

Regional museums of Canada: city – museum – education¹

María del Carmen Franchello de Mariconde

Resumo: Este artigo resume os resultados da investigação feita nos museus de Canadá. Empreende o estudo e a análise de museus regionais, neste caso da Colúmbia Britânica, relacionando a estrutura arquitetônica e o conteúdo museístico à cidade e à região em que estão inseridos e com a sociedade a que estão dirigidos, com os programas de educação como seu fundamento essencial. A missão geral é conhecer e interpretar esses museus importantes no âmbito nacional e internacional, uma vez que são as instituições que resolveram com sucesso a relação cidade-museu-educação, transmitindo o multiculturalismo e as particularidades locais das diferentes regiões do Canadá. Outros objetivos são transmitir a identidade canadense através dos produtos de sua cultura contemporânea e difundir os resultados da investigação em publicações e conferências na Argentina, Brasil e outros países da América Latina, para promover o desenvolvimento de estudos comparados, de reflexões, de intercâmbios e de aplicações concretas possíveis em nossas regiões.

Abstract: This article proposes the study and analysis of Canadian regional museums in British Columbia, relating the architectonic container and the museum contents to the cities they are inserted in and to education, a relation that constitutes the essential basis of a museum as an institution. The objective is to get to know and interpret these museums – important landmarks at the national and international level – in order to contribute to a more widely spread knowledge of them. This is important since they are institutions that have successfully resolved the relation city-museum-education, by transmitting multiculturalism and characteristic local traits. Other objectives are to disseminate Canadian identity through the products of its contemporary culture; and to disseminate the results of the original research through publications and lectures in Argentina, Brazil and other Latin American countries so as to contribute to the development of comparative studies, reflection, interchange and possible concrete applications in these places.

Introduction

This article proposes the study and analysis of Canadian regional museums, relating the architectonic container and the

¹ This paper is part of the Research Report done in Canada supported by the Canadian Studies Faculty Research Program (FRP) scholarship 2001.

museum contents to the cities they are inserted in and to education, a relation that constitutes the essential basis of a museum as an institution.

The objective is to get to know and interpret these museums – important landmarks at national and international levels – in order to contribute to a more widely spread knowledge of them. This is important since they are institutions that have successfully solved the relation city-museum-education, by transmitting multiculturalism and characteristic local traits.

Other objectives are, in the first place, to disseminate Canadian identity through the outcome of its contemporary culture; and in the second place, to disseminate the results of the research through publications and lectures. These would take place in Argentina and other Latin American countries, like Brazil, so as to contribute to the development of future studies, reflection, interchange and possible concrete applications in these places.

In the last 30 years, the museums of the world have evolved towards dynamic, popular institutions, which have become great cultural centres attracting an ever increasing and more varied public. They identify the cities where they are inserted by means of the architectural containers and contents, which clearly express the relation city-museum-education.

In Canada, the problem of historical-anthropological museums has been solved by considering these conditions and by proposing structures which are novel from the standpoint of museology and of architecture. They bear relation to the city they are in and to the precise intention of showing the world Canadian identity in general and regional identities in particular.

In our countries, for multiple reasons, the problem of museums of history has only recently become the topic of conferences, seminars, and reflection. Regarding this new interest, professionals attending different scientific events showed great interest in papers on the Museums of Canada – researched through the FRP / 1996 Canadian Studies Grant. They were particularly drawn by the topic of the architectural and museology solutions offered by Canadian museums,

especially by those whose pillar is the study, research, conservation and dissemination of the sciences of man.

For all these reasons, the intention here was to carry out research on regional, historical-anthropological museums, located in the interior of Canada.

The theoretical framework of the research was focused on the museum and its relation to the city and to education. In the book *The museums of Canada: the monuments of postmodern culture for the XXI century?* (Franchello de Mariconde, 1998) an analysis was presented regarding the historical framework and contemporary theories of the museums in the world and specifically of Canadian museums.

