruction of the social fabric is something that the museum is keen in promoting. This has led me to propose that community museums can also be conceived as museums for peace (Álvarez Castañeda, 2007).

Heritage, in all its forms, tangible, intangible, pre-colonial, contemporary, etc. is the second aim of the museum. Not only through the exhibit of artifacts and multimedia objects, but also through the extension projects with young people and the community as a whole. Thus, preserving and promoting heritage is obviously an important objective for this museum.

Finally, celebrating survival, which in my opinion encompasses the other two objectives, is what would best define what this museum is doing on an every-day basis. From remembering the past glories of the Achí armies during pre-colonial times to the resistance during invasion to the 500 years of colonial and post-colonial rule to the recent genocide: the main message of the museum is "this is what we have endured. We have survived. We will move on". I am currently working on other papers that will delve deeper into these issues, using Linda Tuhiwai Smith's theoretical framework (1999).

Discussion: Rabinal's Community Museum as ABR in Practice.

As I clarified in the beginning of this article, I am not an ABR practitioner nor I in-tend to apply ABR as a methodology to my research in Rabinal, at least not in the short term. However, I believe that the Community Museum in Rabinal is an excel-lent case study of how many ideas of ABR are compatible with this institution's every-day practice.

First and foremost, I believe it is obvious that the community museum promotes the dissemination and creation of knowledge that involves the arts both as a medium and as a way of transcending the traditional dichotomy between "objective" and "subjective" knowledge, such as Barone (2012) indicates. Furthermore, Barone's (2005) and Finley's (2005) ideas of the political engagement of ABR are in accordance with what the museum practices every day. The main objectives of the museum, pro-moting historical memory, preservation of cultural heritage and celebrating survival, are all political aims, and arts, crafts and diverse media are used towards this purpose. The idea of arts-based research as *guerilla* warfare (Finley, 2005: 689) is especially rel-evant to the work done by the Rabinal Community Museum, as it is through their creative, multimedia work that they are countering regressive, denialist postures re-garding genocide.

The museum also has many commonalities with Irwin's (2004) proposal of ABR as métissage. The museum is constantly "in the borderlands", between traditional museography and community engagement, between scientific evidence of genocide (DNA testing, for example) and deep, personal accounts of history (quilts prepared by the widows and orphans of genocide, for example) between international tourists and anthropologists, and local high school kids, between art creation and traditional social research. The museum is *métissage* in practice.

The community museum is also a place where stories are told and reframed from the victims' perspective. By telling the victim's account of what happened during the civil war, but also by celebrating survival in the way in which Linda Tuhiwai Smith defined it (1999), the museum is "taking-back" the historical narrative in the country. It is retelling the tale, with the most important message of all: one of non-repetition. The conversations that are produced among visitors during and after their visit to the museum can most definitely be described as "conspirational", as Barone (2007) mentioned in his previous work. We can also understand the importance of diverse media and sensory experiences in the process of telling stories and learning, as Fredrikson proposes (2011).

Finally, there is much to be said about embodiment and relational aesthetics in this case study. The museum in Rabinal is precisely a complete experience that we undergo with our whole bodies. There are exhibitions where we are limited to see and listen, but others where we are obligated to touch, sing, play music, paint and tell stories. We are exposed by different stimuli and are moved by different emotions, and this, in turn, influences the way we learn and research (Fredrikson, 2011). More importantly, through this embodied experience, we are able to empathize which the topics that the museum seeks to promote (Parsons, 2007).

The aesthetics of the museum are relational, *par excellence*. The meaning of all the artifacts and multimedia objects present in the museum evoke a profound, relational experience that transcends individual tastes or preferences of art. In this sense, the ideas of Bourriaud (2009) also resound profoundly with Rabinal's community museum

Conclusion and Ways Forward.

The museum in Rabinal is a social space that represents a de-colonized vision of history and produces new, constructive and empathic social relations that prompt critical thinking and deep emotions in all of us who have had visited it. The museum, through its engagement with tourists, community elders, scholars, and schoolkids has created an interesting interactive space for creating new meanings of heritage, historical memory, and critical thinking around the past and future of the community. This is especially true of the multimedia presentations used in the museum, as well as the extension programs regarding handcrafts and traditional dances and music. At any given moment in the museum you can touch a handcraft, hear music in the background, interact with locals and tourists, feel a textile, and watch a video of a Maya ceremony.

The museum is in this sense more than multimedia: it is a multisensory space for cultural encounters. These rich and embodied experiences are very similar to what ABR promotes, both in theory and in practice. Through art, and specifically the type of art and crafts present in the museum in Rabinal (a mural depicting the violence during a massacre, or a traditional mask painted by a local teenager), visitors understand the situation both from their cognition and their feelings; from a historical and testimonial perspective, but also from a futuristic, hopeful one; from their own realities and from the realities of others. It is an experience in métissage that forever transforms the visitor.

In previous writings I have expressed the enormous potential of the Community Museum of Rabinal as a Peace Museum or at least as a Museum for Peace (Álvarez Castañeda, 2007). In this article I propose to delve further into other theoretical and methodological perspectives, with ABR holding huge potential for everyone who wishes to engage with these discussions. Looking forward, I would specifically pro-

pose to work with colleagues trained in ABR, and contribute through my applied-anthropology lens a transdisciplinary approach to better understand these issues, especially to engage with the locals who curate the museum and further explore if these new ideas make sense to them or not, or if they have been using them, with other names, for a long time.

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