



# Digital Media

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In the various texts that this Dossier brings together, the central point is the results that digital media technologies have provided for different cultures. In this context, the authors analyze the creation of the image, the impact of algorithms on the news and the audience, the audiovisual associated with VR (Virtual Reality) and the viewer, the industrial production and the multicultural globalization.

We believe that the questions that permeate the texts and the paths that the authors followed in their studies are sources for new discussions and suggest a wide range of developments for future research. Furthermore, these are essays that make us think about who we are and how we live in a world that is increasingly closer to digital media.

Pode consultar uma versão mais atualizada deste livro neste [link](#).

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# Digital Media

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# **Art, media and digital platforms: the Virtual Museum of Lusophony on the Google Arts & Culture<sup>1</sup>**

Alessandra Nardini, Elaine Trindade  
and Moisés de Lemos Martins

**Abstract.** This study focuses on the Virtual Museum of Lusophony, on Google Arts & Culture, as a digital platform capable of providing a space for collaboration and preservation of the cultural, artistic and scientific patrimony of the community of Portuguese-language countries. In order to achieve the proposal, the theoretical discussion begins with virtual museums, art and technology reflections. In the second stage, about cultural resistance, Lusophony and multicultural globalization. To complete this study, the exhibition “Malangatana: the legacy of the Mozambican artist”,

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will be presented and analyzed according to the theoretical proposal.

**Keywords:** Culture · Technology · Virtual Museum of Lusophony · Resistance · Patrimony.

## **Introduction**

The Virtual Museum of Lusophony, as a digital platform available on Google Arts & Culture since 2020, can be considered a tool for the promotion and preservation of the cultural, artistic and scientific patrimony of the community of Portuguese-language countries. Formed by countries which have Portuguese as official language, this community is formed by: Angola, Brasil, Cabo Verde, Guiné-Bissau, Moçambique, Portugal, São Tomé e Príncipe and Timor-Leste. The Spanish region of Galiza and the Chinese administrative region of Macau also take place at this group.

One of the Virtual Museum of Lusophony's missions is to defend the cultural diversity in a context which the globalization of technological-financial bases – cosmopolitan globalization (Martins, 2015) – is established in a hegemonic system, following mainly neoliberal principles and ignoring the heterogeneity of cultures. According to Martins (2015), guided by the desire to build and maintain a culture of unity, cosmopolitan globalization can be logocentric, ethnocentric, imperialist and colonialist, marked by exclusion, assimilation and the destruction of differences. The author proposes that the countercurrent of cosmopolitan globalization is the

multicultural globalization, made by the union of people from distant areas, respecting the differences between them. In the community of Portuguese-language's case, he suggests that countries should remain connected in a movement of mutual cooperation, sharing Portuguese as an official language, but always being aware of the other languages, dialects and cultural habits that are part of them (Martins, 2015).

To understand how the Virtual Museum of Lusophony can work at these terms, this investigation focuses, at the first stage, on comprehend the virtual museums on Google Arts & Culture. At the second point, this study promotes a theoretical discussion about art, culture and technology, according to theories by authors as Walter Benjamin, Raymond Williams and Moisés Martins. In the third stage, a reflection of culture resistance, Lusophony and multicultural globalization is presented. The creative process of the exhibition "Malangatana: the legacy of the Mozambican artist", is analyzed to complete this study, understanding how the Virtual Museum of Lusophony goes beyond the simple definition of virtual museums. Through an artistic curation, the exhibition that doesn't focus only on artistic objects, but on Malangatana's political legacy, helps to preserve memories and identities.

## **1. From virtual museums to the Virtual Museum of Lusophony**

How can we think about museums today? Besides the physical museums, there are currently virtual museums, without walls or borders, open twenty-four hours a day.