In the research for that book, the thesis developed was the concept that the museum was a monument representative of the city and its contemporary culture with a projection towards the future. The conceptual analysis of the educational proposal of the transmission of the contents of the institutions researched was also dealt with.

In this new work, the concept of region has been added to that conceptual equipment. A region is considered as the recognition of a part of geographic territory that is natural, has its particular traits, and cultural characteristics that belong to it and identify it as unique and unrepeatable.

That is to say, by referring to the region or, in this case, to regional museums, the analysis has been approached from the viewpoint of the natural and cultural environment they belong to and represent.

British Columbia Region museums

This article deals with three museums in the cities of Victoria, Vancouver and Prince Rupert.

The region

The territory of British Columbia offers a wide range of landscapes: a broken, rocky coastline with thick woods and a few isolated towns as well as mountains with glaciers and

protected parks. It is a multicultural region of great ethnic variety where most of its population has migrated from another Canadian place or abroad.

Historical origins claim that its special natural environment and conditions attracted the *Haida* and other tribes to the northwest Canadian coast. The different cultures that inhabited the region always had a harmonious relation with the environment even after Spanish explorers discovered the place in 1774.

It was Simon Fraser (1776-1862), a Scotsman who had moved to Canada, the man who devoted most of his life to exploring British Columbia. By traveling up the river named after him, Fraser opened the main route of fur trade, which around the 19th century became one of the main economic sources of the region.

Then, in the 19th century, a group of native people discovered gold in North Thompson River. This marked the beginning of a new activity for gold seekers who believed this was their great economic opportunity. The process is known as "The Gold Fever". This was not the first resource of the land but somehow it became the top productive activity leaving in the second place the fur trade which had previously been the most important one. On the other hand, the European descendants who had settled mainly in Vancouver Island started exploiting the forests, which is one of the activities that still characterize the region.

In 1871, British Columbia became the first Canadian province. Nowadays, its economy is based mainly on the exploitation of its natural resources, producing a quarter of all the wood in North America; mining and fishing are other important economic resources as well. The capital of British Columbia is Victoria, situated in the southern tip of Vancouver Island, opposite the city of the same name. With a strong English influence, it is located near a calm sea, among islands with a moderate and relatively humid micro-climate which favours the varied, luxuriant vegetation full of flowers. The inner harbour is the centre of commercial and touristic activities which characterize this city.

The continental and cosmopolitan Vancouver lies an hour and a half by ferry from Victoria; on one side it is limited by the Pacific Ocean and on the other it is surrounded by rocky mountains. This location, characterised by the topographical variety, the islands, the entrances and exits to the sea, beaches and parks, as well as a mild climate, make Vancouver an unique city, very appealing not only for tourists but, in the first place, for its inhabitants who have chosen this city for these conditions and its prosperous productive activity. The city combines an important historical patrimony and a great economic prosperity with cultural, artistic and sportive strength.

Near the border with Alaska and opposite the *inside passage*, which leads to those far-away territories, we find Prince Rupert, a city easily reached by ferry in the journey that connects it to Port Hardy, in the northern tip of Vancouver Island. It is exceptionally located in front of the meanderings of the Pacific Ocean, which winds among the islands and the thick fir forests that spread from the coast to the high snowy peaks of the rocky range. All these features create a very special environment that was chosen by the first settlers who are still present in the regional culture and life style.

By the end of the 19th century, the arrival of the railway that crossed Canada from east to west began its development process. Today Prince Rupert is one of the many Canadian towns of British Columbia immersed in this natural, breathtaking surrounding.

Royal British Columbia Museum – Victoria

Brief history: in 1886, a group of well-known citizens of Victoria signed a petition for the creation of the Provincial Museum of British Columbia, giving birth to this institution. Its history is related to the professionals who worked in it. John Fannin, collector and taxidermist, was its first curator and his work was of great importance in the beginnings.

First, it was located in the buildings known as The Bird Cages. In 1889 it was moved to the Supreme Court building and

in 1898 to the East Wing of the Legislative Buildings that today are units of the patrimony that identify the city of Victoria.

