

# DEBATING SPACES & PLACES

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## Museums as Public Spaces:

Interrogating the Actual, Revisualizing the Possible

### Questions

How can museums become genuinely public and democratic?

How can curators, perceived as expert, engage critically and democratically with the public?

How can cognitive justice be achieved through museums?

How can memory speak to contemporary concerns?

### Possibilities

How can museum exhibits be viewed in their historical context and at the same time be made relevant to contemporary concerns?

Critical Museology in action: MUŻA, The Maritime Museum and St John's Co-Cathedral as sites for critical pedagogy.

The local community museum as a revitalising 'history from below', celebrating a local community's public memory

E.g. Antonio Sciortino's 'Speed' (Futurism and the modernist or postmodernist obsession with speed), Girolamo Gianni's landscapes (today's vanishing spaces in a construction driven economy) or some of St John's ostentatious iconography ('orientalism' and contemporary Islamophobia and Eurocentric representations of alterity), anachronistic 'socialist realist' paintings à la Antonio Barrera (contemporary concerns with précarité) gory 'Senecan' xvii paintings by Andrea Vaccaro, Matthias Stom, Mattia Preti, Moise Le Valentin, Giovanni Baglioni (suffering and violence as recurring features of religious militant extremism), Church silver displays (extraction of silver, suffering and entombment of indigenous slaves, contemporary politics of human waste disposability).



Base of Nicolas Cotoner's monument at St John's Co-Cathedral (above) & Landscape by Robert Caruana Dingli (below)



'Speed' by Antonio Sciortino courtesy of National Museum of Fine Arts (MUŻA) (above)