Museum International

A guided tour of our past

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Part I – Museology and endogenous development

Group of folk dancers in Sierra Leone, Africa
Photographer: M. Fernandez; copyright UNESCO

The concept of endogenous development came into being during the past few decades. It was initially confined to the economic and social fields, but spread gradually to take in all the activities which promote human development, with increasing account being taken of local conditions and cultural aspirations.

To understand the relationship between museology and the process of endogenous development, we have to go back in time to the 1950s. We can then appreciate the extent to which the concept of the universality of art, by advancing the principle that art transcended the differencies between countries, cleared the way for better understanding of the essential qualities of cultures. The museum became the place for witnessing difference and acquiring the knowledge required for accepting such difference.

The evolution of anthropology, the political context of decolonization and the related emancipation strategies all exercised great influence on the museum in the task of putting an intellectual concept into the practice of connecting the local to the universal sphere.

The 1970s witnessed the creation of ethnographic and eco-museums. They stemmed from the folk arts and traditions movement which was aimed at ensuring the recognition of regional cultures within countries. At the same time, Latin America created the concept of the integrated museum which, by helping to link cultural rehabilitation to political emancipation confirmed the role played by museums in nation-building during the second half of the twentieth century.

Little by little, the museums came to have direct relations with the communities from which the collections they housed originated. The dialogue created between the cultural communities and museum management would, in turn, change the significance, content and recipients of the different types of knowledge put in place by the museum.

The museum was now resolutely turned towards its public, and paid close attention to social and cultural change. It was able to promote integration through its recognition of minority cultural values, and reconciliation in the post-colonial context.

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An art museum in a remote island: the Honolulu Academy of Arts and Bishop Museum

(from Vol. IV, No. 2, 1951, pp. 132–5)

R. Griffing

R. Griffing was born in Riverhead, Long Island, New York, 1914. Educated Yale University (B.A. 1935), Yale University Graduate School, and Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton (M.F.A. 1940). Instructor in Art History at Princeton University and John Hopkins University before the war. Director of Education, Honolulu Academy of Arts, 1946–47. Director of Honolulu Academy of Arts, 1947.

For a number of reasons Honolulu is unique among American cities. Its natural environment is luxuriantly tropical and blessed by an equable climate difficult to rival. Its social traditions inherit something of the informal dignity and instinctive friendliness of its Polynesian past. Its population is a cosmopolitan mixture of races, a very large ingredient of which is Oriental. And, situated on the small island of Oahu in the Hawaiian chain, the city is some two and a half thousand miles distant form its nearest continental neighbour.

All of these factors exercise a powerful and direct influence on the character of Hawaiian institutions in general and on the Territory's only art museum, the Honolulu Academy of Arts, in particular. In the first place, the climate offers practically perfect conditions for the preservation of works of art, with uniform humidity and no temperature change of an appreciable degree. The climate too has made it possible to house the museum in a building the separate rooms of which may be open on one side to garden areas in the manner of the Hawaiian *lanai*, thereby creating an informal and relaxed atmosphere for the enjoyment and study of the arts in contrast to the more rigid monumentality characteristic of the usual museum building. By this same device too, what is essentially an intimate structure achieves a feeling of spaciousness, and nature and landscape architecture may be brought into close relationship to works of art.

The effect of a mixed population containing a large Hawaiian, Filipino and Oriental element is important and is expressed in a number of ways, for example by the fact that the collections give equal emphasis to representation of the arts of the Orient and of the Western World. In fact, the building itself was designed in 1927 in the form of two main exhibition wings flanking a central courtyard in order to give equal physical space to the culture of East and West thus reflecting the character and interests of the community itself.

This is not to say that the process of cultural amalgamation is complete, or that a distinct new culture has been achieved in Hawaii. In its simplest terms, the effect of the blend of West and East has been to increase individual awareness of the significant virtues proper to a variety of cultures, and to produce a citizenry which, at the very least, is likely to show a genuine interest in and respect for the ways of others rather than being repelled by them because they appear 'foreign'. More concretely, there is evidence too that the interplay of Oriental, Polynesian and Western traditions has begun to express itself in the form of some degree of composite cultural achievement, perhaps most clearly seen in the development of an architecture, mainly of a domestic character, in which formal elements of East and West have been fused to form a new style which has a definite symbolic character and significance of its own.

Theoretically, such a blending might occur anywhere, but in a larger area like the continental mainland of the United States of America, the Oriental and Polynesian contributions would probably be engulfed by an overwhelmingly prevailing Western point of view. Since Hawaiians of all origins regard themselves as Americans, the dominant force in the local culture, is certainly Western, but because of the large number of Orientals and Pacific Islanders living here and because of our remoteness, the influence of their traditions continues as a strong and constant ingredient of the Hawaiian consciousness.

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These facts impose at once a direction and a challenge upon the Academy. In the first place, there is and always will be as widespread an interest in the arts of the Orient as in those of the Western world thus determining acquisition policy. In the second place, the museum has always been aware that the most important aspect of its relationship of the community is that of a well-source to which the local population may turn for constant reaffirmation of its extremely rich cultural heritage, and this has a direct bearing on the ways in which the collection is exhibited and interpreted. It is this function, in fact, which occupies the greater part of the Academy's attention at this moment of writing.

Special emphasis on the magnificent achievement of Far Eastern culture as a matter of demonstrable record may enable us to aid many individuals among them to a renewed self-assurance and pride through the process of cultural identification. Certainly many people throughout the world have turned to the arts for this same purpose in the past; it seems to us the justification of the museum's being today.

Probably the fact about Hawaii which most impresses people who do not live in the Islands, however, is their geographical remoteness, and this fact must affect many aspects of our lives, although the Hawaiian reaction to remoteness is quite different from the interpretation of the stranger who customarily tends to think that geographical separation must inevitably produce a feeling of isolation.

Obviously the fact of separation creates certain disadvantages for the museum, as it does for any institution. It is difficult at this distance to maintain close contact with centers of research or with developments in the art market. But although these inconveniences are real they are of secondary importance to the fact that our geographical separation from any continent, coupled with the character of our local population, far from producing a sense of isolation, actually tends to identify Hawaii with an even larger world – that of the entire Pacific area – of which these Islands are in many ways the hub. Most Pacific transportation routes in either direction converge in Honolulu; hence the city has become an important centre from which Western ideas as well as goods flow eastward and vice versa. The secretariat of the Pacific Science Board, whose interests embrace the whole Pacific world, is maintained here. The Bishop Museum, with its vast and world-famous collective illustrative of the folklore and the material culture of the Polynesian, Melanesian and Micronesian peoples, has long been established in the city. To the University of Hawaii come many students from both Eastern and Western nations, and considerable numbers of our own residents have extensive family and business connexions in the Orient and all parts of the Pacific.

For many of the students and visitors who come here from the East this Territory offers the sole opportunity for any direct experience and first-hand knowledge of the West; conversely it is equally true that for the majority of the tens of thousands of Western visitors welcomed annually, very few will ever be in a position to learn more about the Orient than they can absorb in Hawaii. Finally, the Academy realizes too that for a very large proportion of our visitors as well as for the majority of our citizens, the Honolulu Academy of Arts represents the only art museum of a representative nature which they will ever know.

A large part of the Academy's work, then, consists in education applied on a broad basis, in order to make the visitor's experience as rich as possible.

The emphasis on education is a concept of long standing, and in fact the Academy was dedicated to it from the time of its founding. When the museum was first projected, the founder foresaw the potentialities inherent in a community which existed between worlds, and as a result the educational department is the museum's largest, annually teaching some forty thousand children drawn from Hawaii's schools. What might not have been so easily foreseen, however, is the extent to which Hawaiian institutions might be able to affect the lives of people thousands of miles distant from the Islands. It is impossible to measure this effect with any degree of accuracy, but there is abundant evidence that it exists.

It is obvious, then, that the Honolulu Academy of Arts falls into the category of the special case in any discussion of the problem of the art museum in a remote community, and to characterize Hawaii as 'remote' is to think in abstract geographical terms alone. Much more important is the fact that the circumstances which make Hawaii a special case transform our geographical separation into a relationship with a unique local population and a larger world-area, which not only obviates any sense of isolation but serves positively to create an intensely stimulating atmosphere of challenge and an exceptionally broad opportunity for public service as well.

The Rural Museum of the Arab States Fundamental Education Centre

(from Vol. VII, No. 4, 1954, pp. 221–4)

Dorothy G. Williams

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Except for archaeological sites, museums in the Arab countries of the Middle East characteristically are found only in the largest, and particularly the capital, cities. Richly stored as many of these museums are, with world-famous treasures of art and antiquity, they have devoted in general but scant attention to the development of collections or educational programmes concerned with rural life. Even more surprising, in view of the marked cultural unity of the Arab countries, is the almost complete absence of what we might term regional museums.

Thus the fledgling Rural Museum of the Arab States Fundamental Education Centre (ASFEC) represents a pioneer (albeit most modest) venture. The Museum was opened on 22 January 1953 on the occasion of the official inauguration of the Centre. The Museum's purposes are: (1) to collect and display objects made and used in rural life in the Arab countries of the Middle East, and (2) to develop services, methods of work and activities aimed at integration of the Museum into the Centre's total training and field work programme in fundamental education. Before discussing the Museum in further detail, it may be useful to outline briefly the structure and programme of the Arab States Fundamental Education Centre.

ASFEC was established in December 1952 by UNESCO, in collaboration with the Government of Egypt, the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies. It is UNESCO's second regional fundamental education centre. The first Centre, serving Latin America, began operation at Pátzcuaro, Mexico, in May 1951. Like Pátzcuaro, the Centre at Sirs-el-Layyan has two main purposes: to train leaders to raise living standards in the region and to produce 'pilot' printed and audio-visual materials needed for this purpose.

The Centre's first class of 48 trainees will complete its 21 months' course in August 1954; a second group of 43 was admitted in December 1953. Trainees are mature men and women selected by the Governments of six Arab States (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi-Arabia, Syria) and from the Gaza area of Palestine by UNRWA,[1] because of their keen interest in rural welfare in their countries and their previous experience in a particular field of fundamental education. The Centre's international staff comprises experts in such fields as rural sociology, agricultural extension work, co-operatives, health education, literacy teaching, home economics, handicrafts and village planning, assigned to the Centre by UNESCO, FAO, WHO, ILO and the United Nations. There trainees learn how to work in teams and, through classroom study and guided practical field work in the surrounding villages, master the techniques of conducting a combined many-sided attack on the complex problems of poverty, illiteracy and disease.

The Centre is located in the village of Sirs-el-Layyan in the Egyptian Delta (between two branches of the Nile) about 65 kilometres north of Cairo, in the centre of Menoufia Province. This province, with an area of approximately 365 square kilometres and 300,000 inhabitants, constitutes the immediate service area of the Centre and of its Museum. In a very direct sense, however, the Centre serves all the Arab countries and is part of the global network of United Nations programmes aimed at the improvement of living standards and cultural levels of rural people throughout the world.

The original idea for the Museum came from Dr. Abbas Ammar, the Centre's first Director. Through his good offices, the Egyptian Government kindly made

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available to the Centre the extensive collection of handicrafts and other objects from some of the Arab countries (the largest number came from Iraq) which had been exhibited at the second United Nations Social Welfare Seminar for Arab States held in Cairo in 1950. These objects formed the start of the Museum's present holdings, since considerably augmented by gifts, loans and modest purchases.

