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# Silk Road Museums: Design of Inclusive Heritage and Cross-Cultural Education

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**Abstract:** This work is the result of a study on the characteristics that define some of the museums created on the Silk Road. The approach to these museums has focused especially on the observation of the educational and heritage aspects that define these institutions. Since 1988, numerous actions related to the Silk Road have been promoted by UNESCO. This old trade route has now become a route of dialogue between cultures. Each museum studied is characterized by promoting local and national issues that define it. Educational issues stand out, since the tradition of silk production is very important in each place. Another aspect observed is that heritage issues manage to strengthen the characteristic features of each community. I have interviewed those responsible and personally observed their facilities and collections. Each museum has chosen to highlight local differential factors, enhancing the aesthetic arguments of cultural identity. Finally, I examine the specific case of the Valencia Silk Museum, the most recent creation museum but also the oldest institution. In the conclusions, I highlight the importance of education in most of these institutions.

**Keywords:** museum; education; design; heritage; Silk Road; UNESCO



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## 1. Introduction

The analysis presented is part of the experience during decades of university research, promoting education in museums and knowing numerous institutions. I have shared work with teams from different international entities, especially in aspects related to museology, heritage education and training of museum educators. I must influence the dissemination, visibility, economic projection, tourism impact and social cohesion that museums allow. A few years ago, I incorporated the novel concept of “migrant heritage” into academic research, defining it as a transit of ideas, people, commerce and cultures but also of thought in constant transition.

In November 2018, the Valencia Silk Museum organized an international conference with the objective of knowing the history and characteristics of the silk museums around the world from a transdisciplinary perspective. The initiative is linked to the appointment of Valencia as “Silk City 2016–2020” and Focal Point UNESCO within the Silk Road Program. At the congress, issues from complex areas were discussed, and the participation of representative voices from the world scene was attended. The creation of a network of silk museums was proposed to build common projects and exchange experiences. It is in this meeting where I detected interest in the educational and heritage aesthetics of these museums.

ICOM is the entity that represents museums worldwide. ICOM has 30 international committees that bring together professionals from the same field to promote the exchange of scientific knowledge and professional experience. Depending on their interests, each silk museum could be on the respective committee: COSTUME (apparel), ICDAD (decorative arts and design), ICME (ethnography), CECA (education and cultural action), ICFA (fine arts), CIDOC (documentation) or DEMHIST (historical residences). The truth is that silk themes allow endless combinations, attending to this distribution by subject areas that exist in ICOM. Establishing synergies from educational and heritage perspectives

confers a unique aesthetic to the silk museum complex [1]. In addition to the interest in preserving the delicate historical materials of silk, museums incorporate new elements of sustainability, taking into account the new laws that prioritize ecological efficiency. As Elena Lecchi explains: “Besides environmental monitoring and technical control of indoor conditions, the museums assume an educational role for citizens and visitors related to environmental sustainability and energy efficiency” [2]. This is a reality that affects all the museums on the Silk Road.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The study we present is based on a methodology that consists of a historical comparison of some of the museums analyzed. The impact of globalization on our societies impacts knowledge and education. Museums are trying to adapt to these new realities. The different types of museums of silk generate new strategies that represent an advance in education and sustainability issues in the territory. Silk routes as cultural itineraries favor new educational strategies for museums and exhibitions with a direct benefit for educators specialized in pedagogical intervention on heritage [3]. We can launch awareness campaigns toward the cultural phenomenon of silk from different perspectives. These campaigns connect silk museums with educational centers and also have a media impact. We have the responsibility to address the educational by attending to gender and identity issues and preparing new heritage readings [4]. The new strategies contribute to reinforcing the idea of exchange between cultures, diversity, inclusion and plurality, thus rediscovering the mythologies of taste [5]. If, in addition to studying the documents kept in the archives of these museums, we are interested in the artistic and educational value of writing, we show another great argument of the potential that characterizes this type of document: its visual aspect [6]. Each archive offers us a unique opportunity to carry out research that connects the historical and educational with the visual culture and philological studies of art and design [7]. The possibilities offered by these documents allow one to generate collaborative projects together with the research teams of entities that go from Spain and France to China and Japan, where writing is an art [8].

Three museums analyzed stand out for their educational content: the Diddattico della Seta di Como, the Macclesfield in the United Kingdom and the Bsous in Lebanon. The Diddattico di Como disseminates textile culture and sensitizes youth to a reality of great importance in their past that links culture, history, art, technology and economy. In addition, the museum is projected on the city and its territory through guided itineraries that reconstruct the historical scenario of manufacturing development and local crafts [9]. Within the framework of a service society like ours, museums are transformed into realities with a clear social and educational dimension [10]. In the countries of southern Europe, heritage and culture are becoming the axes of the economy. We must create new ways to share the culture. The current situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has increased these issues, since museums have been directly affected by the drop in attendance and the need to adapt their offer, both exhibition and educational. Good practices must be nourished by respect for tradition, collective memory and the desire to innovate to improve our existence. This is possible if the voices of experience and young voices are combined, through illusion and experimentation. In this constant, intergenerational and intersectional exchange, the essential value of handicrafts should always be taken into account, in a broad sense, as Richard Sennett defends, when he defines the artisan as the person who wishes to do things well [11].

