BIASES IN DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES:

Gendered identities in museum data

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Ever since they were created, museums have played a role in defining, shaping, and smoothing out collective national identities. It is no coincidence that the first museums appeared as nation-states were being formed, and their normative and formative powers have been studied by many, especially the way their collections shape an idea of "the other" in terms of race, class, and gender; and how the museum experienced is shaped by a series of explicit and implicit norms, that again are meant to give an idea of who belongs in the museum – and who doesn't. With that in mind, I will give an analysis regarding the difficulties of including LGBTQIA+ identities in official data systems, that later give shape to collective ideas of who can and cannot be recognized officially as an artist.

Using my experience as researcher who uses SURDOC, a database containing the collections of some of Chile's most important museums, and as part of a team charged with designing a new methodology for museum statistics, I will expose the complexities associated with opening up systems to include more diverse ways of being in the world. Modern understandings of gender that compartmentalize and classify it into two sanctioned categories continue to deprive minorities of recognition, and those who do not identify as male or female, as well as sexual minorities, have been consistently erased from digital data, reduced to the binary of men and women.

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The way digital systems and databases are coded thus continue to code patterns of violence and power in relation to LGBTQIA+ identities, and it is key that we become mindful of such embedded biases so as to construct more diverse and inclusive digital technologies.

Biography

María Victoria Guzmán. Researcher specialized in cultural memory, identity and representation. She is a lawyer with postgraduate studies in Philosophy and Aesthetics, and an MA in Cultural and Creative Industries from King's College, London, United Kingdom, in which she was recognized with the award for the best thesis of her generation. Currently she is dedicated to research, cultural criticism and teaching on museums and contemporary art. She is the founder of the blog El Gocerío, dedicated to art criticism in Santiago, and has worked as curator and artistic researcher at the Medial Arts Biennial of Santiago.

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