The Museum's permanent exhibition (sections of which are frequently changed and rearranged) is arranged geographically, objects from each of the Arab countries being grouped together. These include carpets, textiles, basketry, metal work (copper, brass and silver), pottery, costumes, jewellery, household utensils and agricultural implements. It is planned gradually to regroup the exhibition around three main themes: agriculture, rural crafts, and domestic life (including village planning and rural housing). Labelling, to be intelligible to the Museum's varied public, must be in both Arabic and English. It is kept to a minimum to avoid becoming obtrusive in a museum as small as this. Every effort has been made to keep the collection from looking cluttered and crowded, an easy matter at the start, but as the collection grows it becomes increasingly necessary to rearrange sections and withdraw items.

In addition to the permanent exhibition, various temporary exhibits are held. Few of the Museum's constant local visitors, including the Centre's trainees, have travelled outside the Arab countries. Hence small temporary collections devoted to handicrafts and other objects made and used in rural life in other countries are a regular feature. Such collections from Mexico, Indonesia, and West Africa have been displayed. A collection of fine framed reproductions of modern French painting was obtained on loan through the generous co-operation of the French Embassy's Centre Culturel in Cairo and displayed at ASFEC for two months during the spring of 1953. Several excellent films relating to the life and work of the artists exhibited were also borrowed from the Centre Culturel and shown at ASFEC. The Rural Museum is looking forward especially to receiving the exhibition of Japanese woodcuts now on tour in Member States under the auspices of UNESCO.

It is particularly gratifying that the Museum is becoming actively integrated into the Centre's programme. With the addition of a handicrafts expert to the Centre's staff this year, objects are frequently borrowed for use as examples of design or craft technique. The Library also uses objects from the Museum to give vitality and three-dimensional spice to its exhibits. One of the important problems of agriculture in the Arab countries is the continuing use of traditional but inefficient agricultural implements. An excellent practical manual on *Small Farm Implements* was issued by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 1953.[2] In close collaboration with the Centre's agricultural extension work expert assigned to the staff by FAO, one of the Museum's major current projects is the preparation of a full-scale exhibit of life-size small tools and models of larger agricultural implements applicable to the farming needs and conditions of the Arab countries, using the FAO publication as a basic guide. For comparison, implements now typically in use in the region will be shown. This exhibit, which will probably tour the villages where field work is being carried on and the government agricultural units in the surrounding area, will be of immediate practical value to the Centre's

training and field work programme; it will also considerably enrich the Museum's agricultural collection.

Apart from the Centre's staff and trainees, the Museum's visitors are for the most part school-teachers (especially of geography, history and crafts) and their classes from the elementary and secondary schools who come by chartered buses not only from the surrounding villages, but from considerable distances throughout Menoufia Province. School classes, in fact, accounted for almost half of the Museum's outside visitors (close to 30,000) since its opening.

It is still too early to attempt evaluation of the Museum. However, a few concluding comments may be made. First, the Museum was begun and continues to be operated chiefly by the Centre's Library staff. Of necessity, it is, then a sideline and not a main activity. Further, while the three professional members of the Library staff have for many years visited and used museums widely, both as members of the public and as adult educators, none of them has been trained in museum techniques. This has undoubtedly had a limiting effect on the Museum's development. Funds have been as scarce as staff time. The Museum's chief present 'installations' consist exclusively of such odds and ends as celotex boards, 11 packing cases (7 wooden, 4 cardboard), two library tables, a reed bookcase, and two display cases with glass shelves originally intended for the sale of candy. Less than three hundred dollars has been spent thus far, in all, on the Museum – including the purchase of objects.

Much remains to be done and it is hoped that both staff and funds can be increased. Nevertheless, the efforts thus far made have yielded positive results, particularly in the following ways: (1) providing a useful instrument for the Centre's programme of training and field work; (2) promoting pride and a sense of cultural identification in many of the Museum's visitors; (3) serving as a limited demonstration of what can be done to establish a rural museum with few resources, as must be the case in most fundamental education projects.

Notes

1. United Nations Works and Relief Agency.

2. H.J. Hopfen and E. Biesalski, *Small Farm Implements* (FAO Development Paper No. 32, Agriculture). Rome, June 1953, 80 p., 120 ill. 23 cm. This publication describes with explanatory text, photographs and designs, efficient small agricultural implements used in different parts of the world which can be made easily and inexpensively of readily-found materials by the farmer himself or the local carpenter or blacksmith.

Salvaging ethnology
(from Vol. XXIII, No. 3, 1970, pp. 173–9)

Richard Nunoo

Richard Nunoo was born 1922, Ghana. Achimota College (1938–45). Assistant curator (1945–48) then curator (1948–50), Anthropology Museum, Achimota College (also librarian and teacher at the college). University of London Institute of Archaeology, post-graduate course in prehistoric European archaeology, and Museums Association diploma (1950–53). Temporary Assistant, British Museum (1954). Senior officer, National Museum, University College of Ghana (1954–58). Ghana Museum and Monuments Board (1958–61). Director, Ghana Museum and Monuments (1961). Permanent councillor, International Union of Protohistoric and Prehistoric Sciences. Vice-president, general assembly of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, Rome. Vice-president, Museums Association of Tropical Africa (AMAT-MATA). Member, National Committee of the International Council of Museums. Member, Italian Institute of Prehistory and Protohistory. Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute, following excavations on Nsuta Hill, Ghana (1948). Excavations in Israel and Ghana. Publications include Report on Asebu Excavations, Ghana *(1955).*

All countries are concerned with finding effective ways and means of protecting their cultural property. It is encouraging to note that their efforts are being systematically backed up by UNESCO, through advice and aid.

The problem is particularly acute in African countries. In some cases, there was so much illegal export of objects of cultural interest that, if remedial measures were not taken, practically nothing would eventually remain. Moreover, industrialization means that the large-scale production of plastic and synthetic household and other goods is tending to replace the traditional crafts, so that traditional products and artefacts become increasingly rare.

With varying success, laws have been enacted which make it illegal to export cultural objects without a licence.[1]

Ethnographical objects can also disappear through deterioration and lack of proper care. The National Museum of Ghana has adopted methods, described below, which should be of interest to other developing countries with similar problems. The result has been to save for the national collections thousands of important objects which would otherwise have been irretrievably lost to posterity.

The basic operation is similar to a rescue dig in archaeology; for want of a better term, it is referred to here as 'salvaging ethnology'.

The first step is to establish a field-collecting network that covers the country. Because of the distribution of objects, it may not be economical to post collectors to all regions. Success depends largely on the quality of the collectors, who must be friendly, tactful, trustworthy and have a flair for collecting. Each collector should have lived long enough in the district or area to be familiar with local traditions and customs. He is expected to write full particulars on every object collected and, where possible, to add sketches. He must be fluent in the local language or dialect.

In Ghana, it has been found best to invite applicants through the Traditional Councils, which usually nominate three or more candidates who are interviewed by a panel consisting of the District Administrative Officer, one of the members of the council, and a museum officer. Otherwise, the people selected through normal advertisement and interview may be perfectly competent but not familiar with the district in which a vacancy occurs.

Successful candidates do an initial training course at the museum before being posted. They learn what to collect, and how. They are taught how to write up information, how to store objects properly as an interim measure, how to run a small office, and what to do about surface finds. The course is usually given by a trained ethnologist or archaeologist who also has a particular interest in technology. On being posted, collectors are formally introduced to the local people either by the Secretary to the Traditional Council or by the chief's spokesman. The new collector is also taken to see any important persons who, for one reason or another, were not present at the meeting just mentioned. He is also introduced to the local police, who help in tracking down illegal collectors.

The collector has an official identity card, signed by the Director of the National Museum.

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Exhibitions are then mounted in community centres, class-rooms, the houses of chiefs, or other suitable buildings, by museum assistants, in order to show the local community the kind of objects they might contribute to the national collections. This helps to involve schoolchildren, and the adult population, including chiefs and elders. The museum assistants explain the reasons for preserving objects of cultural interest. Once this is done, the collector should be able to start work.

Collectors start off by going from house to house and asking people what they might have to offer. With luck, they may obtain quite large quantities of objects, although the first round of visits usually serves to get people to decide what objects they are prepared to give. Subsequent visits keep up interest and ensure a regular response. Collectors often have to travel long distances in order to reach people in the remote parts of their areas.

Sometimes the bulk of the donations come from the chief of the area himself. Sometimes he summons a number of his people, particularly those whom he knows to possess interesting objects, and persuades them to give generously to help a good cause. In some cases, the museum has had the good fortune of having sub-chiefs as collectors; they not only accept responsibility for the items collected, but get young men – usually their relatives – to collect under their supervision, and to write notes and particulars on the specimens collected if they themselves cannot read or write. When an interesting object cannot be donated, it may be given on loan. It is occasionally necessary to pay for objects that are difficult to obtain and cannot be donated or loaned to the museum.

With the exception of a few types of specimens, such as drums, the objects are usually light in weight and small in size as compared with ethnographical material collected in other countries. For this reason, transport is seldom a problem. The items collected usually consist of wood, metal, clay, leather, cotton or silk. Storage space is allocated in the chief's house, or in the regional or district administrative buildings. Items are periodically forwarded to the museum, where they are treated against decay and added to the national collections. The collector decides when he has enough objects to forward; if an item is in unsatisfactory condition, arrangements can be made to have it dispatched to the museum for immediate treatment. It may be mentioned that, when regional museums are built, many of these objects will be returned to their regions of origin.

This type of field-work, of course, has its disappointments. Some collectors who were not honest and sincere nearly ruined the scheme in their areas. Equally disappointing was the lack of co-operation in certain places. This is why great pains are taken in the selection of collectors; the success of the whole operation depends almost entirely on them.

We can nevertheless, warmly recommend the idea. In addition to the advantages already mentioned, it serves: (a) to arouse people's interest in aspects of their traditional culture which are now considered old-fashioned or valueless, as is the case, for example, of material objects such as tools which now have no ceremonial significance; (b) to prevent them from selling these things to traders, who may pay high prices but are interested in the objects only as curios and not as part of a culture; (c) to prevent them from throwing objects away, or leaving them in unsuitable conditions in which they deteriorate; (d) to build up

museum collections representative of a disappearing or changing way of life.

It may be mentioned in conclusion that the collections include specimens of living handicrafts, including basket-making and leather work, which deserve particular attention. Objects are now being made for tourists rather than for their original purpose. Inevitably, the form tends to change and, very often, the quality deteriorates. The art and culture centres now being established in Ghana are doing much to encourage handicrafts to continue along traditional lines.

Note

1. UNESCO has contributed significantly in this respect through the adoption of recommendations in favour of such laws. It is currently preparing a convention on the same subject.

The round table of Santiago (Chile)

(from Vol. XXV, No. 3, 1973, pp. 129–34)

Mario E. Teruggi

Mario E. Teruggi was full-time professor and Head of the Division of Mineralogy and Petrography in the Natural Science Museum of La Plata. He has acted as Director of that museum and also of the Bernardino Rivadavia Natural Science Museum in Buenos Aires. He is the author of some seventy books and research works on subjects in his special field. In addition, he has published many works on museums, on general subjects and on language and literature. His name was given to a mineral, the teruggite. Has taken part in several UNESCO seminars, round tables and symposia.