A silk museum can be an educating museum for all audiences, sensitive to the needs of each sector, involved with its surroundings. It is good to hear the voices of those who visit it, and therefore it is worth fighting for a participatory museum, inclusive, open to ideas, realistic and possible, that knows its possibilities, that enjoys and celebrates its characteristics and peculiarities, promoting training esthetic. The manufacture of silk fabrics is a complex technology and always attentive to knowledge. With a tradition of more than five centuries developing and trading with rich fabrics of perfectionist creation,

we are in a position to progress adequately in the face of the emergence of technologies. We have to position ourselves with an open and sensible attitude toward this new technological reality. In the same way that we keep the silk fabric tradition alive, we can spin a direct connection with the most advanced digital technologies [12].

Economic barriers cannot become cultural barriers; therefore, we have an obligation to maximize the attractions of museums and heritage, such as attractive and identity environments. Cultural heritage is for all citizens. We can turn silk museums into friendly and generous spaces for society, also in environments for aesthetic delight [13]. The emphasis should be placed not only on conservation, but also on research, education and communication, generating resources and synergies. The benefit must be for those who visit and for society in general; therefore, it is urgent to establish convincing criteria for economic, political, social, educational and aesthetic action [14]. In this sense, Elena Lecchi offers us important ideas about energy efficiency and human comfort in building museums, because it is necessary to amplify the research: “there are not books or tools specifically devoted to the energy and environmental retrofit of museums, which consider the conservation effects, the impact on comfort analyses, and the energy demand related to the use of artificial lighting and air-conditioning systems”. [15]

The role that a museum has to generate in its environment and in relation to the rest of the institutions must start from a serene and adequate reflection, from a political position. The way to improve our context is to develop a coherent speech, attending to memory but looking forward to the future with great desire to improve. Discussion is necessary, such as reflection. When I talk about heritage, the responsibility of making appropriate decisions is of enormous importance [16]. I must try to make each silk museum an original reference for the economic and educational development of its territory.

The migrations of artisans and merchants and the transfer of knowledge and technologies are essential phenomena to understand the crossing of ideas and promote the integration of cultures. Our museums have enormous diversity, the result of a complex and peculiar tradition.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Reconsidering Concepts such as Luxury or Colonialism through Silk Museums

I tend to establish bonds of union based on elements that characterize us. However, identity is also shielded in what confronts the adversary, the “other”. When the elements that unite us are of historical character, we add a heritage component that ends up influencing the opinion about ourselves and about the group to which we feel united. Rethinking the factors that govern beliefs, such as religion, color, culture, territory or social class to which we belong, Anthony Appiah states that we can stay together without having a common religion or the illusion of a common past [17]. Given that the trade routes that cross the territories between Asia and Europe come from an ancestral practice, linked to the roads that the territory itself traces, we must assume that the distances and inequalities between different countries and cultures also contain fusion ingredients that originate deep pairing. From this idea of mixing and amalgam, which would be what really identifies the different cultures that hybridize between Asia and Europe, we maintain a position of integration. This positioning allows one to overcome the concepts of colonialism, never ceasing to review and denounce the abuses of the metropolis over the dominated territories. In any case, the truth is that silk, as a clothing material, has always been related to the concept of luxury; therefore, museums that deal with issues related to silk must address this issue. The splendid architectures and decorative furniture fit in silk museums with the concept of luxury that defines the textile material itself.

One way to start shared experiences between different countries is to analyze the common elements shared by distant regions, something that can be verified in historical research [18], in the works on economic history, in stylistic analyses [19], in contemporary artistic creation [20] and of course in educational inquiries of an aesthetic nature [21]. The exhibition “Silk Museums” was inaugurated on 31 October 2018 as an activity linked to the

conference. This is a sample that has numerous panels in which a tour of silk museums from different countries is presented. From the Canary Islands to Japan, we detected the vitality of the Silk Road concept, an expression coined by the German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen in 1877. The importance of silk heritage is reflected in the museums created in all places along the East and West. The exhibition offers an overview of the museums specialized in silk, highlighting their typologies, explaining the architectural spaces, interpreting the machinery and tools for silk making, praising the recovery of heritage through fabrics and clothing, applauding the effort to transmit the traditions from education or analyzing the value of historical, artistic, political and economic ecosystems. The development of commercial and cultural exchanges is still alive with the Silk Road promoted by UNESCO. Museums, as cultural and educational institutions, reinforce the spirit of dialogue, collaboration and cultural transmission [22].