There is no need to walk to them. They are just a click away. To understand better what virtual museums are, it is important to go back in time to realize that the term virtual museum, mentioned for the first time in an article by Tschritzis & Gibbs dated 1991, during the International Conference on Hypermedia and Interactivity in Museums (ICHIM), hasn't much in common with a virtual museum today. Tschritzis & Gibbs (1991) named virtual museums as catalogs available on the internet, but they did not define a theoretical concept for the term. It is pertinent to say that, in 1991, the internet was not a widespread technology in social terms and belonged to the university environment and at an experimental level.

Another author using the term is Pierre Levy (2000). According to him, virtual museums were nothing more than “bad catalogs on the internet” (Lévy, 2000: 202). At the time, there was a fear that physical museums would lose audiences due to the excessive virtualization of collections. Once works of art were available online, visitors would no longer visit museums to see the physical work. Nonetheless, the idea of museums regarding the virtual environment started to be connected to advertising and internet pages served to publicize the collections and generate a certain curiosity, making the virtual visitor a real visitor. As times passed, it was realized that one situation would not be able to cancel another one, and that virtual museums would never replace physical museums. According to Lima (2013), virtual museums can be defined into three categories: physical museums with virtual correspondence, physical museums whose works have been digitized and are available online and exclusively virtual museums.

From the pioneering use of the term by Tsihritzis & Gibbs (1991) to the implementation of Google Arts & Culture, almost twenty three years have passed and there has been a lot of improvement. The Google Art Project, the name of the project before Arts and Culture, was inaugurated in February 2011, and virtualized the collections of museums such as: MoMA, in New York (United States of America), the Galleria Degli Uffizi, in Florence (Italy), the Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid (Spain), the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam (Netherlands), among others. The first idea was to digitize the collections of the world's museums, in order to popularize the collections and offer visibility to those who didn't have the opportunity to be in a specific location.

The Google Art Project's mission was to democratize knowledge by disseminating works of art and their artists. Thousand works of art were virtualized in high resolution (gigapixels), which allowed us to see the work in detail, what sometimes was not possible even in person. A different perspective on the work of art was established. Google Art Project also included visits to galleries, in three hundred and sixty degrees and using Google Street View technology, a resource launched in 2007 that provides panoramic images of three hundred and sixty degrees horizontally and two hundred and ninety degrees vertically, enabling greater detail and other angles of vision. Currently, Google Arts & Culture focuses on the immersive experience with the aim of developing another way of experiencing art and culture through an immersive and expanded aesthetic in which the sensorial experience is extremely valued.

Nowadays, the Google Arts & Culture continues to emphasize that their initiative is not commercial but focuses

on: “Preserving and making art and culture available to anyone, anywhere” (Google Arts & Culture, 2023). As time passes, the project seeks new ways to access art and culture, valuing history and cultural heritage. Besides “Culture in 360°” and virtual tours with Google Street View, the digital platform has new tools for the website and mobile app. Among them are the “In-painting-tours” (guided tours in a painting to show details and reveal histories aspects), the “Art Selfie” (you can take a selfie photo and find your “doppelgänger” among several artworks), the “Nearby” (tool that can help you to find cultural events and museums close to your geography location), the “Art Palette” (research artworks based on colors), and others. Google Arts & Culture has open space for new partnerships and those who are interested can contact them through the website (Google Arts & Culture, 2023).

The Virtual Museum of Lusophony integrates the Google Arts & Culture platform and is part of this context of immersive and expanded experience using photographic images, videos and the geolocation system from the Street View tool, which allows you to frame history, a narrative, at your real scenario. The Museum was founded in 2017, under the direction of Dr Moisés de Lemos Martins. Created through an initiative of the Communication and Society Research Centre (CECS) at the University of Minho, the museum works as a project to make available and preserve the cultural, artistic and scientific patrimony of the community of Portuguese-language countries. Currently, the Virtual Museum of Lusophony is under the direction of Dr. Isabel Moreira Macedo.