'The Role of Museums in Today's Latin America', the title given by UNESCO to the round table in Santiago de Chile seemed, at first sight, to be entirely innocuous. Several of us, moreover, had taken part in similar meetings on previous occasions and we knew what to expect of them. There was, of course, an innovation in the traditional programme: instead of welcoming museologists alone, specialists in other disciplines had been invited to speak about their particular domains and to act as discussion leaders in the ensuing debates and in considering the basic theme of the round table. This theme, according to the first invitation to participants, was whether the museums of Latin America, as educational, cultural and scientific institutions, are adapted to the problems posed by the development, in its social and economic aspects, of the culture of present-day Latin America.

At the opening meeting of the round table, Miss Raymond Frin mentioned that UNESCO, on the basis of confrontations between specialists of different disciplines, was seeking to try out a new idea for this type of international meeting. Mr. Hugues de Varine-Bohan, for his part, emphasized that the meeting was regarded as a bridge to bring two categories of specialists together.

From the moment of this opening ceremony, things began to happen. We museologists form a very special confraternity with which we are satisfied and of which we are proud, notwithstanding the meagre social prestige and poor remuneration associated with our profession. When and if we meet, we talk about our affairs, exchange experiences, deplore the evils which afflict museums, seek solutions and improvements, study techniques and, after formulating statements and proposals, we go our separate ways well pleased with what has been achieved. We are frogs in the same pond croaking in the same way. But here in Santiago frogs from other ponds were introduced into ours, with a different sort of croak!

The first paper by 'one of the outsiders' – on cultural development in the rural environment and the development of agriculture – was like a bombshell. When the speaker had finished, we museologists looked at one another confounded not so much by what had been said (though it was plenty), but because it had been made obvious to us at one stroke that the existence, sorrows, longings and hopes of mankind were not getting into the museums. We looked at one another in silence for awhile, for we realized, with no more said, that the museum is grafted on to the tree of society but is nothing unless it gets from the host trunk the vital sap that has its origin in the fields, the workshops, laboratories and schools, homes and towns.

From this point onwards our vague and incoherent misgivings began to crystallize and we all knew what reply had to be given to the basic issue raised by the round table: the museums of Latin America are not adapted to handle the problems arising from the continent's development.

Irrespective of our previous personal opinions, and of individual political ideas, we all felt that the Latin American museums – museums which, although the majority lack funds, are tenacious and courageous in their task of disseminating culture – were not satisfactorily fulfilling their social mission of making the citizen at one with his natural and human environment, considered in all its aspects.

This was the point of departure – the realization that museums were doing very

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little, and sometimes virtually nothing, on behalf of the underprivileged Latin American and it brought immediate reflection on the ultimate purpose of museums. There were no direct accusations (except on one occasion by an observer), but some of the discussion leaders' dissertations made us feel as if we museologists were indifferent to the economic and social problems affecting Latin America and that our statement and conclusions were a kind of swansong of an obsolete profession, with no notion or power of adapting itself to present circumstances. These veiled criticisms led several participants to remark that museums were being assigned functions that were not their direct concern. It was maintained that matters such as the 'green revolution' in agriculture, the reduction of illiteracy, the elimination of epidemics and malnutrition, or the more effective utilization of natural resources – to quote a few examples only – should be dealt with, publicized, promoted and implemented by specific organs and agencies of the State. However, the retort was duly forthcoming that in numbers of Latin American countries these organizations are not operating satisfactorily or have not yet been established, and it was for existing museums to fill the gap.

In the daily discussions that followed the statements by the various specialists, time and time again we got back to revising the traditional concept of the museum in the face of the demands of a developing society. We museologists had a taste of ashes in our mouths and we wanted to get rid of it. We divined that this was the major question before the round table and that a solution to it had to be found.

The answer hit on was the idea of the integral museum. It ripened and gained substance as the days went by until it took final shape as a new museological concept – revolutionary, even, since it gets right away from the traditional lines and limits of our museum. It was the round table's answer to the crisis in Latin America, but unquestionably this new notion will be applicable in other parts of the world (developed or developing), since wealthy and indigent alike are affected or threatened by today's scientific and technological innovations and revolutions.

The fact that the majority of the specialists invited should have discovered the museums for the first time has particular significance, since we can thus conclude that if distinguished intellectuals have a very vague idea of museology, its possibilities and prospects, all others will have even less knowledge of our mission and its significance. In other words, put very generally, it would seem that people as a whole are perfectly ignorant of what museums are or what they are really for. They visit them from time to time – generally when it rains or to take children or visiting friends – and go away either impressed by, or indifferent towards the show put on by the museologists, but completely blind to every detail of the work, the effort, the dedication (and, at times, sacrifice), the dreams, the ideals, and the hopes that have made possible the remarkable cultural phenomenon of the museum. All of which supports the suspicion that we museologists have all along been 'selling' museums to ourselves, but not to those outside our profession and much less so the thinkers, scientists and technicians who are performing vital tasks in the modern world.

It is very probable that the consequences of the Santiago round table move will have far-reaching repercussions through-

out the world of museology; not merely because it yielded the notion of the integral museum, but also because it would seem an extremely sound policy to invite eminent persons from different walks of life to museological meetings in the future. Up to now only educationists have attended with any frequency, which is very natural, but they, poor souls, like the museologists, have the hard task of persuading a variety of authorities and magnates to support them in their work. The museological profession has to create awareness of its vital social function in the most varied sectors of the community.

It is undeniable, then, that the Santiago round table introduced a new way of posing problems in connexion with museums, for a little reflection shows us that a subtle difference has crept into the approach to museums as cultural institutions. Up to now a museum has only been conceived in terms of the past, which is its *raison d'être*. Museologists assemble, catalogue, conserve and exhibit the works, including the throw-outs, of previous cultures, close to or far removed from our own. In the temporal dimension, the museum is a vector which starts in the present and whose far end is in the past. With the round table's agreement that the museum should take on a role in development, it is simply intended to inverse the direction of the temporal vector which we now get with its tarting point at some moment in the past, with its far end, the 'arrowhead', reaching the present and even beyond it into the future. In a certain sense the museologist is being asked to cease merely scavenging the jetsam of the past and become, in addition, an expert on the present and a forecaster of the future.

The round table did not consider the means, manners and concrete forms of implementing the aspirations it was generating. It was not its function to do so since the meeting was not held for that purpose, neither was it exclusively technical. But consideration was given repeatedly in participants' addresses and observations to the status of the object, the specimen, in a museum co-operating with the community in the solution of its problems. For it was accepted that the object is the museum's point of departure and its justification, a premise that did not fail to produce surprise among the non-museologists who could not grasp what seemed to them the museologist's deification of the object. There were even some who suggested the possibility of museums without objects. Disregarding these 'sacrilegious' propositions, if the object is to continue to be the backbone of the museum, it will have to be supplemented, extrapolated; and inter-related in a multitude of ways for it to fit naturally into the panorama of social, economic and cultural development which it is desired to present to the Latin American public. This means, in a sense, that the object would begin to be transformed into a kind of datum, a linkage with the past from which to develop propaganda sequences – in the best sense of the term – to serve the community towards understanding itself and plotting its course. The object would no longer be the basic consideration but would become the starting point for a vast elaboration in which it would remain a significant and crucial element.

It may seem that we are laying a superhuman task on museologists, since, in addition to their present specific function, it is sought to have them create, establish, each of his own museum, a continuum presenting in their correct relations the conditions of the natural and ethnic environment, social and

economic evolution, the phases of culture and development, the effects of the exploitation of renewable and non-renewable resources, the present and future repercussions of environmental pollution, problems of health, pest and disease control in agriculture and animal husbandry, the evolution of urban centres, the transformation and performance of educational systems, the mediate and immediate prospects for general well-being, and a thousand other things. Obviously there is no museologist capable of covering all aspects of our world, or even a tiny part of them. But this is not the point, nor would anyone imagine that it was. The point is that at the round table it was made clear that we museologists did not take advantage of the co-operation of specialists, and our presentation of our objects was limited, so that we did not make the most of them for the purpose of their primary function, interpreting the manifold aspects of a national or local situation. It was pointed out that in the future museums were going to require more and more team work, not only at the museological level, but in the sense of teams comprising a variety of specialists who, up to now, have had very little to do with museology. A great many possibilities offered by the objects, essential for our knowledge and understanding of development, were perhaps remaining unexploited in exhibition rooms because no one had appreciated them or thought of making use of them.

A clear account of all this effort and achievement is provided in the round table resolutions and recommendations. In addition, the basis and guiding principle were established for the integral museum, opening up a new perspective in museology. Finally, the round table acted as a catalyst for the creation and launching of the Latin American Association of Museology (ALAM).

The meeting in Santiago de Chile has been an outstanding one in museology round tables because of the profundity of the questions it has posed which compel reflection on the meaning and scope of our profession and the task that we are performing.

(Translated from Spanish)

Ecomuseums in Quebec

(from Vol. XXXVII, No. 4, No. 148, 1985, pp. 202–5)

René Rivard

René Rivard was born in 1941 at Victoriaville, Quebec. B.A. degree, 1963. Administrator-supervisor of historic sites in Quebec and Ontario, 1970–72. Regional administrator for Quebec, 1972–73. Head of interpretation, museology and public service for Parks Canada in Quebec, 1973–79. Consultant in museology, having founded the firm Muséart in 1978. Several missions for UNESCO and ICOM.

Before 1970 Quebec had few public museums, no strong museological tradition, and little or nothing in the way of 'conservational' restrictions. When the region's 'quiet revolution' got under way, it stimulated a large section of the public to search for their identity and brought them a new awareness of their heritage. In Ontario and New Brunswick, the two Canadian provinces bordering Quebec, conventional museums were being developed at that time, together with open-air museums and model reconstructions of historical scenes and old forts. But museums in Quebec were dragging their feet, searching for an identity.

At that point, a number of factors came into play that were gradually to transform our museology, moving it towards the new idea of the ecomuseum. There was the declaration of a first cultural development policy for Quebec, large-scale community development work in some areas, experimentation with new approaches to museum development, such as nature centres and interpretation centres, the move to Quebec of the federal bureaux of Parks Canada (which deals with national parks and historic sites) and, last but not least, the increasing involvement of the Office Franco-Québecois pour la Jeunesse (OFQJ) in major exchange programmes between France and Quebec.

1974–79: Quebec develops an interest in the ecomuseum

Informal contacts were established about 1974 between the French regional parks and a number of young museum professionals from Quebec. Georges Henri Rivière directed them towards Mont Lozère, Ouessant Island, the Landes of Gascony, and Le Creusot. Thanks to the shared language, documentation and communications quickly crossed the Atlantic to Quebec. The ecomuseum formula was proposed to Parks Canada for the group of historic buildings of Grande-Grave in the Forillon National Park. Unfortunately, the statutes of this federal organization did not permit it to adopt an idea based on public participation. Nevertheless, it sent a number of staff to study French parks and their arrangements for conservation and public participation.