To organize an adequate structure of the complex, we present a scheme linked to the different types of museums, which means favoring environments for specific models of audiences, taking into account the geographies and interests of each institution, always taking into account their peculiarities. In that sense, we present an organization chart based on typologies, areas of action or structural preferences of each museum:

- a. Museums that reinforce its past, claiming history and architectural elements.
- b. Museums that meet the strategic needs of the territory, both socially and environmentally, as well as tourism and economic.
- c. Museums presenting samples of traditional technologies of silk production.
- d. Museums or stations more linked to the study of silkworm breeding, the treatment of cocoons and mulberry plantations, scientific laboratories of nature.
- e. Museums where the role of clothing predominates.
- f. Museums that enhance educational activity and pedagogical actions.
- g. Spectacular museums that represent powerful institutions.

From one island in the west to another island in the east, we establish a museum route between Europe and Asia that crosses the traditional territories of the Silk Road. The geographical route through these museums offers us a wide-enough panorama to be able to attend the different characteristics and peculiarities. The culture of dialogue has been reinforced, thus encouraging different audiences to have new offers offered by the cultural tourism of silk.

### 3.2. *El Paso Silk Museum (La Palma, Canary Island)*

The Silk Museum of El Paso, located on the island of La Palma (Canary Islands), is conceived as a permanent exhibition dedicated to the dissemination of the artisan silk work. Inaugurated in 2011, it contributes to the valorization of artisan works, rigorously showing, in an entertaining and informative way, the historical continuity of this artisan industry. The main objective of the exhibition is to show the production techniques, the typology and variety of products, their procedures and modes of work, as well as their uses and future perspectives. It is designed to convey to the public that the technical and aesthetic value of the clothing made is the result of the continuity in the historical transmission of this knowledge (Figure 1), as well as the high qualification and artisans skills.

Juan de la Cruz, responsible for the El Paso Silk Museum project, tells us that in the 1920s the Sericulture Station was created in La Palma but that during the last decades, he has struggled to better claim the serene tradition of the island. The creation of the museum has been achieved defending the work of artisans, who continue to maintain their thorough work of silk thread and fabric. It is these women who explain to visitors and tourists the value of their works [23]. The main objective of the museum is to show the production techniques, the typology and variety of products, as well as their uses and future perspectives [24].



**Figure 1.** El Paso Silk Museum (La Palma, Canary Islands).

### 3.3. “Estación Sericícola” (Murcia, Spain)

Silk production was one of the bases of the economy of the Murcia region since the 16th century. Around 1850, the “pebrine” epidemic caused the ruin of the activity. It was able to recover by founding the Estación Sericícola de Murcia (ESM) in 1892, whose mission was to develop, import and transmit silk technology to increase productivity. In 1976, it became the IMIDA agricultural research centre. The activity of the ESM over 80 years generated a rich heritage of machinery, instruments and documentation. In 2006, IMIDA began a line of research consisting of the development of silk as a biomaterial in the field of regenerative medicine, specializing in the biotechnology of silk and its new uses in biomedicine. At the Estación Sericícola de Murcia (Figure 2), silkworm breeding workshops are carried out, and silk is processed for the manufacture of biomaterials.



**Figure 2.** “Estación Sericícola” building (Murcia, Spain).

José Luis Cenís, a researcher at IMIDA, explains that among the scientific contributions of the Estación Sericícola de Murcia: “the work with silkworm larvae stands out, from

which a material is obtained whose properties allow blood glucose levels to be reduced, thus improving the perspectives of those suffering from diabetes or other associated metabolic symptoms". The possibility of using silk proteins as an active component in the manufacture of cosmetics is also being investigated. The biocompatibility of silk also allows us to think about the manufacture of new tissues that are more respectful of human skin and also much more durable. The advances in biology and medical treatments that silk can provide and everything related to the world of silk are currently the subject of scientific research, and this can substantially modify the idea that we have about the possibilities of silk, beyond the luxury and ostentation of the power they may suppose. These advances also allow us to review the educational possibilities of the silk museums themselves.

### 3.4. Maison Rouge/Musée des Vallées Cévenoles (Saint Jean du Gard, France)

The Musée du Tissage et de la Soierie de Bussières (France) combines spinning and contemporary mill. It was created in 1977 to safeguard and transmit textile heritage. The old Braud factory was renovated in 1988 to present a unique collection, with machinery in operation. A dozen looms show visitors the evolution of Lyon's silk from 1800 to the present. The museum values local companies, with temporary exhibitions and events throughout the year. Visitors discover the story about the fabrics told by ancient weavers. The visit reveals the secrets of Jacquard's mechanics.