From 1911 on a record of the number of visitors to the museum has been kept; from 3740 visitors in 1889, the number grew to 30,000 in 1911. In 1913 the Constitutional Act of the Provincial Museum defines its objectives: *To ensure and preserve the species of natural history of the province; to collect anthropological material related to the first cultures of the region; to obtain all kind of information regarding natural sciences, especially concerning the natural history of the province and to disseminate knowledge with this same aim.*

By 1939, the first museum publications started to come out and have never been discontinued since then. In 1941, Thunderbird Park is officially opened next to the museum and devoted to the exhibition of primitive art. In 1945 the total number of visitors in the whole year is estimated at 75,000 and by 1961 the number had grown to 100,000.

In 1968 the Provincial Museum of Natural History and Anthropology changes its name to British Columbia Provincial Museum and moves to the Heritage Court Complex, opposite the Parliament buildings, where, with some changes, it still stands today. The complex includes a steeple, the archives building, the curatorial tower and the exhibition building.

In 1972 the first permanent exhibition, the Gallery of Modern History, is opened with more than 1,000,000 visitors. In 1979 the first stage of the Galleries of Natural History, called *Living Land and Living Sea*, is opened. To celebrate its centennial, the museum opens the second stage of the natural history exhibition *Open Oceans*, in 1986. In 1987 the museum becomes the Royal British Columbia Museum, name which remains until the present.

Relationship museum/city

The buildings that compose the Royal British Columbia Museum are located in the most representative and significant place of Victoria. They are situated at the corner of Government and Belleville streets, opposite on one side to the Parliament

buildings and the park, and on the other side to the gardens that surround the traditional Empress Hotel. This urban area of great patrimonial value surrounds the Inner Harbour of Victoria, which is the most valuable place of the city from the landscape point of view.

The museum's location was determined by the historical and patrimonial value of the site that was heightened by these new uses in the cultural complex: museum, archives, etc. that represent British Columbia. The buildings are inserted in a dense forest and gardens full of natural species of the region, which constitute a type of regional botanical gardens that embrace and transmit the spirit of the museum to the outdoor surroundings. These gardens continue in the green streets that limit the unit integrating it visually to the surrounding urban landscape, even though the architecture of the museum complex, which shows strong rationalist traits of the 60s, contrasts with the picturesque roofs and stone massive walls of the Parliament buildings and the Empress Hotel.

As regards the relationship with the city, the historical weight and the landscape values of the site strongly influence the positive appraisal of this museum, which adheres to the place and is recognized for it.

The container

When the government decided to build the museum and archive complex at the beginning of the 60s, a Board of Directors and a Planning Committee were immediately appointed. The former was set up to create the policies and act as guidance and the latter, to develop the project. In July 1964, five members of the Planning Committee, representing the Architecture Division of the Public Works Department and the museum, made a tour of museums, art galleries and public buildings in general. They visited 17 institutions in the United States and Canada. After that, the government announced that the new complex was to be built in Beacon Hill Park. This announcement caused great controversy which brought about the final decision of situating the museum in the free sites

that belonged to the government located in the west side of Government Street, just opposite the west wing of the Legislative Buildings at that time. Official works began in May 1965.

Throughout the last decades, the complex has been undergoing a number of transformations that suited the dynamics of change characteristic of these kinds of institutions. The cultural activity involved new changes that were gradually incorporated (National Geographic, Cine Imax, etc). The buildings that make up the museum complex are: the one with *galleries*, or the museum as such, related to dissemination tasks; the *Curatorial Tower*, which contains the specific offices and labs for research activities and the preparation and treatment of exhibits; the *Newcombe Building*, that includes an auditorium for 530 people, next to the exhibition building and connected to it by a large hall; the building that houses the British Columbia Archive; the ancient *Helmcken House and St Ann's Schoolhouse*, both of great patrimonial value; *Thunderbird Park*, that recreates a native house and totem poles and offers activities related with these cultures; and *the native plants gardens* that surround the complex.