Visits and training periods were gradually organized and more formal exchanges took place. Quebec invited Gérard Collin, Jean-Pierre Gestin and Georges Henri Rivière, while France welcomed René Milot, Carole Lévesque and René Rivard. The high point was reached in 1979 when, thanks to the OFQJ, one large group from each country followed a month's course in the other country. The ecomuseum formula was considered very promising and Quebec took a lively interest in it.

1979–82: the first ecomuseum in Quebec

A first, cautious experiment took place in Haute-Beauce, where Pierre Mayrand assisted a group of people who were anxious to safeguard an important part of their regional heritage without, however, putting it in a conventional museum. For this purpose, they established the Musée et Centre Régional d'Interprétation de la Haute-Beauce. This enabled the neglected region to recover a measure of pride through a clearer idea of its own identity in the form of the kind of museum supported by its own people and with its own financial resources. Its development, carefully planned by Pierre Mayrand and Maude Céré, paved the way for eventual

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acceptance of the ecomuseum, the appropriation and interpretation of its territory, and research into the collective memory and popular creativity.

In spring 1980, a group of residents of the south centre district of Montreal who worked in housing co-operatives decided to provide cultural facilities adapted to their situation, perceived as 'blocked in time and space'. Claude Watters, who had been living in the United States, suggested the idea of a neighbourhood museum similar to those in the deprived areas of American towns. The ensuing discussions among local people soon encouraged the promoters to move on towards the idea of the fully fledged ecomuseum.

In this way, the Maison du Fier-Monde was established and quickly took up the people's demands for improvement of the environment and quality of life of this working-class area. The development zone of Montreal had been somewhat distorted by urban development, which had set up the University of Quebec there, as well as the French language broadcasting centre of Radio Canada. The area had also been split in two by a motorway and over four hundred houses had been demolished in the process. Thus the Maison du Fier-Monde soon became, to use its own description, 'a campaigning ecomuseum'.

Other experimental ecomuseums took shape in 1981–82 in La Rouge Valley, part of the 'high country' of the Laurentides, and in the Iles du Lac Saint-Pierre, an archipelago on the Saint Lawrence River which forms a frail natural and cultural environment. This ecomuseum is known as the Insulaire.

Hugues de Varine visited Haute-Beauce and the other new ecomuseums in 1981 and advocated action that was more direct and more involved in the socio-economic development of the areas they covered. The courses in museology and heritage offered by the University of Quebec and by Laval University discussed the ecomuseums unambiguously and several students took an active part in their activities and their development. Thus the ecomuseum took its place in the museum vocabulary and museum system of Quebec.

Subsequent developments

In accordance with the wishes of the local people, the museum and interpretation centre of Haute-Beauce was renamed in 1983 the Écomusée de la Haute-Beauce. This change confirms the success of a three-year plan drawn up in 1980 and implemented by means of the 'triangle of creativity' – constituted by Appropriation of area, Ecomuseum and Growth of awareness – and courses in popular museology. Thanks to these courses and to the methods of interpretation and community organization employed, the public is progressing confidently towards the appropriation of its neighbourhood and is developing museographical resources with which to attain the objectives of the ecomuseum.

The triangle of creativity is a genuine innovation and a substantial contribution by the ecomuseums of Quebec to popular museology. Its cyclical practice in time and regional space brings specific, attainable objectives within the reach of the population as a whole. 'Haute-Beauce Créatrice', an operation conducted in 1983, gave the thirteen villages of the ecomuseum an opportunity to express their appropriation of their territory by means of monumental symbols and

creative activities. The Maison du Fier-Monde did the same, with a collective mural, community activities in the district, and exhibitions connected with the search for identity.

Two new ecomuseums opened – Deux-Rives in the Valleyfield area and Saint-Constant, on the Saint Lawrence River opposite Montreal. These last two, like the ecomuseums of La Rouge Valley and the islands in the Saint Lawrence, have consolidated their positions and, in spite of a certain amount of hesitation and opposition, prepared very promising activities. At the JAL, in Témiscouata County, the idea of starting an ecomuseum has been maturing for some time within the context of a vast co-operative development movement.[1]

Today, the Quebec Association of Ecomuseums has six members. In May 1983, it organized a one-day conference which was attended by Hugues de Varine and non-specialist representatives of all the Quebec ecomuseums. The conference decided to hold the First International Workshop on 'Ecomuseums and the New Museology', an itinerant symposium which took place in Quebec in October 1984 and led to an international grouping of the principal exponents of popular museology.

The state of affairs in Quebec

It is interesting to note that the six ecomuseums of Quebec all originated in different ways. None of them is a product of the parks system, as is most often the case in France. It is therefore worth comparing the different reasons which led to the founding of the Quebec ecomuseums: *Haute-Beauce* – preventing the removal of items of local heritage collected by a self-taught ethnographer; *Maison du Fier-Monde* – a need for appropriate cultural facilities and means of defence for housing co-operatives in a working-class district; *Insulaire* – the initiative of a heritage student confronted with a frail natural and cultural environment that was further threatened by inconsiderate tourism: *La Rouge Valley* – a heritage society concerned with interpretation and community action; *Saint-Constant* – a project by an ecological education centre, which is growing into an ecomuseum; *Deux-Rives* – a cultural centre set up in 1979 which was developed into an ecomuseum following a seminar on popular museology in 1984.

The ecomuseums of Quebec can take pride in certain special features that mark them off from European ecomuseums, thus demonstrating their distinctive character and initiative and hence their contribution to the advancement of what we call the new museology. These features may be summarized as follows:

- Public participation is not only considered essential, but it is sought, encouraged and very often obtained at unexpected levels.

- This participation does not just consist of voluntary work; it is also financial, since ecomuseums are funded chiefly, or almost exclusively, by subscription and individual contribution.

- The approach of the ecomuseums in Quebec is at once interdisciplinary and non-disciplinary, in that none of them has the scientific committee that French ecomuseums have. This fact does not in any way denote fear or disdain of the strict, scientific approach. It shows a preference for integrating professional researchers with the local people and,

through the users' committee, ensuring that they are neither isolated nor made remote from the popular objectives given to their research work by the ecomuseums.

- The courses in popular museology that have been on offer for a number of years, especially in Haute-Beauce, are not only an innovation in the practice of ecomuseums but are also a very effective means of dispelling misunderstandings about museums in general, of encouraging participation in the development of the ecomuseum's aids to interpretation and of providing competent workers for community action.

- The collective memory of the public is the primary heritage of the ecomuseum, and it is studied not only by a few isolated researchers and scientists but by the people themselves, guided by the most active already among them or who come to the fore.

- The people have also to a certain extent regained their 'power of naming' or of redefining their territory, resuming with increased creativity this activity so dear to their ancestors who a little over a century ago, had done the same when they opened up Haute-Beauce and La Rouge Valley.

- An increasing concern by the people living in the areas of the ecomuseums with working on a variety of socio-economic development projects, in the country, in villages and in towns, and a desire to keep these projects on a local or human scale compatible with the public's wishes.

- A high level of exchange among the ecomuseums of Quebec, and between them and ecomuseums in other countries, and any organization working in the fields of popular education, economic development, and heritage appreciation. A number of useful partnerships have been established, for example between two ecomuseums in Quebec and between the ecomuseum of Haute-Beauce and the one in Coglais in Brittany, as well as between an ecomuseum and two other museums in a particular region, forming a network that can offer local people and visitors a greater range of services and more effective means for concerted museum activity.

It is a little over ten years now since that first encounter between the people of Quebec and Georges Henri Rivière, which initiated the ecomuseum movement in Quebec. Now that the 'father of the ecomuseum' is no more, Quebec brings its own jewel to the crown of ecomuseums in different parts of the world, a living crown, resplendent to his memory.

(Translated from French)

Notes

1. The acronym JAL is the name of a tourism corporation created by three villages threatened by extinction – Saint-Just, Auclair and Lejeune – which decided to join forces.

Museum of the Indian: new perspectives for student and indigenous population participation

(from Vol. XLI, No. 1, No. 161, 1989, pp. 37–41)

Claudia Menezes

Claudia Menezes has a Master's degree in social anthropology from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. Doctorate in political science from São Paulo University. Director of the Museum of the Indian. Curator of the Indigenous Section of the Forty-second Venice Biennale. Co-ordinator of the Latin American Indigenous Peoples Cinema Committee (affiliated to the Visual Anthropology Commission of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences). Associate Editor of the publication Visual Anthropology. *Researcher with fieldwork to her credit in the Akwe-Xavante, Mbya-Guarani, Macuxi and Pankararu indigenous areas.*

The Rio de Janeiro Museum of the Indian, an institution administered by the Federal Government of Brazil, possesses a rich collection of objects and documents relating to national indigenous minorities. It studies and interprets these groups, and makes known the results of its research through publications and audio-visual means. It collaborates on a regular basis with scientific organizations at home and abroad. Since its creation in 1951,[1] it has had three different homes.

Undoubtedly, the title 'Museum of the Indigenous Populations' would more accurately represent the philosophy underlying its creation and reflect its field of interest: to produce and circulate basic information on the history, organization and culture of indigenous peoples, and on the relationship between their specific social universes and that of the nation as a whole.

After more than thirty years of existence the institution has come to assume a variety of functions: as scientific laboratory, as instrument of education, as agent of cultural outreach and, finally, as a focus of leisure activity. This has given it an innovative role alongside the older, principal Brazilian museums with sections devoted to indigenous archaeology and ethnology, such as the National Museum (1818), the Emilio Goeldi Museum of Para (1871) and the Paulista Museum of the University of São Paulo (1895). These traditional centres of knowledge, organized and set up in the nineteenth century, were pioneers in the display of ethnographic collections, showing the importance attached by the Brazilian élite at that time to the nation's historical, scientific and artistic heritage. Noteworthy, in this regard, is the coincidence of this kind of cultural action with the development of the European museological movement. It should be remembered that the revival of the eastern part of that continent led to the creation of the National Museum of Hungary in the 1860s,[2] and that France's first ethnographic museum, the Musée de l'Homme, was founded in 1877.

The museum as centre of diffusion of knowledge

At the present stage of its evolution the Museum of the Indian is making every effort to maximize the use of available material and physical resources and so activate to the fullest its educational potential, aiming at a variety of audiences, from the urban student population to the indigenous ethnic groups themselves. To forge its action into an instrument for the spread of knowledge, an educational model was adopted whose main goal was to widen the horizons of the general public and to collaborate with indigenous populations through a programme of cultural restitution. This means breaking away from certain presuppositions and preconceptions concerning museums' roles.

The hoarding instinct,[3] which tends to reduce museums to the status of hospitals or cemeteries for objects,[4] and leads to the worship of the past, must be overcome. Accumulated knowledge and tradition must be reprocessed collectively, to fuel a dynamic process leading to their better definition in the light of present necessities and future aspirations. It is also imperative to resist the tradition of cultural elitism inherited from the last century, which defined museums as temples of bourgeois knowledge, and the tradition that makes intellectual goals their principal *raison d'être*. Instead, the popularization of research must be considered as a resource for the democratization of

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information, and the museum's activity in this regard as a legitimate means for the divulgation of accumulated material. In this way, the preservation of the past – especially where an ethnological museum is concerned – takes on a new meaning, and the peoples represented in it are able to recover the historical heritage reflected in the material produced by – and ideological manifestations of – each culture. This is also an effective way of desacralizing the object, by reshaping the purist attitude that validates the contents of collections solely according to criteria such as rarity and authenticity. The value of artefacts must derive principally from their educational power and their status as evidence, assisting the national minorities to retain their memories and their forms of understanding – in short, their specific ethnic identity – to which traditional material production is a clue. As is well-known, past colonial rue and pressures of present existence have forced the greater part of the population of pre-Columbian origin to abandon, in the face of western European tradition, modes of thought and action that are the product of a particular and autonomous history.