Also in France, the unique heritage context of Maison Rouge is an ideal scenario to evoke silk as the main theme of identity. The museum allows to structure the territory and offers keys to understand the region. The rhythmic museology successively proposes libraries and cabinets of curiosities, beautiful richly composed showcases, with decorations and objects arranged in the furniture (Figure 3). The Tea Room, a small stone-clad brick building, was designed in 1850 to receive guests in an exotic environment reminiscent of the Far East and the origins of silk, thus establishing a creative specular game of looks [25]. Maison Rouge is listed in the Inventory of Historic Monuments in France.

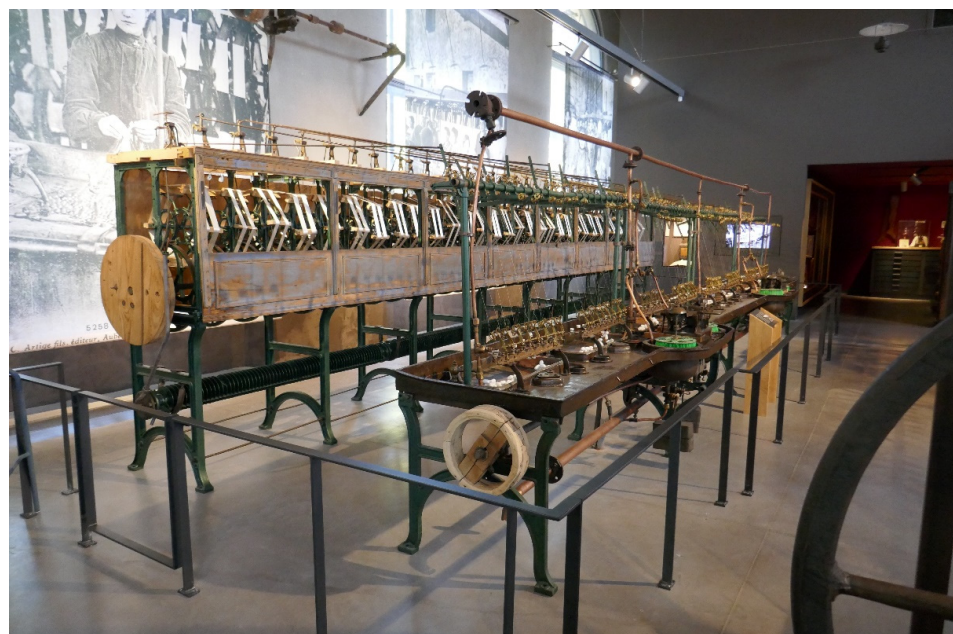


Figure 3. Maison Rouge, Musée des Vallées Cévenoles (Saint Jean du Gard, France).

For Sophie Desrosiers, specialist in the history of the fabrics of l'École d'Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales de Paris, there is a recent factor that provides an interesting clue to understand the resurgence of silk museums in certain regions: the movement to renew the silk production in Cévennes. This movement to revive sericulture was promoted in the late 1940s by the Alès station and especially by its director André Schenk. In the 1980s,

the Association for the Development of Sericulture in Cévennes (ADSC) resorted to the “Chemins de la Soie” project that advocated contemporary strategies from an integral vision of the past. This project coincides with that of the European silk route initiated by the Council of Europe from 1988.

Another French example is the Musée de la Soie de Saint Hippolyte du Fort, created in 1984 to preserve, improve and transmit the Cevennes sericultural heritage. It presents all the stages of silk thread transformation, from the silkworm to the fabric. The visitor discovers every step of the “Bombyx Mori”, from the caterpillar to the cocoon. Seed boxes, incubators, baskets for harvesting mulberry leaves, worm selection and hygrometry tools and all material for the breeding of worms are shown. Pasteur’s work on pebrine, the silkworm disease, is also shown.

To finish our French tour, we visit the Taulignan Silk Museum, created in 1985 by a descendant of a family of silk millers, who decides to place it in an old spinning mill and silk mills. As a city of medieval origin in the 19th century, Taulignan was prosperous thanks to the silk industry. In 1862, with 20 factories, it became the first miller municipality in the Drôme area. The museum traces the evolution of silk work with old machines by presenting the different stages: the breeding of silkworms, the extraction of thread, the twisting of the thread and finally the weaving process.

### 3.5. Macclesfield Silk Museum (United Kingdom)

The Macclesfield Silk Museum (United Kingdom) is located in the building of the School of Art built in 1879. Its original objective was to train designers to manufacture silk. Its initial visitors include the artist, designer, poet, novelist and social activist William Morris, who arrived in Macclesfield to learn more about the natural dyes of local silk maker Thomas Wardle, who struggled to renew the silk industry in India. The museum’s collection includes archival material and a wide variety of textiles inspired by India. The museum reveals the properties of silk, how it is woven, printed and colored (Figure 4). Highlights include the 18th century silk buttons that were the beginning of Macclesfield’s silk history, the silk maps, the parachutes that helped win World War II and the loom used to make the famous silk photographs of Brocklehurst Whiston. This is a clear example that calls into question the alleged contradiction between historical memory and digital technology, managing aesthetic elements from the industrial side.