The museum building is a big horizontal prism of rationalist shapes that alternates between stone coated planes and big glassed surfaces which are ordered by a vertical line with a frieze in which a simplified abstraction of native figurative art can be recognised. On the ground floor a sequence of pointed arches encloses the foyer. The result is eclectic, but the location, the different levels, the stairs and terraces and the green surroundings result in great spatial richness in spite of the rigidity of these anodyne boxes which house the museum and the other buildings.

A walk through the gardens and a plaza leads to the entrance. A large marquee indicates the entrance to the big hall that connects the exhibitions building with the Newcombe. The hall houses a number of native sculptures and its glassed surrounding walls relates the outside, the city, with the interior of the museum. From this point different tours are organized: on the one hand the exhibition hall in three levels and the

connections with the boutique and cafeteria, and on the other hand the circulation space that leads to the area devoted to administration offices and education.

The different exhibition halls are organized in large flexible spaces, which due to design and the requirements of the exhibits, are artificially illuminated. By contrast, natural light inundates the public and connective spaces in this museum.

The important functions of the Curatorial Tower determine its great size: 13 floors in this prismatic, totally rationalist block. The external walls are ordered by horizontal bands that alternate white and glassed planes.

The entrance to the British Columbia Archive is made through the gardens by means of bridges, stairs and terraces that come down to a level which is inferior to the one of the museum entrance creating, therefore, a space surrounded by lush vegetation with several water courses. This situation creates the right atmosphere for the researchers who visit this important centre. The entrance door, carved in wood, represents motifs of native iconography.

Thunderbird Park was created in 1940 to show the main works of the northwest coast first nations: the totem pole. Their exhibition in the open air poses the problem of preservation since these objects are carved in red cedar trees and last about 100 years; therefore, the ones exhibited nowadays are replicas of the originals. In 1952 a carving program started to be developed in this place; it not only revives the ancient artistic techniques but also becomes an educational experience for the visitors who participate.

Another element exhibited in Thunderbird Park is the great house *Kwakiuti*, which is a replica of the original one built in Port Rupert about a century ago by the chief *Naká penkin*. The original house was twice as big, but its construction and carving style have been faithfully reproduced in this exhibition.

Helmcken House is situated at the end of the park; it was built in 1852 and is considered the oldest residence in Victoria. It originally housed St. Ann's Schoolhouse, built in 1843, the same as Victoria Fort. In 1974 the building was moved from its original location in an avenue in the city to the museum's park.

The museum complex, which exhibits the natural history indoors, also moves outdoors by means of the garden of native plants. This garden is unique in its concept because it shows original species of British Columbia and becomes, in this way, an invaluable research and learning space for students and professionals in the field.

The content

The team of professionals that organized this museum established a number of concepts that explain the ways of exhibiting and this can be understood by means of a key idea called *The ring of time*. The visitors would walk the galleries in a *journey backwards through time*, starting by the present, going back in history and coming back to the present day. This concept provided the museum with a framework which allowed additions and changes that infused dynamism into the organization of collections. The Business Plan Summary 1999-2000 clearly states the ideas that at present guide the museum work. The Royal British Columbia mission is *to explore and preserve the natural and cultural patrimony of British Columbia, to inspire curiosity and wonder and share our history with the world*.

To fulfill this mission the museum proposes the following policies: *Responsibility for the visitors' interests and expectations; stewardship of the collection entrusted to the museum; respect for diversity; objectivity in the presentation of information; excellence in products and services*. The established strategic objectives are: *to strengthen the role of the museum in British Columbia; to innovate the development and dissemination of knowledge by means of exhibitions, programs and technology; to increase self-support, economically becoming less dependent on the government; to assess results working efficiently to achieve the aims of each annual plan*.

The first of these objectives is to be accomplished by increasing the exhibitions of human aspects that involve the interior, centre and north of British Columbia; the second can be achieved by enlivening the exhibitions; the third by

diversifying income sources and the fourth by projecting a program of planning, communication, etc.