The Museum mission is to spread knowledge through various forms, whether artistic, cultural or scientific expres-



sion. With the objective of gathering, preserving and disseminating this knowledge globally, Martins (2015), reiterates that interactive and hypertextual digital communication is capable of providing a favorable environment for the construction of a common Portuguese-language virtual space. According to the author: “The Virtual Museum of Lusophony constitutes, in this way, a mobilizing experience of intercultural communication, mutual knowledge and reinforcement of the sense of community in the space of Lusophony” (Martins, 2015: 31). When launched on the Google Arts & Culture platform in September 2020, the Virtual Museum of Lusophony presented two fifty-six works of art, including one hundred and twelve photographs, ninety-eight radio programs, forty-four multimedia exhibitions, nineteen films and two documentaries.

## **2. Technology, art and digital devices**

Raymond Williams was critical of technological determinism and rejected accounts of the “social effects of technology”. Contested and revisited since the 1970s, the “flow” concept developed by Williams, was overcome as radio broadcasting gave way, as the author himself had already predicted, to other communication systems, nevertheless, Graeme Turner explains the relevance of remember Raymond Williams formulations to think about the emergence of the digital (Serelle, 2016).

According to Turner (2016), despite the optimism that the web generated, it demonstrated vulnerability to the same trends that shaped the structure of traditional media. According to the author:

In this enthusiasm for technological potential as a new device appears, much of the discussion on new media has neglected these variations. Paradoxically, as much of the enthusiasm for the digital world was based on what was seen as the potential to empower common people, this enthusiasm was also based on assumptions that are, deep down, technologically deterministic (Turner, 2016: 10).

Márcio Serelle explains: “To reflect on the constitution of a technology as a cultural form, within a society, and on the possibilities of appropriating and redirecting the uses of this technology, was important for television as we know it in the 20th century, and it seems be now for the internet” (Serelle, 2016: 197). Therefore, the contribution of Raymond Williams becomes even more relevant to avoid mistakes that end up being technologically deterministic. According to Williams, changing these emphases requires prolonged and collective intellectual effort, as these are issues that bring with them other developments that mask more complex and difficult philosophical and historical questions.

To think about new technologies, it is almost inevitable not address aspects inherent to historicism, as if a technical object were necessarily replacing the previous one, in a process of technological obsolescence. Nevertheless, we should not stay on the idea that the dark chamber would have given way to the photographic camera or that this technology would have been replaced by cinema. As can be inferred, this is not what happens. More than a hundred years later we have both cinema and photography, and they both are in the process of evolution and other social uses.

The idea of obsolescence of technical objects leads us to the thought of a “false illusion” that we are experiencing a

technological revolution. The historicistic thinking narrates in a linear way the emergence and obsolescence of technology, when, in reality, it is relevant to think about the social, scientific and economic moment of the time in which such technologies emerge. In such a way as to realize that without this tripod (society, science and technology), objects do not have the proper reception and use by people. In this way, it can be inferred that evolution is not in the object itself, but in the social use given to the socio-technical object. Latour (1994: 15-16) questions the concept between the modern and the archaic, in which the use of the concept of modernity would be related to the technological revolution, signaling a rupture in time and conditioning modernity to a form of improvement of the old regimes.

Michel Foucault is one of the first theorists to think about devices. Based on Foucault's philosophy, Gilles Deleuze (1990: 155) points to technical objects as elements of agency, devices capable of modeling, controlling, directing or managing social behaviors. Machines that make people see and make people talk. According to the author, devices can be considered as a set of practices of knowledge, power and production of subjectivity.

The first two dimensions of a device, or those that Foucault highlights first, are the visibility curves and the enunciation curves. What is certain is that the devices are like Raymond Rousset's machines, machines for making people see and make them speak, as analyzed by Foucault (Deleuze, 1990:155).

Walter Benjamin (1987) developed one of his theories about "the optical revolution, inaugurated by the camera, a new vision machine" (Martins, 2015: 48). The philosopher

thought about the photography camera and wrote about the cult of the “inaccessible work of art” and how a technical device would enable new perspectives, modifying the creation, circulation and representation of art. According to him, contemporary art, in its political dimension, will be more effective when reproduced (Benjamin, 1987:171). The author reflects on how art and politics are connected and how the era of technical reproducibility would be beneficial to make this connection between art and politics even more intense.