Figure 4. Macclesfield Silk Museum (UK). Machine room spinning and weaving silk.

In Sweden, the K. A. Almgren Sidenväveri and Museum of Stockholm is dedicated to Knut August Almgren, who was 16 years old when he entered in 1822 to work for Mazer & Co., at that time the largest silk maker in Stockholm. He contracted tuberculosis, but after regaining health in Montpellier, he spent time in Lyon as an apprentice. Almgren acquired the necessary skills and managed to bring some Jacquard mechanics to Sweden. Klas Nyberg, director of the museum, tells us that silk weaving was an exception to guild law in Sweden, which only gave men the opportunity to have an occupation. In the year 1846, in the Swedish silk factories the majority of female employees were women. The factory produced fashion silks, clergy coats, bow ties and umbrellas, as well as ribbons and scarves. During World War II, they were forced to use Swedish artificial silk, since it was not possible to import natural silk. For Klas Nyberg, the educational role of this museum is linked to the heritage work it plays in this country so far away from the traditional silk routes [26].

### 3.6. “Museo Diddattico Della Seta” (Como, Italy)

The Museo Didattico della Seta di Como was founded in 1985 on the initiative of individuals who worked to recover the achievements of silk textile factories in Italy. The museum is a place of historical memory of the silk industry (Figure 5). Industrial silk production artifacts from the period between 1850 and 1950 have been acquired and restored. Its director Paolo Aquilini tells us about the importance of the legacy, which has an archive, a research center, a library and deposits in which it preserves an important essential heritage to deepen from the permanent exhibition. According to Aquilini, “everything is memory in the museum, since the silk filament represents the history of the city of Como”, although in 1911, he already intended to create the museum, it was not inaugurated until 1990. He also points out that “a strategic aspect is the ability to dialogue with the city and with the public that visits it”.



**Figure 5.** Museo Diddattico della Seta di Como (Italy).

### 3.7. Setificio Piemontese Museum or Filatoio di Caraglio (Italy)

The Italian Museo del Setificio Piemontese o Filatoio di Caraglio is the oldest silk factory in Europe. Built between 1676 and 1678 by Giovanni Gerolamo Galleani, it is a true silk factory that operated until the 1930s, where traditional spinning and industrial spinning mills were integrated.

Filatoio di Caraglio represents the first example of industrialization of a production process, long before the Industrial Revolution (Figure 6). In the 1990s, the Council of Europe



defined the Filatoio as the most important historical–cultural monument of industrial archeology in Piedmont. The Twist Room houses the reconstruction of the imposing hydraulic silk torsion machines, technology used in the torsion phase of the famous Piedmontese “organzino” (Figure 7). According to Laura Vietto, responsible for the Fondazione Filatoio Rosso, since 2015, the areas of attention and intervention of the museum have been focused on the promotion of cultural and educational activity, with exhibitions of contemporary art and with themed visits for specific audiences.



Figure 6. Silk Museum Filatoio di Caraglio (Italy).