As regards the functional organization of the museum, the educational area is on the ground floor, where professionals work designing the programs and strategies that have to do with the educational role of the institution, which includes school programs, exhibition exchanges, conferences, courses, etc.²

On the second floor we can find the Gallery of Traveling Exhibitions and the Gallery of Natural History which starts in the last ice age and historically discovers the ecosystems in British Columbia until the present. It also recreates the coast forests and sea world and shows specimens of varied animal and vegetal species of all the region in accordance with the concept established by the museum: to express *the illusion of reality* by means of scenic techniques, such as *diorama*, which reproduce in that spirit different situations in natural and artificial space. This idea might be controversial for other museum trends; in this case, it was considered the basis to achieve the dissemination and interpretation of the natural and historical environment of the region.

The Gallery of Native People takes up a big part of the third floor. In British Columbia, the history of these first nations is very rich as well as diverse. The exhibition shows objects, a big ceremonial house, large totem poles and several artifacts which clearly reflect the way of living of these cultures.

The Gallery of Contemporary History is organized in another area of this floor. The idea behind the exhibition is to recreate in a realistic way the history of this region of Canada from the 70s backwards until 1700. Therefore, urban and rural life are accurately reproduced by means of scenes of the original environments – institutions, architecture, urban and rural spaces, landscapes – which allow the visitor to become part of the history of the region by recreating the experiences and the varied activities of the different social groups that

² As regards RBCM Educational Program, see:

- “*Learning at the museum*”, October 2000 – May 2001;
- Royal British Columbia Museum Annual Report 1999-2000 (presented by Bill Barkley, RBCM Director).

inhabited it and still do.

The native plant garden is organized like an exhibition of natural history and it is divided in different habitats such as sand dunes, rocky alpine, semi-arid, woody, etc. This facilitates the understanding of the regional natural environments.

Region/museum/city/education

The British Columbia region is reflected in this museum both in its content and container. Apparently, the latter is a neutral one, but the way in which it has fused with the city and become part of the urban landscape together with its surrounding native garden makes it belong to this particular place. In fact, the museum is seen as an urban symbol and at present is recognized as such not only in Victoria, British Columbia and Canada but also in the rest of the world.

The spirit of the museum, expressed by its content and the way this is shown, expresses the strength of the region and the educational intentions and strategies as regard the recognition and interpretation of the region and its identity.

Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia – Vancouver

Brief history

The British Columbia University in Vancouver created the Anthropology Museum in its campus with the intention of protecting its valuable patrimony. This museum, founded by the Provincial and Federal governments, hosts one of the richest collections of objects and art works of the first cultures of the northwest coast as well as collections from other parts of the world.

In 1947 this institution starts when the first anthropology professor of the university Harry B. Hawthorn and his wife Audrey begin working with the first object collections. The work done by these first curators in a room inside the university main library is today continued in the special container

designed by the Canadian architect Arthur C. Erickson in the 70s. The new building was opened on May 30th, 1976.

The main idea of the museum is to attract visitors in general and students in particular. The building and exhibitions aim at the achievement of this goal.

Royal British Columbia Museum – Victoria





Museum of Anthropology at The University of British Columbia – Vancouver

Museum/city relationship

The museum is situated in Vancouver, in the British Columbia University campus, in a peninsula in Point Grey Cliffs, surrounded by the sea, in front of Strait of Georgia and

Burrard Inlet or the small inner sea around which the city spreads. The campus, several kilometres away from the centre, is in a forested area next to water. The N.W. Marine Drive leads to the campus with the added bonus of touring magnificent landscapes.

The building was set up in a clearing in the forest on a site of 11 acres that rises like a great terrace-vantage point facing the coast, the sea and the background mountains. The design and location of the building reflect the ways of settlement of the first peoples of the northwest coast, relating the idea of natural region to the explicit purpose of the anthropology museum.

The container

The park where the museum is located is surrounded by species which make up a natural forest. The visitor can see in perspective a huge concrete and glass sculpture which stands in a clearing in this forest and reproduces the shapes of a big native hut, recreating the traditional communal house. Significantly, this house, preceded by totem poles, is on one side of the museum as a reminder of the original native villages.

