

ABSTRACT

Museums, Slavery, and the Caribbean Exhibitionary Complex Towards a Museology of Displacement

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This dissertation offers a reading in postcolonial museology or what I have called a museology of displacement. Taking the Caribbean museum and other exhibitionary institutions as the object of study, it connects museology and Caribbean cultural studies. It asks how museology can account for peoples whose originary formation is not located in the territory of their current negotiations of identity and belonging, but within a colonial formation characterised by forced migration, disjuncture and loss. The thesis addresses this issue and extends Tony Bennett's influential concept of the Exhibitionary Complex, re-reading it to account for slavery. The result is the idea of a Caribbean Exhibitionary Complex, defined as a system of exhibitionary technologies that emerged around anxieties about the Black (slave) body and that sought to control both its representation and behaviours. The structuring argument throughout is that an understanding of the emergence, development and role of museums within the region must take into account the institution of slavery and its impact on both the Caribbean historical formation and contemporary identity politics.

Key Words: Museums, slavery, Caribbean, Jamaica, colonialism, identity politics, world's fair and exhibitionary complex.