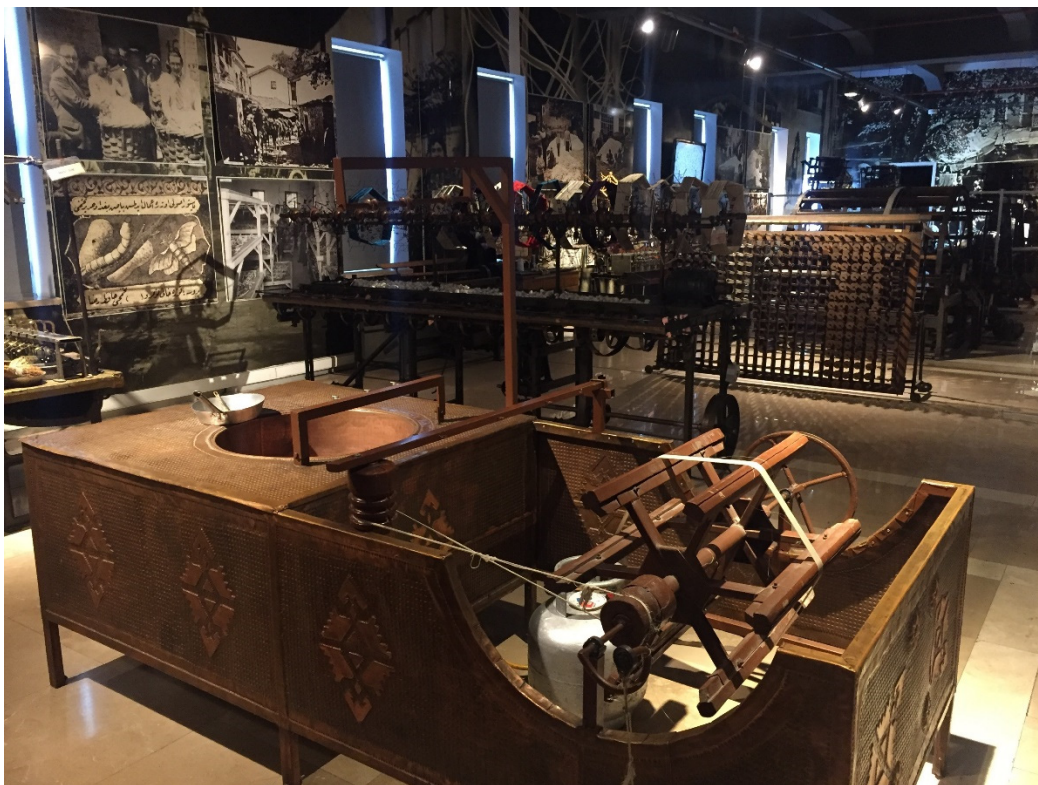


Figure 7. Silk hydraulic torsion machines. Silk Museum Filatoio di Caraglio (Italy).

Another important Italian silk museum is the *Civico Museo della Seta Abegg*, located in an 18th century Italian country house with a mulberry garden on the shores of Garlate Lake. The museum exhibits discoveries, inventions and machines that have served in history to process silk. The tour concludes with a section dedicated to the future, where new research and applications of silk are presented in the biomedical field, in cosmetics and in the production of new threads. In addition to conserving heritage, the museum offers conferences, seminars, meetings, exhibitions, concerts and shows for the community.

### 3.8. *Bsous Silk Museum (Turkey)*

Bursa is an important silk city of Turkey. In the 15th century, there were 1000 silk looms in Bursa. Silk production continued until the middle of the 20th century. The Municipality of Bursa has created work by promoting the design and production of fabrics in schools of restored villages and urban mansions in several districts. The Merinos Textile and Silk Museum opened to the public in 2013. Each year, more than 22,000 students and teachers go through the museum where the history of silk is explained, with the intention of creating awareness in a sociocultural sense. Education, practical workshop and production activities are coordinated from the center (Figure 8), where visitors have large areas of carpet and fabric exhibition.



**Figure 8.** Merino Silk Museum (Bursa, Turkey).

Next Turkey, the *Bsous Silk Museum* is an important reference of the ecological, cultural and economic history of Lebanon and was founded by George and Alexandra Asseily in an old abandoned silk factory. The ecomuseum is a space of culture in which the population, the territory and a period of time are always present. These elements relate the history of this land from its origins to the present. The ecomuseum is the collective memory of an entire region. Its objective is to encourage the population to look at their past, present and future in a new and different way. At the beginning of the 20th century, there were hundreds of silk looms in the country, something that is already history. A gender detail: silkworm breeding in Lebanon has always been a responsibility of women.

### 3.9. State Silk Museum (Tbilisi, Georgia)

The State Silk Museum of Tbilisi (Georgia) is one of the oldest silk museums in the world and the only one in the Caucasus region. The museum is part of the Sericulture Caucasian Station, as an educational and scientific research center, dedicated to the study of silk manufacturing throughout the Caucasus. The building was specially built for a museum and is included in the list of Georgian cultural heritage monuments (Figure 9). It retains all kinds of elements related to sericulture, as well as objects and books from fifty different countries. Artistic and scientific research in this field is essential, as well as the conservation and dissemination of materials in the museum's collections, which is one of its priorities today. Nino Kuprava, its director, explains that the museum is open to new initiatives, contemporary art projects, artist residences, workshops and educational activities. Kuprava is aware of the importance of the museum heritage legacy, located in the intermediate zone of the Silk Road; therefore, it has always been a knot of commercial and cultural links of the first magnitude.



**Figure 9.** Library of the National Silk Museum in Tbilisi (Georgia).

### 3.10. China National Silk Museum (Hangzhou, China)

The National Silk Museum of China, near the West Lake in Hangzhou, is one of the first state museums in this immense country. It has a total area of 42,000 square meters, of which half correspond to the built area, and the rest are gardens and lakes (Figure 10). Inaugurated in 1992, it has made remarkable progress thanks to the joint effort of all the staff, obtaining important collections, assembling national and international thematic exhibitions, protecting the textile heritage and, through of all this, joining sericulture and silk production (Figure 11). Important educational programs in silk sciences are being carried out and the silk culture is being promoted, focusing attention on school audiences and young people.