In this context, Third World museums desirous of modernizing their programmes should not be content to adopt existing educational tools, but should, rather, see themselves as institutions of popular education, which means playing a role not only in the formal education system but also, much more broadly, in the recovery and enhancement of activities, values and patterns of behaviour. This wide-ranging educational role in society is the inevitable consequence of the institutional renewal being experienced in recent years, and which in the case of Latin America is particularly a reaction to the divorce between the teaching methodology – characterized by conservatism and élitism – and national realities.

The process of learning is thus akin to the ascent of a pyramid,[5] both because of the inequality of access to information and because of the marginalization of traditional knowledge conveyed by the popular heritage of the indigenous societies. Against this background, the tasks of informing and of creating awareness of themes relevant to the nation are not the exclusive province of the university. Museums must intervene positively in the education of the population, alongside the formal education system and the media, precisely because of their status as repositories of the national identity.

Closer links between the museum and indigenous groups

Although the museum's charter calls for the development of closer relations with its objects of study – the indigenous ethnic minorities – the achievement of this goal is hindered by a number of factors. The museum is inspired by the ideal of establishing a two-way channel of mutual scientific and cultural enrichment with these largely rural peoples, but is an urban institution. A large part of the populations in the countryside and at the fringes of the city, as well as the indigenous population itself, is therefore excluded from regular contact and attendance. In the specific case of the indigenous groups, the very idea of 'museum' is quite alien, since the functions carried out by it in modern society – custody of the collective memory and reproduction of knowledge – devolve, in Indian culture, upon institutions such as families, age-groupings and ceremonial associations, among others.

Nevertheless, preservation of cultural values appears to be becoming a more and more familiar and influential concern among indigenous groups, as a result of their efforts to maintain their common heritage and delineate the ethnic frontiers distinguishing their social universe from those of the nation as a whole. It is in large part this concern that has enabled the Museum of the Indian to open a dialogue with a variety of ethnic groups and make itself available for their projects of self re-discovery. Cultural revitalization through the use of visual aids has turned out to be one of the museum's chief instruments of co-operation with the groups. A good example was the photographic series documenting the campaign of a Macuxi leader – whose lands are situated in the Roraima Territory (Northern Region) – in the Federal parliamentary elections. In more general terms, the indigenous groups have evinced great interest in having the museum record significant events in their societies, such as rituals, and in obtaining its guidance for the establishment of their own archives. Both requests have been complied with to the best of the museum's ability. In recent months, two anthropological documentaries produced at the suggestion of the xocó-Cariri and Pankararu groups, who live in the north-east, were completed. The commitment of these groups to cultural revival has led them, instead of seeking a historical frame of reference in the idealization of the past, to want to shape the present through organization and political action. After 300 years of social, economic, political and ideological pressure, they had lost the greater part of their unique cultural traits. They now speak fluent Portuguese and are racially indistinguishable from other Brazilians as a result of widespread intermarriage with whites and blacks.

Cinema, video

Our laboratory of social experimentation found two useful allies in the cinema and video. The films produced by the museum have an indigenous orientation and seek to reveal the present relationship of the ethnic minorities with different national agents and agencies. The films are used by them as evidence of their distinctive identity, particularly in the political context, where such testimony is indispensable in securing ancient territorial rights and obtaining the benefits accruing to them from the state.

Stronger relations between the museum and indigenous communities have also been fostered by assistance in setting up independent video production units, an experience similar to that of the Navajos in the United States. The use by indigenous groups of audio-visual aids as a resource for both cultural rehabilitation and political expression is a recent phenomenon, but one which is already bearing fruit. In Brazil we are seeing the birth of a new visual language, determined by the particular way the Indian film-makers see themselves and their environment, an unprecedented re-appropriation of technology by peoples who have suffered keenly from the impact of modernization on their way of life. The museum collaborates in this process by training indigenous producers in the use of video equipment, disseminating their autonomous production to the public, and (for example) supporting recording projects in the Akwẽ-Xavante area in the State of Mato Grosso. The Indians from that area, introduced to the cinema by Salesian missionaries who have used it as a teaching device since the 1950s, are launching their own video production activities.

The cultural restitution project

The determination to overcome the moral violence that has eroded the historical and ideological heritage of the majority of indigenous groups in Brazil has led them to seek in museums' ethnographic and documentary collections elements conducive to the restoration of traditional expressions of culture. An example of this concern has been the attempts to recover objects of inestimable symbolic value. There are instances of the restitution of cultural property in different parts of the world. In Brazil, one can point to the return of the Krahó ceremonial hatchet that had been part of the collection of the Paulista Museum.

The Museum of the Indian, for its part, is carrying out a systematic programme of cultural restitution in collaboration with other bodies working in the Indian areas, by providing copies of its documents. In this connection, photography has been amply used as a tool of historical memory. Its function is not merely to recover what has been lost to time and distance, but also to testify that certain beings or things really existed. In this programme, the Terena Indians were enabled to inaugurate a documentation and leisure centre in one of their villages (Cachoeirinha) with an exhibition of photographs of items that had been collected in 1943 and were filed in the Museum of the Indian. The event demonstrated the value of photography in enhancing group identity. The participants recognized deceased relations, recalled ritual costumes no longer made, and identified clay modelling techniques not now in use. Similar results came from the visit to Rio de Janeiro of the Bakairi, who were deeply moved to see their traditional artefacts in the collections of the National Museum and of the Museum of the Indian. Photographs and sound recordings were given to them to form part of a small museum being organized with the help of the Federal University of Mato Grosso.

Another medium of integration between the museum and the indigenous peoples is the educational activities undertaken directly in their villages. With money from research funding agencies, our linguistic section is operating in the Karajá area, situated on Bananal Island (Central Brazil). The people in this area have maintained regular contact with the other Brazilians for at least two centuries, and have had a number of education programmes, both governmental and religious, without so far losing their culture and language. At present the museum's goal is to help equip this group for co-existence with the dominant culture, by a programme of schooling adapted to its needs and interests.

The educators and the Indians themselves are agreed that the child's formation must take place within its own universe. This means running schools in the villages and using Indian teachers. For this purpose the linguistic section is preparing, with the collaboration of Karajá assistants, reading primers in two languages and mathematics textbooks. At the same time, it is helping to develop human resources, by training teaching aides for indigenous education. Since a codified knowledge of the group's language is indispensable for teaching the section is making linguistic descriptions of the dialect variants of the Karajá sub-groups (Javaé and Xambioá). It is hoped to use the results of this research to improve and extend the indigenous education project.

Indigenous participation in the essential technical activities of the museum, including restoration of its collections, deserves special mention here. A staff member of the museological section is a Kaingang Indian, a skilled craftsman well

versed in different aspects of production of artefacts. His guidance has been of benefit not only in the restoration of items requiring raw materials from the indigenous areas, but also in the identification of the objects, an indispensable stage in the classification and indexing of the collections.

Concluding observations

The gradual increase in the number of visitors to the Museum of the Indian – from 15,384 in 1985 to 22,458 in 1987 – is evidence of the receptivity of the public to our new approaches. There has been a corresponding increase in major media coverage and in interest among specialists, as well as an extension of the network of research institutions and museums with which we have exchanges, particularly in Latin America, France and the United States.

Efforts to make the Indian experience known also reached a wider public through temporary ethnographic and photographic exhibits mounted in the most varied locations in the city – residential condominiums, art cinemas, universities, cultural centres, grammar schools. The other sections of the museum, particularly the social and visual anthropology section, assisted with these efforts. In its daily contacts with visitors and pupils, the education section also concentrated on combating prejudices.

The essentially experimental attitude guiding the museum's operations recently has led to a more mature definition of its work. The programmes, in turn, enabled us to measure the obstacles to be overcome. The majority of the problems have been identified, but they unfortunately do not always lend themselves to short-term solutions. Fundamentally, we need to increase the number of social-science professionals on our staff, improve plant and internal services, and find sources of regular support.

(Translated from Portuguese)

Notes

1. The Rio de Janeiro Museum of the Indian was inaugurated on 19 April 1953 and consisted at first of the research section of the Indian Protection Service (SPI), headed by the anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro. In 1963 the museum was transferred to the National Council for Protection of the Indians (CNPI). Following the demise of the SPI and the CNPI and the reorganization of the National Indian Foundation, in 1986, it became a Presidential advisory body.

2. Lázló Selmeczi, 'Museums and National Identity', *Museum*, Vol. XXXV, No. 4 (140), 1983.

3. Julian Pitt-Rivers, 'Reflections on the Concept of Museums and Interdisciplinarity', *Museum*, Vol. XXXII, No. ½, 1980.

4. F. Venancio Filho, *A Educação e seu aparelhamento moderno*, p. 128, São Paulo, quoted by Edgar Susseking de Mendonça in 'A extensão cultural nos museos', *Museu Nacional*, No. 2, 1946.

5. Rui Mourão, 'Experiência do programa nacional de museus: museu, cultura e educação', *Alternativas de educación para grupos culturalmente diferenciados,* Vol. III, CIDAP, 1985.

6. According to G. Geertz's definition, the ethos of a people is the tone, character and quality of life, their moral and aesthetic style, their disposition. It is, in short, the underlying attitude to themselves and to their world reflected in their life; see p. 143 of *A interpretacão das culturas*, 1978.

Part II – Culture and the environment

Amarbayasgalan monastery in winter time, Mongolia
Photographer: Poppeliers, J;
copyright UNESCO

Environmental items today occupy the top of international agendas. And, over the last two decades, two landmark events have epitomized the will to act at a global level. They are the publication in 1983 of the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development and the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

Awareness of the importance of the natural environment has increased gradually over the last fifty years, helped by cultural studies and better understanding of the interactions between culture and nature. The museum was one of the actors and vectors in this process.

To begin with, the science and natural history and, then, technology museums demonstrated the importance of nature in our everyday lives. The concern to popularize the biological sciences, which reflected the desire to make the museum a prime educational tool, contributed to the renewal of the museographic discourse. The museographic techniques were adapted to the different types of knowledge used in the study of nature.

During the 1960s, the stronger and more generalized pressure of industry on the environment, and the endangerment of cultural heritage led to public opinion becoming sensitive and watchful with regard to the fragility of humanity's creations and living conditions. The resulting study and monitoring of the environment, which generally meant trying to understand and regulate the anthropic processes, implied, in the restricted context of the museum, the control of the factors leading to the degradation of the collections (e.g. humidity and light rays).

Little by little, environmental concerns spread from the exclusive field of physical science to that of cultural studies. The 1980s brought proof of the complementarity existing between the human, social and environmental sciences, illustrated in museography by the presentation of ecological sets and contextualization of objects.

The dialogue which became established between culture and the natural environment has lead to the enhancement of culture. New categories of property have been created, including that of cultural landscape which was included in the World Heritage Convention in 1992.