The building is made up of three basic longitudinal and parallel volumes that go down in different levels accompanying the morphology of the ground. A descending path through the forest from the street leads to the entrance. The visitor has to walk through the important wooden door K'san, carved by the sculptors Gitxsan, Walter Harris, Earl Muldoe, Vernon Stephens and Art Sterrit. When this door with native iconography is closed, it represents the shape of a folded cedar box from the northwest coast.

The first room is the hall that exhibits sculptures in *haida* wood and two posts which are used as interior structure in the original houses. The museum uses this room for small receptions, events and demonstrations.

A ramp built in large spans leads to the main room of the museum that is the big hall. Walking down the ramp, the visitor can see sculptures by artists from the northwest coast and the coastal region of Salish; this tour starts preparing the observer

for the last room. First the visitor gets to the reception area and following the same direction arrives at the big hall. The importance of this room is highlighted by the magnificent incidence of light and its structure, both proposed by Erickson. The space that gradually rises by means of vaulted shapes up to the glass surface at the end is integrated with the surrounding nature. Light comes in through this large surface and through huge longitudinal skylights between the vaults.

The light incidence and the handling of walls create a space of significant symbolism with important traits of native culture. The Haida houses outside can be observed through these large panes of glass becoming visually integrated with the collections inside.

The *roundabout*, a big circular space, is the ceremonial place of the building. Bill Reid's sculpture, "The raven and the first humans", takes up the central place below a big dome that lets light in and scenically illuminates this important object which becomes a symbol of the museum. The sculpture was asked by Walter and Marianne Koerner and illustrates the first part of the Haida traditional legend³.

The museum proposes a walk through the inner galleries of traveling exhibits, the Koerner gallery of ceramic and the *visible storage*, which is a special and different way of exhibit. At the end of the corridor that leads to the roundabout there is a small theatre, designed by Rudy Kovach, which is used for talks, conferences or ritual ceremonies and dance performances. Besides, the museum offers a cafeteria and a souvenir shop related to the hall.

As regards the relationship between the museum and the region, Arthur Erickson's intention of reproducing a structure that represents the constructions of the first peoples of the northwest coast is clearly reflected both inside and outside. In one of his publications the architect stated: "It is only through architecture that I can comprehend a culture"⁴.

³ As regards this sculpture, see: REID, 1980.

⁴ Arq. Arthur C. Erickson's concept, architect from the city of Vancouver, well known for his important works and awards.

The content

The Museum of Anthropology is meant to teach, research and promote the knowledge, understanding and respect for the cultures of the world. Its mission involves providing information and access to cultural objects around the world, putting special emphasis on the first cultural communities of British Columbia; stimulating critical thinking and understanding of the problems in cultural relationships; developing innovative answers to matters concerning the museum, anthropology, aesthetics and education. As a public institution and a university the museum aims at reaching a balance among research, education, public programs, services for the visitors, development of documents and preservation of collections.

The exterior of the museum presents collections of totem poles which reproduce the original ones and the already mentioned native houses. In the interior, the big room hosts historical-patrimonial works that represent the different tribes of the northwest coast. The Koerner Gallery hosts a unique collection of 600 pieces of European ceramic from the 15th to 19th centuries.

The most important innovation regarding the ways of exhibiting in this museum, and the most controversial as well, is the visible storage or open storage, which in fact combines the observation of objects and the idea of warehouse. It takes up 10,000 squared feet which stand out compared to the 25,000 squared feet of the remaining exhibition areas of the museum.

Kovach and his team's designers are responsible for the display islands and glass showcases where visitors can watch all the objects that the museum openly exhibits to be used by researchers, students and public in general. The priority of this museum, according to Audrey Hawthorn, is to keep all objects safe but visible for students and interested people. All the exhibits are classified and numbered and visitors have access to information about the whole museum collection.