**Figure 10.** Front gate of the China National Silk Museum of Hangzhou.



**Figure 11.** Fashion Gallery in the China National Silk Museum.

The Korean Silk Museum (Cheongwon-gun, South Korea) offers an interesting look at Korean sericulture, with special emphasis on the educational and childcare. During the Korean invasions of Hideyoshi, the Battle of Chongju took place in Cheongju, in which Korean forces took the city back to the Japanese army. The opening of the Chungbuk line in 1926 caused the boom and regional development. Evidence of international exchange with the numerous foreign cultures that reached Korea through the oasis routes of the desert area of Central Asia, the steppes of the southern Siberi, and the silk sea routes are found. Due to the strategic nature of the territory in which it is installed, this museum constitutes an important axis of historical revision, which gives it a fundamental role in matters related to national identity.

In 1909, Japan became the world's largest exporter of raw silk. The silkworm industry in Japan had a decisive influence on the country's economy and contributed greatly to modernization. To commemorate the centenary of the inauguration of the Port of Yokohama, in March 1959, the city and the companies and industries involved opened the Silk Center International Trade and Sightseeing Building in the space of the British firm Jardine Matheson & Co. The Yokohama Silk Museum explains the history of the different silk industries of Japan, facilitating a better understanding of the subject through science and technology. The museum preserves valuable materials and makes them available to the public, encouraging the demand for silk and contributing to the promotion of international tourism.

### 3.11. Valencia Silk Museum (Spain)

We focused on the most recent creation of a museum. The tradition of the silk fabrication and commerce in Valencia was born more than five hundred years ago. This accumulated heritage was created in the splendid moment of medieval Valencia, in the origins of the Valencian preponderance in the Mediterranean, in a plural scenario where diverse cultures and religions were shared. In medieval Valencia, the corporate spirit that made the birth of the Silk College, later ratified by royal ordinances such as Silk College of Art, emerged strongly. The patrimonial burden characterizes this important institution which is history, present, and future. One has to make the tradition visible, while taking into account the need to innovate. Innovation is the result of respect and memory.

The historical building has undergone a recent transformation brought about by the efforts of its leaders, with the support of the Hortensia Herrero Foundation. This architectural intervention and recovery of the impressive amount of decorative and artistic elements (especially ceramic flooring and wall paintings) has placed it as a nerve center of urban recovery. It is a historical and cultural reference of great importance for the city. The decisions taken here have important repercussions on the local scene, but also on a global level, since Valencia was the world capital of the silk trade in the fifteenth century.

We value the possibility of considering it as an authentic house-museum. The Guild space is an environment inhabited by its owners for more than five centuries. The meetings of the representatives of the families of Valencian silk manufacturers have inhabited this house for centuries, and it continues to be their home. Within this architectural space, the memory of the different material and immaterial testimonies present in their vestiges, also in their current use, is still alive. Vicente Enguïdanos, a "velluter" (silk worker) that still maintains the ancestral tradition of silk manufacturing, is proof of what we are defending. The concept of house-museum is reinforced as it is a guild house converted into a museum, which maintains the spirit of ancestral generations belonging to the community of Valencian silk manufacturers and merchants.

An act of 1477 is the oldest document that includes the foundation of the brotherhood of San Jerónimo. The municipal authorities ratified its foundation in 1479 [27]. The Silk College of Art, heir to the medieval guild of the "velluters", owns the building that is now a museum. Due to its status as a private entity, public institutions never opted to invest in this project. Since its opening in 2016, Valencia has been a place to learn about the history of silk making, an occupation that marked the future of the city until it became an indispensable part of its culture [28].

The Silk Museum of Valencia has four different spaces.

- The permanent exhibition, where there is a tour through the history of silk.
- The archive, with documentary funds of the College, which make up the most extensive and oldest guild documentary record in Europe.
- The noble floor of the guild house, which preserves a large set of Valencian Baroque tiles, a Gothic spiral staircase and paintings by José Vergara.
- The workshops, which have old textile machinery where the process of the artisanal weaving of the Valencian spur is shown.

It has an attractive store space, as well as a restaurant that has a terrace in the place where the garden was located. Its rooms host temporary exhibitions with silk as a common

thread, with very pending themes of the territorial and historical reality of the closest heritage (Figure 12). The headquarters of the museum are a prominent building, located in the historical area of the city center. Very close to the museum, we find the lavish building of *La Lonja*, an emblem of the Mediterranean civil Gothic, as well as the framework of what was a huge neighborhood of manufacturers of silk fabrics.



**Figure 12.** “La Pometa” room in the Valencia Silk Museum (Spain).

The protagonists of the history of silk in Valencia were workers and merchants, women and men, children and the elderly, slaves, servants, teachers and apprentices, officers and families who dedicated their lives to a variety of artisanal activities between agriculture and market. A part of that community was organized in corporations and brotherhoods of trades since the end of the 15th century. Thanks to historical research, these anonymous people have a voice today, and their material and immaterial legacy is valued in this museum. Museum is an educational space of excellence that identifies the objects and elements that characterize society in the same place where they worked centuries ago. The fact of it being called “college” appeals to its condition as a place to teach, since the silk trade was learned here and it is where the titles were delivered to be able to practice as a silk teacher.