The last years of the twentieth century witnessed the establishment of parallels between global cultural and environmental systems. Thus, the defence of biodiversity is now paralleled by respect for cultural diversity. And both are indissociable in the search for an equitable and sustainable human development, and a fundamental orientation to be given to new ambitious museographic projects.[1]

Note

1. An example of such an orientation is the future *Musée des Confluences* (Lyon, France).

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Protection of nature and museums of natural history

(from Vol. VI, No. 3, 1953, pp. 150–3)

Roger Heim

Roger Heim was Assistant Director and later (since 1951) Director of the laboratory of Cryptogamy at the Muséum national d'histoire naturelle. His work has covered anatomy, biology, the classification of fungi, mycological flora and diseases of crops in tropical regions, the relationship between insects and fungi, and the protection of nature. He has travelled extensively in Africa, Madagascar, the South-West Pacific and Central America. His laboratory is at present a very active centre, devoted more particularly to living cultures representing all the different groups of algae and fungi. Followed Professor Guilliermond at the Académie des Sciences, 1946.

In a noteworthy article published recently,[1] Mr. Albert E. Parr, Director of the American Museum of Natural History, New York, dwelt on the present decline of these museums, that is to say, on the growing indifference of the public towards them. The reasons for this state of affairs were carefully reviewed: the author thought the main cause was the failure of museum directors to adapt themes and exhibits to the human realities in which people today are interested. Another reason was to be sought in the consequences of the amazing development that has taken place in the experimental sciences, which it is not easy to present significantly in a museum display. The establishment of zoological gardens and the continual improvement in motion films and photography, make the inanimate objects in our museums seem out of date and not worth remembering. In face of this very real competition, the author adds, museums have now become 'only one of many, instead of the one and only'.

To the above remarks we should add that the regard for taxonomy – i.e., for classification – which usually governs any museum display, tends to give it the artificial, heavy and overcrowded character of a catalogue, far from a clear, faithful picture of nature, and results in a lifeless arrangement instead of a satisfying portrayal of a living world. These objections, then, point to the need for new methods of interpretation and a better use of natural phenomena in our natural history museums and above all, for an entirely different presentation of biological specimens and a really complete picture of wildlife in these institutions. To meet this new demand, we shall make use of modern techniques and of the sciences of ecology, biogeography, genetics and ethology. Even better: the increasing importance of ideas of balance and grouping in nature, reducing the lists of flora and fauna to their proper importance coupled with the need for a better and different representation of nature in museums, lead scientifically first, to a great concentration on field studies carried out by teamwork enabling detailed, annotated and analytical inventories to be drawn up; then to taking advantage of this research, based as it is on observations, statistics and experiments, to make a judicious selection, for the museum showcases, of typical, necessary and sufficient items, not too many, but well chosen – so as to throw light upon the exceptional biotopes from which they originate. Thus certain natural areas, nests of biocenoses and arenas of teeming life and intense competition between animals and plants, must be protected so that we may be able to interpret, in museums, the biological and ecological conclusions of field research carried out on the spot by expert naturalists. A beginning would thus be made with a method and style of display that might really open up to the public the living reality of nature.

The notion of the protection of nature springs quite naturally from these considerations. The aim is to preserve certain habits for study and explanation; to draw attention to the close interdependence between an environment and the creatures living in it; and to bring home to the general public the need for the preservation of nature. Above all the idea is to explain *why* it is urgently necessary to protect forests, animals and plants, not only for the sake of scientists and nature lovers, but in the interests and for the future of mankind as a whole.

I shall not dwell on the gravity of the destructive acts (daily more common, shameless and disquieting) perpetrated

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against large African herds, fur-bearing animals, marine mammals, birds with valuable plumage, antelopes prized as venison, the magnificently antlered moose, marsupials surviving from another age, and rare orchids. Nor shall I refer to the spectacular species whose accelerated extinction occurred in historical times or is still going on. I shall not raise the alarm today on behalf of the Australian ant-eater, the Indian rhinoceros or the Californian condor, which will soon vanish from the list of extant species. This has already been done many times over. Everyone knows that flora and fauna are steadily dwindling before the relentless inroads of hunters, natives and the military, and that the soil itself is gradually enduring the same fate as a result of single-crop industrialized farming, rice-growing on slopes, the planting of coffee-shrubs in Brazil and peanuts in Senegal. And as the exhaustion of the earth and the destruction of trees and animal life are accelerated, ceaseless erosion and the encroachment of the desert go steadily on. At the same time, the human population is increasing at a fantastic rate and seriously endangering the maintenance of the renewable natural resources of which men stand in perpetual need.

We know, too, that in the last resort, this situation can be remedied only by education, by continual warnings of the results of destruction, and by issuing directives for the protection of nature. Radio, films, primary and secondary schools, clubs, can all serve this cause. Museums will thus have an incentive to re-organize, and the general public, schoolchildren and students a reason for becoming acquainted with the facts and making them more widely known. Here is an opportunity for museums planned along modern lines to support this whole propaganda movement on behalf of the defence of nature and natural resources.

The curious visitor will be able to look at a series of dioramas reproducing, in their biotopes, the main animal and vegetable species. He will learn about their characteristic habits, the reasons why they are useful and how they can be used. He will be able to grasp their value and importance, and will at once appreciate the arguments in favour of preserving them. He will contemplate the dioramic reconstruction of an ancient and venerable New Zealand kauri forest now being felled for commercial purposes and carrying with it in its ruin the countless creepers, tree ferns and island animals whose home it was. He will learn that this forest country regulated the climate of the region, on which the country's fertility depended. He will realize the indissoluble link between the general environment – be it forest, swamp, mountain, atoll or river – and the species it shelters.

The scale of the destruction wrought will also be brought home to him – by statistics, land surveys and graphs revealing the rapid depletion of the world's mineral, vegetable, animal and forest resources and the steady encroachment of the desert, and, on the other hand, the constant and alarming increase in human population and in the demands consequently made on nature. And he will then understand the vicious cycle in which mankind is gradually being caught up.

Perhaps the prospect thus clearly revealed of disaster ahead will cause a sudden shudder of apprehension to pass over him. A new truth will flash upon his mind, and he will realize how relatively small a part is played by diplomatic manœuvres and political assemblies in decisions of peace and war. He will see that economic problems and the volume of production and consumption are consequences rather than causes and that behind all this

agitation is the selfish, destructive frenzy of man working havoc as he creates.

But there is yet another aspect – a moral aspect – of this problem. Many individuals, forced to lead the mechanized life that promises to be increasingly the lot of modern man, and anxious at times to retrace their steps to the source from which they came, will demand an escape from this intolerable robot existence. Thus the insight and encouragement they gain from a well-planned museum will make them understand better the need and the blessedness of a return to nature. They will discover the supremacy and power of natural laws and the grandeur of the cause upheld by those who point to the abyss that man is digging under the feet of future generations.

(Translated from French)

Note

1. *The Museums Journal*, London, November 1950, p. 165.

Role of museums of art and of human and social sciences

(from Vol. XXV, No. 1/2, 1973, pp. 26–44)

Georges Henri Rivière

Georges Henri Rivière was born in 1897. Under Professor Rivet, was in charge of the installation, in the Palais de Chaillot, Paris, of the Musée de l'Homme, of which he was Assistant Director from 1928 to 1937. Then became Chief Curator of the Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires of which, with the help of a team of enthusiastic workers, he assembled the collections and documentation, and prepared the programme for the building where it is now installed in the Bois de Boulogne. From 1947 to 1965, Director of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) of which he remains the permanent adviser. Since 1970, Lecturer in contemporary general museology at the Paris I and Paris IV universities. Author of numerous works which are still fundamental for training in this new discipline.

Museums and natural and human environment

Environment is the 'sum total of prevailing energy, physical and biological conditions obtaining in the immediate vicinity of living organisms'. It is also the 'concrete milieu constructed by man'.[1] As the science of environment, ecology exhibits the same duality; natural ecology and human ecology, however, tend to interpenetrate each other, indeed to blend. Especially in our time, serious and urgent problems arise concerning the fate of the entire human race, such as the using up of natural and mineral resources, pollution, the continuing industrial and demographic growth.[2]

Is this dualism, this convergence of the disciplines of ecology, reflected in the museum system? Is it possible to define the natural environment as the domain of the science museums proper; can one define the human environment as the domain of the museums of human and social sciences and those of advanced technology? Here again, the situation is complex, as shown by a first glance.

The science museum in most cases makes common cause with the museum of industrial technics to which it supplies a background of mathematics, physics and chemistry. This last museum presupposes a certain component of archaic techniques, drawn from history and ethnology; should this 'archaic' component become substantial, the museum of industrial technics turns into a museum of technological history, a branch of the museum of cultural history.[3] Both natural environment and human environment are part of it.

Whilst natural-science museums are concerned with the physical man as the apex of the tree of life they are also concerned with cultural man as the predator of the natural environment. The museums of the human and social sciences are concerned not only with the human environment; they are concerned with the natural environment as man sees, affects and conceives it. And this, under their respective forms of 'covered' museums and historical parks.[4]

Concentrating on historical art, the art museum contributes to the protection of the human environment. Concentrating on both historical and contemporary art, it offers a review of the natural and human environment as it is perceived and figured by the creative artist.[5]

As a new form of museum, the neighbourhood museum and the ecomuseum have an interdisciplinary character and place stress on ecology.

Displaying the human environment with the help of objects and models in museums of the human sciences

There are two traditional ways open to museums of the human sciences for portraying the human environment. They may make use of the 'real things', isolated or integrated[6] or 'models', concrete or abstract.

Single or collective real things are the objects collected by the museum one by one, ideally to a programme. Provided with pertinent informative material decoded by the visitor, they are evidences, after their kind, of the human environment. A harpoon will tell of the technological sub-environment of Neolithic man and a statuette of his religious or artistic sub-environment. A twentieth-century mask will tell of the social,

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religious or artistic sub-environment of an African ethnic group. A nineteenth-century French painting of wrestling will tell of the social and athletic sub-environment of a Breton ethnic group. Integrated real things are the objects which made up a particular ambiance, acquired as a lot or regrouped by the museum and describable as 'ecological units'. Interpreted in the same way as before and decoded by the visitor, they show the human environment more vividly than the isolated specimens. Units of this kind might be the complete contents of a 'period room', of a ship or of a tomb, transferred to the museum, with or without their domestic, naval or funerary architectural sub-environment.

Units of this kind may be available, or lack of space or technical considerations may preclude presenting them in the museum. Hence in cases such as these, use is made of life-size models or models on a reduced or enlarged scale. For instance, life-size would be used for the cast of a prehistoric statuette or the facsimile of a manuscript, an enlarged scale for a model of a Gallic coin, and a miniaturized maquette for showing a castle, or an archaeological, historical or rural site.

There are certain important aspects of the human environment which require to be shown but which, by reason of their abstract character, cannot be exhibited using real things. An ethnological model may then be used to show, say the articulation of work, religious or seasonal feast days in a village community.

Art museums

The environment, as has already been pointed out, is a limited-programme subject for the art museums.[7] The latter can take in architecture and town planning, arts of space-disposal; or it can ally itself with the history museum and the 'science museum' in the work of providing an introduction to the environment.