Director Michael M. Ames explains that the visible storage system poses a serious problem: it looks nice, very much like an exhibit and not a warehouse; it is therefore confusing for many

people who think that warehouses are set in back rooms, in dark, dusty places. The idea is to create spaces suitable for the activities and available for everyone. As regards the visible storage, the system created in the 70s with the purpose of solving both problems of keeping objects in a warehouse and having easy access to them, has today proved to be very practical. David Cunningham, who is the museum Projects Manager, reflects upon the spirit of the visible storage and states that a university museum with an important objective of teaching and research constantly needs to watch and remove objects for study. This is not the only way of exhibiting objects in the museum and shows the institution evolves and changes and is willing to consider other ways of exhibition in the future if needed.

Region/museum/city/education

Undoubtedly, the British Columbia region is reflected in this museum for many reasons that have already been analyzed: its location in the particular site, the natural surroundings, the disposition of Erickson's building, its shapes and the inclusion of native objects in the park express the idea of region symbolically shown in each of these characteristics. Inside the container, the design of each room, the content and the originality of the exhibitions are a clear reflection of the region and especially of the northwest coast.

Obviously, the relationship region/museum/city/education is clearly shown in this museum if we consider the meaning both the architectonic container and the exhibits convey; that is why it has become a representative symbol of the first peoples of the Canadian northwest and of the activities carried out by the professionals in the anthropological science in general.

Museum of Northern British Columbia – Prince Rupert

A visit to this museum, located in the town of Prince Rupert, already described in the introduction of this article, involves experiencing the magnificent and first regional architecture of the Canadian northwest coast.

The museum, created several decades ago, worked in political administrative buildings of the town until a little more

than ten years ago. Today it is set up in this site that reproduces the essential spatial, linguistic and technological characteristics of a log communal house from the first peoples of the region. This special container, situated downtown but surrounded by vegetation and opposite the *inside passage* where ships travel towards Alaska, has become an object of invaluable patrimonial presence in the city.

Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia – Vancouver







Museum of Northern British Columbia – Prince Rupert

In addition to the container and its location, we have the content, especially based on the exhibition of objects from the history of primitive peoples as well from their presence in the region nowadays.

The spirit of the museum is conveyed in the phrase that in the language of Tsimshians reads: *NA XBIISA £AGIGYET*, and means “Ancestors’ treasure box”, relating the importance of the container, meaningful to the memory of the town and the

content as its historical-cultural patrimony. The Tsimshian culture is from that region; the phrase also refers to the knowledge and wisdom of the first inhabitants and shows their awareness of the value of patrimony.

Inside the museum, a distribution area integrates the entrance with the beginning of the tour to the different rooms and the crafts shop. The most important exhibition place is the great hall, which reproduces a large native room, where the carved tree trunks constitute a significant element of great value in the appraisal of museum collections. The glass surface that closes the end of this great hall brings the view of the inside passage into the museum. The forest, the water, the vessels are part of the scenery as a backdrop, highlighting even more the presence of the exhibits such as native sculptures, totem poles, objects, etc. The great hall exhibits the history of the northwest coast, of its culture from the Ice Age to more recent periods until today. There are four more galleries, two for permanent collections and two for traveling ones. All of them clearly show the regional spirit and these collections become an invaluable material for educational and scientific purposes.

As part of a complete educational program and in response to its geographical location and climate, this museum offers a seasonal program from May to September with guided visits and drama performances such as *Prince Rupert story and evening of drama*. In addition, the museum organizes a walking tour through the works that make up the historical patrimony of Prince Rupert and an archaeological tour in the harbour. All these extension and dissemination activities for the community have the purpose of experiencing nature and reviving the regional history of the northwest coast with the aim of understanding, interpreting and identifying it.

The isolation of the place, its special characteristics, the difference, the diversity, the strength of geography and the presence of native first cultures are reflected in the museum, in its container, in its content and in its proposals. The Northern British Columbia Museum in fact represents this unique identity.

Conclusion

The selected regional samples have been analysed taking into account the most relevant aspects which have been briefly mentioned. Evidently, these aspects are: the history of the institution, the relationship museum/city, the container, the content and, to sum up, the relationship city/museum/education.