The means of our time, at the beginning of the third millennium, are in digital technologies, in the hybridization of ecosystems with techno systems and in the inextricable absorption of scientific research into artistic creation, all of these opening unprecedented horizons for the artist to explore new territories of sensorially and sensibility (Santaella & Arantes, 2008: 39).

The devices would be capable of highlighting other forms of subjectivity production. Subjectivation processes do not follow rules or models. Each society, era and technology have different processes. After the 2000s and with the advent of the internet, devices are increasingly socially present in the form of cell phones, surveillance cameras, GPS, among others. According to Bentes (2005: 2), these devices can be capable of altering human cognition and perception, thinking about the mathematical modeling of information launched by Marvin Minsky. To this perspective, such devices connected to the internet would be capable of altering the subject’s perceptions and brain functioning. If devices can change perception and socio-communicational praxis, it is relevant to think about how virtual museums, such as

the Virtual Museum of Lusophony, would contribute to a new status of the image, based on new socially modeled practices and knowledge.

Santaella (2009), emphasizes the importance of the new experiences with technological advances to the creative processes of the production of art. According to the author, in the contemporary times, digital technologies have led to the emergence of hybrid art languages. Exploring new territories means meeting new digital media. This provokes new experiences for the artists and also for the public in general, now with new ways of feeling and experiencing everything, that occur through interaction. Therefore, it's necessary to remember about Williams (2003), when he explained why technology and society cannot be thought separately in these terms. The connection between both must always be remembered.

### **3. Cultural resistance and the Virtual Museum of Lusophony**

In the same way that there were economic and technological investments on sound broadcasting, there were interests of the same nature on visual broadcasting and also on the internet, nevertheless, although “enormously powerful”, the political and economic ideals are not “omnipotent” as Roger Silverstone (2003: 15) explains. They function as pressures that act on the uses and development of technology and not as “prescriptive and controlling forces”. Williams (2016) explains the pertinence of decisions and resistance actions arising from critical thinking with the aim of developing a society capable of organizing itself in the search of more effective communication in different

areas, elucidating new possibilities of alternative uses for technology by small communities.

In “A razão comunicativa nas sociedades avançadas”, an article by Moisés de Lemos Martins published in 2005, the author reminds us that: “The development of the cultural industries (computer products, multimedia – television, telephone and integrated computer -, advertising, fashion, music, dance, tourism and holidays) has made mass culture hegemonic in our time”. Understanding that as much as the area of Communication is influenced by liberalism (more precisely, neoliberalism at this moment) and that the holders of technological resources and knowledge are always ahead, controlling through power relations what is said and what is not said, done and not done, there is still space for criticism and urgent debate about the role of resistance in what Martins (2005) defined as: “the serious political problem of a new democratic space”. The debate on the political problem of a new democratic space is related to the fact that it is necessary to think of alternative ways. On how to use networks, connections and digital platforms to unite people for common ideals and dreams across the globe, breaking geographic limits, valuing and preserving heterogeneity.

Once speaking of Lusophony and the passion invested in this theme, Martins (2015: 11) expresses the existence of “multiple lusophone imaginaries” and not a single imaginary. The lusophone community is built by plurality, difference and continuous knowledge about each other. The idea of lusophony defends multiculturalist globalization and exists through it.

In a field of knowledge and powers in which the hegemonic discourse is the discourse of uniqueness, which directs

us towards a world-culture, the ideal of building a lusophone community wages a symbolic struggle against the hegemonic logic. It is a path that leads us to transculturality. This struggle is aimed at valuing the heterogeneity of people and portuguese as a language of science, learning about ourselves and others, artistic expressions, cultural practices and also towards partnerships that enable the human and economic development of these countries.