Backing up the history museum, it can supplement the works it shows by an illustration of the environments from which they came and the concepts of the artists who created them; it can help the visitor to feel involved by bringing him nearer, by one means or another, to the artist from whom he is far separated in time or space.[8]

Backing up the science museum, it can offer an explanation of the materials and techniques used in the execution of a selection of works which are particularly representative in this respect.[9]

History museums

For many years archaeological museums and history museums have gone along different paths. The first archaeological museum stocked with antiquities appeared in Rome at the dawn of the Italian Renaissance – the Museum of the Capitol.

From the nineteenth century onwards the domain of the archaeological museum has been progressively pushed backwards in time and extended in space. Defined from the cultural angle, its material, long artistic in character, has tended subsequently to embrace the whole of the cultural field. Defined from the technical angle, the material comes essentially from excavations, long crudely executed, but today conducted on exhaustive principles, whereby nothing of significance is ignored in the deposit being explored level by level, whether the remains be human, animal, vegetable or mineral. The

yield of these excavations is from now on subjected to physico-chemical analyses making it possible to date the items with precision. Summed up, the evolving policy of the archaeological museum over the years amounts to an even more exigent and ever more rigorous analysis of the human and natural environment of the societies where the materials originate.

However, such an evolution has, in general, shown itself up till now with varying intensity, according to the period concerned. The more ancient the culture observed, the more the archaeologist concerns himself with the human and natural environment and vice versa. As a result, for example, the Neolithic exhibit may illustrate much better the manners of hunting, fishing, farming and processing materials, than exhibits of more recent periods. With the latter the atmosphere becomes artistic and the objects are distributed and interpreted more by technical categories of product (sculpture, painting, ceramics, glassware, etc.) than in terms of their social or ideological significance. The satyr may be depicted dancing on the oenochoe, but what is of consequence is not the dance or any other social or cultural behaviour but, more often, the characteristics of the material and the brush-work. The first example of the natural-history museum first appeared in seventeenth-century Europe in the form of portrait galleries. At that time environment meant the attire, the attitude, the accompanists and the accoutrement of the person depicted.

The first major example of a national-history museum appeared in France at the time of the Revolution, and the second in the France of Louis-Philippe. Curiously, both pay some slight deference to the ecology: the first with its remains of ruined or disused monuments, cobbled together in a pre-romantic ambience; the second, however, event-oriented in its principle, with its large paintings depicting battles and its commemorative medals. Meanwhile most history museums have been confined to their own nation or region, depending on their geographical scope.

Whether nationally or regionally oriented, the traditional types of history museum in most cases despise the illustration of the society in all its aspects and present their material arranged by technical and artistic forms, to the detriment of its economic, social, cultural and ideological significance. And if they do bring out these aspects, they generally do it with evidence in the form of art works. In fact, in placing the accent on society, history museums ignore the role of dominated society and belittle the expression of social environment.

Archaeological museums and history museums, however, tend to come closer together. A few examples only will be quoted, drawn from the West and the East showing in every case the progress of the system of periodization and of the concepts of history.

For about the last twenty years, if I am not mistaken, at the Hermitage Museum, two sections in the archaeology department on Scythian and Slavonic culture respectively have stood out resolutely from the other sections in this department in dealing with social, economic and cultural themes, backed up by clever cartography.

Established in Washington in 1964 by the Smithsonian Institution, the large and magnificent United States Museum of History and Technology is concerned not so much with political history and the

history of events as with the technical, economic, social, demographic and cultural history of the American people.

In the new layout introduced around 1968 the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities of the British Museum has abandoned the classical formula of subdivisions by techniques with contents in dated series for subdivisions by periods with complex and selective contents. One such is the 'Roman Britain' subdivision which, with themes comprising economics, techniques, the society, the class of native and Roman cultures and human ecology, and perhaps the most remarkable, its renovated galleries.

Likewise abandoning its subdivisions by techniques, the department of Greek and Roman antiquities of the Louvre Museum is preparing a new layout with a succession of period exhibits with complex and eclectic contents on the one hand, and study series on the other.

Through progressive approximation archaeological museums and history museums end by merging with a system of successive mixed-content period exhibits from the earliest times to our own day. By way of conclusion I shall give a few examples.

From as long ago as the inter-war period in the Soviet Union, and since the Second World War, in the peoples' democracies, a good many local museums have been effecting a periodization on the following lines: pre-feudal society, feudal society, capitalist society, socialist society.

The frontier between archaeological and historical museums has also been abolished, since the last war, in museums most ambitious in scale, e.g. museums of urban history in Warsaw, Copenhagen, Stockholm and in the Hungarian National History Museum in Budapest.

Rennes affords yet another example with the Musée de Bretagne started in 1946. Here, broadly speaking, the sub-themes of the periods have not been determined by the collections available in advance, but by the structures of history. In the last section to be opened, on the origins of Brittany, an initial sub-theme deals with Brittany before man's arrival there, and the human periods are presented in the context of the natural environment. The last section, currently in preparation, will deal with the Brittany of modern times of the future.[10]

A large department on the history of the Netherlands was opened in 1971, in Amsterdam, in the Rijksmuseum. There are presented successive periods of human history in their complexity with an accent, however, on the artistic expression and the role of the popular structures in the society. The futurology of the Netherlands is presented through the medium of a rich collection of diagrams prepared by the national planning services.

A project for an Algerian national-history museum is under study in Algiers to be presented in eight periods ranging from geological times to the foreseeable future in a detailed and consecutive context of natural ecology.[11]

From this competition between archaeological museums and history museums of which I have mentioned a few aspects I shall attempt to draw a few conclusions.

It is difficult to see how any but the most jagged of saw-tooth boundary lines can be traced between the two types of museum in chronological terms, in view of the great diversity of patterns of cultural

development throughout the world. What differences there are in this respect, between Europe and pre-Columbian America, between Maghreb and New Guinea, to go no further.

One of the most effective ways of arousing the visitor's interest and, more generally, that of the community which supports the museum, is to show the future implications of trends to be observed in the section devoted to the contemporary period in a history museum. If the archaeological museum wishes to open windows on the future, it should become a history museum.

In this particular case, however, theory is less important than practice, and no international museum's regulations exist compelling a particular museum to place itself in a particular category of museum in virtue of a particular definition or a particular terminology.

The formulas vary, stemming as they do from the local, regional or national museum system, and determined as they are by the aspirations of the population, the experts available and the material possibilities.

What is important, regardless of whether the museum calls itself an archaeological or a history museum, is that the community which supports it should feel involved; that it be given an exposition of its historical heritage as a trampoline for its future development; that, with the museum's help, it learns to know its human and natural environment better.

Ethnological museums

Ethnology is the science of human groups, considered in their idiosyncracy.[12]

A large number of museums throughout the world are concerned with this discipline. The first of them appeared during the latter part of the nineteenth century, already conforming to the three most common models in this category: the general ethnological museums, the regional ethnological museum and the open-air museum.

Many problems which the museums in this discipline pose have parallels in the history museums. I shall not go over this ground again here save to underline major roles which ethnological museums are called to fill. These roles consist in: teaching mutual understanding between cultures and peoples, in their points of resemblance and their points of difference; combating racial prejudice; expressing culture in all its different aspects, be they technical, economic, social or aesthetic, concrete or abstract, in the context of their natural and human environment, in their world as they experience it, operate it and conceive it;[13] illustrating the historical heritage of living populations as a trampoline for development; helping the peoples of newly independent countries to become aware of their national identity.[14]

Museums of the social sciences

It is the function of sociology to establish advance frames of reference which clearly make it possible to explain the traits whereby any distinctive group fits into a social mould.[15] In the face of terms of reference as broad as these, social-science museums are by way of being rare birds in the international repertory of museums.[16] It is tempting to seek the reasons for this.

As an abstract discipline, sociology does not appear to be interested in the language

of the object, the 'real thing' whose vital communication is one of the museum's major attributes. While sociology uses diagrams it usually does so in the two-dimensional form, by reason of its overt preference for the written word. It lacks at present the relatively large number of mass platforms available to archaeology and ethnology, with the press, radio and television. It does not yet feel the need to equip itself with a verbal language of wide diffusion, transposed from a scientific verbal language nearly incomprehensible to the layman. All these are perhaps circumstances which account for the small number of sociological exhibitions, the tenuous contacts between sociology and museology and that rarity of specimen museums in this domain of which I have spoken[17] with the exception, of course, of the accomplishments of one sociological branch of the museum, the pedagogical museum.

To tell the truth, if sociology does not use the museum, it is used by the museum, in so far at least as the museum avails itself of the rigorous methods of sociology to evaluate the reactions of its real public and to estimate its potential public.[18]

At all events, an increase in the numbers of social-sciences museums and more frequent inclusion of sociological themes in historical, artistic and ethnological exhibitions would contribute to building up the image of discipline useful to modern society with a public which too often ignores it when it does not confuse it with technocracy.

Sociology would gain access to new communication media, both visual and audio-visual, those in fact which the museum already has at its disposal, adapted to the specific needs of sociology; statistical and structural three-dimensional models;[19] sound-tracked and 'moving' graphic diagrams in the form of superimposed transparencies and films; figurative presentations in the manner of cartoon strips; 'real things' serving as concrete and vivifying symbols, inlaid in the visual sociological communication.

Neighbourhood museums

Museum has described this new type of museum which has already passed from the stage of experiment to that of success. The Anacostia Neighborhood Museum is a remarkable example of this type of museum; started in Washington with the assistance of the Smithsonian Institution.[20] It serves a community of some 20,000 persons, in the black ghetto of Washington.

The neighbourhood museum is not a museum in the traditional sense of the word. Following the acquisition of a Mobile Division and thanks to the additional facilities to house both an Arts and Crafts Centre and a research centre and library, it has 'become at once a museum, a multi-media centre, a skills training facility, a meeting place for community groups and a cultural arts centre'.[21]

Here people dance, sing and work, debate social issues, study and create Afro-American culture and put their hands to the museographic clay in this living neighbours' museum, actually a multi-disciplinary museum of urban ecology created by a poor community to be held up as an example to great museums.

From the open-air ethnological museum to the ecomuseum

The name 'ecomuseum' is a new one, but the idea is by no means new and to be

found in germ, and in more than the germ, in various parts of the museum world.

Its most obviously recognizable ancestor is the open-air museum: a collection of specimens of traditional architecture, mainly rural, transferred to a park along with their domestic, agricultural craftsmen; or other equipment or with period items from elsewhere and with re-creation of their original surroundings. This type of museum is particularly well represented in Scandinavia, where it originated. Several hundred such museums exist in the world.

To these groups of ecological micro-units, the open-air ethnological museum generally adds one or more buildings retained on the site or custom-built in which complementary exhibitions, permanent or temporary, of furniture, specimens of folk art, costumes, etc., are housed. Examples are the Lingby Open-air Museum near Copenhagen and the Welsh Folk Museum of Saint Fagans, which is a branch of the National Museum of Wales.[22]

A step further from these developments, the ecomuseum consists essentially of two interrelated museums – a spatial museum which is an open-air museum, and a temporal museum which is enclosed. The underlying idea was developed in France and in Algeria from different starting points.