Each of the analysed museums represent a particular case, where the peculiarities of the Canadian region they belong and respond to are directly expressed in the container. In the case of content, the strategies and exhibits are clear expressions of the natural and cultural characteristics of their territories.

Behind each of the museums there is effort and creativity, there are human beings, professionals, hard-working builders who promoted their foundations, their developments and their growth in different historical circumstances of the regions they belong to.

Museum of Northern British Columbia – Prince Rupert









References

AMES, Michel. Visible storage and lic documentation. *Publication Curator*, Museo de Antropología de la UBC, v. 1, n. 20.

BAZZO, Marie France. The fun museum. *UIA 89*, v. 1, n. 4, Summer/Été 1989.

BLANCHET, Jean; BERNARD, Yolande. *Glossary of museology*. Ottawa: Department of the Secretary of State of Canada, 1989.

BRITISH COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY. Museum of Northern British Columbia. *Objects and expressions*. Guide to the collection.

CORLEY-SMITH, Peter. *White bears and other curiosities: the first 100 years of the Royal British Columbia Museum*. Victoria, BC: RBCM Friends, 1989.

_____. *The ring of time*. Victoria, BC: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1985.

COULL, Cheryl. *Carving out its own legend: UBC's Museum of Anthropology*.

CUNNINGHAM, David D. The philosophy of visible storage at the Museum of Anthropology. *Museum – Movie – Multimedia*. Bremen: Übersee Museum, April 27, 28, 29, 1999.

DAVIS, Douglas. *The museum transformed: design and culture in the post Pompidou age*. Tokyo: Cross River Press, 1990.

DONZEL, Catherine. *New museums*. Paris: Telleri, 1998.

FRANCHELLO DE MARICONDE, María del Carmen. *The museums*

of Canada: the monuments of postmodern culture for the XXI Century?. Córdoba: Boulevard, 1998.

GRANT, Peter. *Victoria: a history in photographs*. Canmore, Alberta: Altitude, 1995.

HAWTHORN, Audrey. *A labour of love: the making of the museum of Anthropology – UBC – The first three decades 1947–1976*. Vancouver BC: UBC Museum of Anthropology, 1993.

KALMAN, Harold. *A history of Canadian architecture*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994. 2 v.

LEON, Aurora. *El museo: teoría, praxis y utopía*. Madrid, 1990. Cuadernos Arte Cátedra.

LEHRMAN, Jonas. Museum of Anthropology: an appraisal. *The Canadian Architect*, v. 22, n. 5, May 1977.

MacNAIR, Peter L.; HOOVER, Alan L.; MARY, Kevin. *The legacy: tradition and innovation in Northwest coast Indian art*. Vancouver: Royal BC Museum, 1984.

MONTANER, Josep M. *Nuevos museos: espacios para el arte y la cultura*. Barcelona: GG Ediciones, 1990.

MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY VANCOUVER. Architect: Arthur Erikson. *The Canadian Architect*, v. 22, n. 5, May 1977.

REID, Bill. *The Haida legend of the raven and the first humans*. UBC Museum of Anthropology, 1980.

THE OFFICIAL DIRECTORY OF CANADIAN MUSEUMS AND RELATED INSTITUTIONS: 1997–1999. Ottawa: Canadian Museums Associations, 1997.

VASTOKAS, Joan M. Architecture as cultural expression: Arthur Erickson and the new Museum of Anthropology, University of BC. *Arts Canada*, Oct.-Nov. 1976.

VICTORIA TOWN HALL. *Building on our pass*. City of Victoria. Heritage Program, Nov. 2000.

_____. *Foundation Group Designs. City of Victoria. Downtown Heritage Registry*. Victoria: The Corporation of the City of Victoria. Planning Department, 1996.

WOODHEAD, Peter; STANFLIED, Geoffrey. *Key guide to information sources in Museums Studies*. New York: Mansell, 1989.