Bourdieu (1989) strongly points out that the world has a symbolic order, and this becomes even more evident in a globalized world, in which the distinction occurs along three main axes: technology – economy – common language. The internet and the socio-technical networks, as a technology capable of changing the notion of time and space. The economy, as the main engine of symbolic exchanges. The English language, as a common and hegemonic language, in which North America and Europe are judged as producers of a superior culture, while Latin America, Africa and Asia (with the exception of Japan) would be like a kind of periphery of the world (Martins, 2021). Although Portuguese is the official language in African countries such as Angola and Mozambique, these countries have other languages and dialects.

Martins (2015, 2018, 2021) criticizes the Anglo-Saxon hegemony in scientific publications. In this context, even if the project is geographically located in Portugal (Europe), the Virtual Museum of Lusophony is counter-hegemonic since it is dedicated to the Portuguese-language community. Mignolo & Walsh (2018: 159) believe in interculturality as a tool for the reorganization of diverse cultures and identities. The authors also believe in the development of inclusion policies for knowledge and cul-

ture, in a counter-ordination to the sociocultural, economic and political hegemony of the social order as a whole, so that all sectors of society would be involved. In this scenario, interculturality is more than the interrelation and dialogue between cultures, it is a way of decolonizing through a radical change in the dominant order (modern and capitalist).

#### **4. The exhibition “Malangatana: the legacy of the Mozambican artist”**

Malangatana Valente Ngwenya was a mozambican artist who produced important works of art such as drawings, paintings, sculptures, poetry and music. Besides being an artist, he was a member of the FRELIMO (Liberation Front of Mozambique) and a defender of cultural, social and political causes. One of the most important artists of the world, Malangatana was born in Matalana, Maputo province, in 1936.

An artist with multiple talents for working with different artistic languages, Malangatana also had talent for teaching art. The artist thought that children were the future and hope for the renewal of Moçambique, which is why he dedicated so much time to teach young people and provided possibilities for the development of his local community.

“Malangatana: the legacy of the Mozambican artist”, at the Virtual Museum of Lusophony, on Google Arts & Culture, includes photographs from the exhibition “Colors of Mozambique”, made by Simone Faresin, and the documentary, “On the Malangatana Trail: from Legacy to Memory”



(2018), produced by the researcher Dr Lurdes Macedo. The permanent exhibition on the Virtual Museum of Lusophony was made using Google Arts & Culture tools, such as those that offer the ability to develop a hybrid exhibition in media formats and zoom in to discover extraordinary levels of detail.

The exhibition starts with the documentary about his life and legacy. The beginning of the documentary is dedicated to show the “Sacred House of the Mabyaya Family”, a work of art, many meters high, made up of a set of sculptures, located on the outskirts of the city of Maputo. Looking at this work of art, it is possible to observe how Malangatana had the ability to work in various artistic spheres. The work, inaugurated in 1989, was dedicated to the family that controlled the territory between Matalana and Zimpeto. The Mabyaya family reigned from the village where Malangatana was born, to the place where the sculpture is today. The initial project was smaller, but the artist transformed it into a larger one, where pieces designed by him in metal were placed in the structure, over the course of three years. Nowadays, the artwork is without any maintenance and needs to be restored and placed in another place, where young students and admirers of Malangatana’s work can have access. To achieve this, the community needs resources.

The documentary by Lurdes Macedo presents how Malangatana’s art is also a work of social intervention, and the “Sacred House of the Mabyaya Family” it’s the beginning of the journey, with approximately twenty five minutes, that the producer will guide us. The documentary is made up of images that show where the artist was born and worked. It also shows archive images of his life, the construction

of his works, moments of interaction with the local and international community, and interviews with people who shared their memories, such as Richard Gray, an expert on Malangatana's life and work. Some of the artist's works are also shown in this documentary, which also tells how Malangatana contributed to the internationalization of Mozambican art.

After the documentary, we can see eight images from Simone Faresin's exhibition, "Colors of Mozambique". The photographs are the result of Faresin's experiences in Moçambique and the proximity he established with the work of Malangatana. The images show Malangatana's artwork from the photographer's point of view. Faresin portrayed drawings, paintings and sculptures that show us faces and creatures, fauna and flora.