The Archive of the Silk Art College is one of the most important trade union funds in Europe. It consists of 48 scrolls, 660 books and 97 boxes of documents whose antiquity date back to the 15th century. It keeps records of income and expenses of the corporation and its brotherhood on a continuous basis from 1479 to the 19th century with lists of registered teachers, officers and apprentices, meeting minutes, names of the *clavarios* and *mayorales* of each period, entry of foreign workers, parties, charities, graves, census, works and inventories, in addition to the privilege of King Ferdinand II of Aragon of the year 1479 [29]. Since it opened in 2016, the museum has promoted and developed activities such as exhibitions, conferences, seminars, congresses, institutional receptions, book publishing, audiovisual production and specialized merchandising [30].

The Historical Archive of the Silk Museum is a heritage jewel. There are numerous silk museums in different cities and countries of the world, but none of them have the particularity that characterizes that of Valencia, its Historical Archive. One of the most important works that the preservation of the manuscripts has required is the construction

of an airtight vault, in which all these documents maintain an adequate temperature and humidity for their better conservation [31]. Scientific research, especially from the humanities, is being carried out to better understand the history of this institution and is based on the importance that silk had as an industry and international trade in both the 15th [32] and 18th centuries [33,34].

We propose for the Silk Museum a museological context based on three geographical areas (local, regional and global), thus promoting a way to address various actions that should take into account the particular characteristics of the public, the ages of those who visit the museum, the visits of public school, the massive presence of tourists, and the pull of the Fallas creative and popular expression. As it is a first-class tourist event, recognized as Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO, the Fallas festival offers a splendid showcase in which the fabric of special dresses, an element that fits with Valencian silk tradition. The Silk Museum of Valencia becomes a cultural, commercial, economic, educational and tourist center (Figure 13).



**Figure 13.** Vicente Enguïdanos, the last “velluter” in the Valencia Silk Museum (Spain).

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusions

In this research, we have tried to know the characteristics of a significant part of the silk museums that we can find on the Silk Road. By focusing on the educational part, while also involving the design of their architectures, we have discovered that, despite the lack of previous contacts, most of the museums analyzed have followed similar criteria. The effort that is being made in educational matters supposes an approach to the society closest to each museum. In addition to the interest in the tourist offer, we verify that the silk museums maintain a live encounter with the public of their cities and countries. This condition of closeness allows them to reinforce their presence in the place where they are.

Contacts between peoples and civilizations generate a common heritage in continuous movement. That is where the concept of movement, of route and of cultural interaction becomes fundamental for addressing the issue of migrant heritage. We cannot be seduced by museum approaches dominated by the obsession of tourist attraction or entertainment, which in the short term may work; however, in the medium and long term, they destroy any possibility of progress, or they deteriorate the very sense of the heritage concept. While paying attention to the tourist reality and entertainment, what we verify in the silk

museums is the intention of assuming a commitment to prioritize their interests toward diverse realities, understanding their role from the social and educational dimension.

Silk museums combine history and memory to prepare us for the future. It is in this necessary duplicity that the proposals that are defined by the educational and heritage facets fit together. Faced with this reality, the silk museums are a good example of a combination of past and future, creating aesthetics that unite the educational and the heritage, properly using the knowledge acquired in the past to deal more consistently with current problems and the challenges of the future.

In reviewing and analyzing the aspects of each museum, we detected a great interest in reinforcing the educational functions and in rediscovering the identity potential of its collections. This happens both in European and Asian institutions, which allows us to develop a criterion based on the parallels that unite them. Here, we have tried to establish a cultural cartography, a map of sensitivities and technologies, which is complemented by the notion of social cartography. We have approached silk museums as articulators of past and future and as entities that are memory and also experimentation and social creativity. These are museums that emerge from educational practices and that explore the identities of each place, exploring the voices and residues of enriched memories.

We have established an approach between each museum and its city, elements that converge in a constant dialogue of convergences and meetings, places that create their own narratives, without being alien to history and current reality. In that sense, it is interesting to discover that education and heritage are the characteristics that determine the priority functions of the Silk Road museums. Beyond the commercial tradition or the current tourist approach, the truth is that heritage and education are the keys to the framework that determines the new approaches. These are signals that can activate imaginary about memory spaces. To build a society that is more respectful of its heritage, it is necessary to develop educational dynamics with which to increase the approach of the public to their respective realities. This is an obvious question of sustainability, and museums have an important mission in this regard. After several decades have passed since UNESCO created the Silk Road as an element of cultural, tourist and economic connections, we can see that museums have been able to play an important role in this evolution of heritage education. From the Canary Islands to Japan, a route full of museums awaits us in order to discover this ancient tradition.

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