Simone Faresin's photos show the amphitheater, one of the most significant buildings in that region, a space for presentations and transmission of knowledge. In his photos, we can see details of Malangatana's work, like monsters, for example, which look like mythical creatures, with large claws, pointy teeth and red eyes. The way the artist portrayed the people can also be seen, with striking eyes, hands, mouths and breasts. Observing the presence of strong colors, we see how Malangatana mixes the shapes of monsters, nature animals, elements of forests and people who make facial expressions of fright.

Secco (2003) explains that Malangatana's paintings show cultural diversity in constant interaction, influenced by ancestry, wars and invasions. According to the author, this can be seen through the use of red and monstrous figures. Another important characteristic is the strong presence of women in his paintings and drawings. Many of these details of the

Malangatana's universe is represented in Simone Faresin's images that are now in the Virtual Museum of Lusophony, on Google Arts & Culture. Malangatana's legacy goes beyond what can be seen by our eyes. The artist was very active, a supporter of social causes who presented his community to the world. The exhibition, now on Google Arts & Culture, can contribute to the preservation of the artwork of Malangatana, giving more visibility to the need for interventional work to preserve the legacy that needs artistic restoration. The documentary initiative and also the photo exhibition bring a complementary dimension, showing cultural heritage through interviews, chosen and sequenced archive images.

## **Conclusion**

This study was focused on demonstrating how the presence of the Virtual Museum of Lusophony, on the Google Arts & Culture, collaborates with the promotion and preservation of the cultural and scientific patrimony of the Portuguese-speaking community, in a context marked by the globalization of technological-financial bases, that guides us along a unique path, ignoring the existence of multiple histories and using cultural diversity for marketing purposes.

In this context, it is necessary to think about ways of making the new virtual platforms become heterogeneous spaces, consequently going against the current of individualization that neoliberalism generates through the weakening of communities in favor of economic growth that does not benefit minorized peoples. It is also one of our objectives with this study, to invite the scientific community and civil society to debate on the importance of

resistance and criticism in order to be able to defend and protect patrimony, languages, cultural and diverse artistic expressions.

Through exhibitions of photographs, illustrations, radio programs, films and other types of media resources that bring interactivity to visitors, the Virtual Museum of Lusophony is capable of get to know multiple imaginaries of the portuguese-speaking countries, formed by different cultures that, through respect and mutual knowledge, can collaborate with each other. As a research and intervention platform of the Communication and Society Research Centre (CECS), and Cultural Unit of the University of Minho, the Virtual Museum of Lusophony can also promote the production of scientific knowledge about the cultural expressions of these countries. This study is one of the results of this incentive.

The Virtual Museum of Lusophony demonstrates that a virtual museum is not just a catalog of works of art. It is a museum that preserves and makes art available around the world, providing opportunities for people to discover artists from diverse context, without geographical limitations. With the use of diverse resources and hybrid languages, the experience with the exhibitions became more complete, revealing details and providing more information. The fact that we can share this content with other people around the world, is also a positive factor for the preservation of memory and cultural heritage.

The Malangatana exhibition reveals not only the cultural diversity of Mozambique, but also the importance of social intervention in communities through artistic expressions. Malangatana's artistic work contributed to the internationalization of Mozambican art and left us an

inspiring legacy. The images by Simone Faresin and the documentary by Lurdes Macedo bring interesting points of view to the Virtual Museum of Lusophony, as both found, each in their own way, the beauty and strength of Malangatana. Having this exhibition on Google Arts & Culture, available to people around the world, is very significant for strengthening the Portuguese-speaking community.

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In the various texts that this Dossier brings together, the central point is the results that digital media technologies have provided for different cultures. In this context, the authors analyze the creation of the image, the impact of algorithms on the news and the audience, the audiovisual associated with VR (Virtual Reality) and the viewer, the industrial production and the multicultural globalization.

We believe that the questions that permeate the texts and the paths that the authors followed in their studies are sources for new discussions and suggest a wide range of developments for future research. Furthermore, these are essays that make us think about who we are and how we live in a world that is increasingly closer to digital media.