The 'spatial museum' comprises a collection of contiguous or separated parcels each of which is an ecological unit representative of the regional environment, on which there may or may not be buildings of cultural interest preserved *in situ* or transferred from elsewhere, and fully equipped, as in the case of the open-air ethnological museums.

The 'chronological museum' houses collections of specimen objects and models plus audio-visual programmes, also representative of the regional environment arranged by periods, from geological times to the present day.

The forecasting of the future, or futurology, is not denied a place in the ecomuseum, far from it. In the chronological museum it can systematically be shown at the end of the periods, usually presented in the form of models and audio-visual programmes representative of projects adopted or under consideration, or even contradictory projects. In the spatial museum it may, from time to time, bring about exhibitions of new accomplishments or experiments.

Planned on these lines, the ecomuseum does indeed seem to be likely to achieve on a modest scale, all of the basic aims of the museum.

It can serve as a research and experiment facility for specialists in the natural and human sciences,[23] more particularly ecology which is their common bond. It can ensure the preservation of invaluable samples of architectures and sites threatened with disappearance.

It can play a part in the education and culture of a very wide audience: a local public who see their origins depicted – these even down to the still fresh impress of a recent past – who feel still more involved with the museum by its evocation of their present and the forecast of their future which the ecomuseum encourages them to build; a regional, national and international public, for whom it provides an explanation of the country which attracts their visiting and subjects for reflection with regards to their own countries; an intra-regional or extra

regional 'schools' public escorted by teachers; groups proceeding from cultural organizations escorted by those in charge.

Several ecomuseums are in the process of installation in France, either in the setting of nature parks (nature reserves) or not.[24] Other ecomuseums are under consideration in France.[25] An ecomuseum is under study in Algeria, in an oasis of the north Sahara at Bou Saàda.

Conclusion

'Since the subject of human ecology is a condition rather than a thing ... the condition, rather than the things that exist under the condition, is the central theme of an ecological exhibit'.[26]

This proposition advanced by an American museologist in an article on the principles of environmental exhibits may serve as a conclusion to my study.

May the museums of human and social sciences take it to heart and find inspiration from the experiments which this article evokes, responsible as they are for introducing their communities and their foreign visitors to the problems of human environment – nay more, as we have seen, the problems of the natural environment, so closely are the two domains dove-tailed.[27]

(Translated from French)

Notes

1. Cf. Pierre George, *Dictionnaire de la Géographie*, Paris, PUF, 1970, p. 155; also entries 'Ecology', 'Animal Ecology', 'Human Ecology', 'Population', in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, New York, N.Y., 1964.

2. Cf. Edward J. Kormondy, *Concepts of Ecology?* Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1969.

3. This is the attitude of the Deutsches Musuem in Munich.

4. Cf. in the present article inset concerning the Museum at Biskupin.

5. Cf. Charles Parkhurst, Assistant Director, National Gallery, Washington, in *Museum and Environment* ... The Environmental Committee, American Association of Museums, Washington, New York, Arkville Press, 1971.

6. Cf. Duncan F. Cameron, 'A Viewpoint: The Museum as a Communication System and Implications for Museum Education', *Curator* (New York), Vol. II, No. 1, 1968, pp. 33–40.

7. Cf. Parkhurst, op. cit., p. 163.

8. Cf. Duncan F. Cameron, 'The "Language" of Museum Interpretation', in *Museums, Society, Knowledge*. Special number of the *Journal of World History/Cultures*, No. XIV, pp. 48–57.

9. Cf. the exhibition *Breughel et Son Monde* (Breughel and His World), Brussels, Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, 1969 (a catalogue has been published).

10. Cf. Jean Yves Veillard, the problem of the history museum with reference to the museum of Brittany in Rennes. In *Museum*, Vol. XXIV, No. 4, 1972, pp. 193–203.

11. Cf. S. A. Baghli, 'Les Musées d'Histoire et leur Contribution au Développement des Pays du Tiers Monde', *Museums, Society, Knowledge* (special number of the *Journal of World History/Cultures*, op. cit).

12. Cf. A. Leroi-Gourhan, 'L'Expérience Ethnologique', *Ethnologie Générale, Encyclopédie de la Pléiade*, 1968, pp. 1816–18. Cf. also G. H. Rivière, *Séminaire Muséologique National, Algiers, February 1969*, Paris, ICOM, 1969, pp. 45–53 (duplicated).

13. Cf. Leroi-Gourhan, op. cit., p. 1817.

14. The Museum of Niamey is one of the most noteworthy examples of open-air ethnological museums for the presentation of the human environment (cf. *Museum*, Vol. XXIV, No. 4). The current issue contains an account of an exceptional experiment, consisting of a major structurization of an ethnological gallery around an ecological theme (cf. article on the new gallery in *Man in Africa*, American Museum of Natural History, New York). The environment is featured in the renovated museum of general ethnology recently opened in West Berlin.

15. Cf. Leroi-Gourhan, op. cit., p. 1818.

16. Only a few museums of social sciences are listed in the archives of the UNESCO/ ICOM Documentation Centre.

17. A gallery is supposed to be under way, relating to social structures, in a large American museum of natural history. The Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires, Paris, announces a temporary exhibition on the family.

18. Cf. *Museum*, Vol. XXII, No. 3/4, pp. 204–11.

19. Such as the remarkable three-dimensional sociological model featured in the first part of the gallery *Man in Africa* in the American Museum of History in New York.

20. Cf. Zora B. Martin, 'Urban Ecology and the Inner City Museum', *Museums and Environment*, op. cit., pp. 168–71. The Anacostia Museum was the subject of a communication to ICOM in 1971, presented, together with a film, by its Director, John Kinard.

21. Of the two of the most striking exhibitions put on by the Anacostia Museum, one held on the premises and organized at the request of the youth commission of the museum was devoted to *This Thing called Jazz*, and the other, a travelling exhibition, was staged by the children, adolescents and adults of the community and was entitled *The Rat: Man's Invited Affliction*. Cf. *Museum*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1, 1972.

22. A theory of the open-air museum was adopted by way of a conclusion to an ICOM symposium on open-air museums (*ICOM News*, Vol. II, No. 1, February 1958, pp. 22–5). *Museum* has on various occasions published articles on open-air museums, and in particular in Vol. X, No. 1, 1957.

23. By the way, far from our minds is the idea that the principle of interdisciplinarity is evident in ecomuseums only; it is brought out in museums of other disciplines also; e.g. the Tropical Museum in Amsterdam.

24. In the setting of the Regional Nature Park of the Landes de Gascogne: Ecomuseum of the Landes de Gascogne at Sabres. In the setting of regional National Park of Brittany: ecomuseum on the island of Ushant and of a high valley in the Arrée mountains. In the neighbourhood of the Naitonal Park of the Cévenne; ecomuseum called Cévenol Museum (cf. above page 36 and inset plate.) In the setting of the urban community of Le Creusot-les-Mines: Ecomuseum of Industrial Man.

25. Especially in the setting of the National Park of the Cévennes, in the neighbourhood of Mont Losère and the source of the Tarn;

and on the shores of the Etang de Berre, at Istres, an Ecomuseum of Industrial Man.

26. G. Caroll Lindsay, 'Creating and Building Environmental Exhibits', *Museums and the Environment*, op. cit., p. 131.

27. Cf. generally, already quoted in respect of art museums, the publication by the American Association of Museums: *Museums and Environment.*

Cultural history museums and human ecology – a challenge to integration

(from Vol. XL, No. 2, No. 158, 1988, pp. 213–16)

Bo Nilsson and Bengt Rosén

Bo Nilsson was born in Sweden in 1941. Degree in art history, ethnology, ethnography and archaeology. Worked with school programmes and later with archive questions at the Nordic Museum in the 1960s and early 1970s. From 1976 to 1983, was head of the photographic department at the City Museum of Stockholm. Since 1984 has been at the National Council for Cultural Affairs working with projects on ecology and new technologies in museums.

Bengt Rosén was born in Sweden in 1941. PhD. In ecology. A teacher of natural sciences, since 1971 at the high school of Visby, Gotland Island. Has worked as a freelance author in news media since 1968. Promoter of the Museum of Nature of Gotland 1974–85. Member of the special committee on education of the Swedish Society for the Preservation of Nature. Has done evaluative work on behalf of the Swedish Board of Research 1985/86.

'Each individual's idea of reality', according to the Nobel prizewinner Konrad Lorenz, 'is that with which he interacts daily, with which he has to get to grips in everyday work situations'. Each person builds up his or her own special form of reality in this way. The same can be said of our common way of life, our society. At best these pictures of reality work in most of life's ups and downs. But sometimes another type of reality than that we should most like to see, or with which we would prefer to live, runs a race with us. It may be a question of life or death – someone close to us dies, a prime minister or a president is assassinated – it might be a matter of peace or war, or it could be the collapse of the environment around us.

The environment in danger

So far we have not, at the everyday level, noticed so much the fact that the ozone layer has become considerably thinner from the use of freons and other almost indestructible substances; or that the earth's climate is slowly heating up because of increased carbon dioxide from the combustion of fossil fuels; or that on our planet we exterminate at least one animal species every day; or that dioxins collect in our food and inside our own bodies. But in many cases the threat to the environment is quite obvious. It might be the dust bowl in the United States in the 1930s, the catastrophic drought in the Sahel, flood disasters in Bangladesh and China, or forest destruction and the accelerating corrosion of historic monuments and buildings in Europe by acid rain. Sadly, the list can go on and on. We often call these phenomena natural disasters, but in fact they are cultural disasters, caused by our own lack of knowledge, and above all by our own imperfect grasp of reality!

The role of museums

Vital questions affecting the future are at present dealt with at different levels in society, and for many people it can be difficult to form an accurate overall impression. It is here that museums can play an important, indeed a central, role as centres of adult education. Cultural history museums have not traditionally reflected the ecological aspects of our reality. The potential and pattern of life given to us by nature is, remarkably enough, still not reckoned as part of our human culture. Nevertheless humanity during its whole long existence has taken its starting point from, and worked within, an ecological reality. On the basis of the cultural and natural history research of recent years, it is quite clear that cultural history cannot be properly understood without some knowledge of the preconditions and framework afforded to us by nature. And reciprocally, the part played by nature in today's world cannot be adequately grasped without a proper knowledge of the history of man and his exploitation of natural resources. The United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development has energetically pointed to the need for this sort of overall view.

Knowledge and experience can be passed on in many different ways, but no other medium has the same unique possibilities as the museum to work with so many of the recipient's senses: sight, hearing, touch and smell, and sometimes even taste and balance. Museums can combine the intake of knowledge with aesthetic and emotional experiences, and with creative activity, in a way which has no equivalent anywhere else. Neither is there any other forum, which can bring about direct contacts in the same way between the researcher and the artist, on the one

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hand, and the general public, on the other. Museums can also be a meeting ground between non-profit-making associations and the general public.

In today's situation, therefore, as we face momentous and difficult questions about the future, the contribution of museums to social debate and the dissemination of information is a matter of the greatest urgency. With their multi-disciplinary and integrated approach, cultural history museums can assume greater importance as resources for adult education about human ecology. To provide accurate information about present and future paths of growth of our society, they may have to reorient and broaden their research work not only as regards culture, but also in respect to natural history.

The Swedish case

This new role for museum has been highlighted in recent years in Sweden as a result of a survey by the National Council for Cultural Affairs. The Council proposed a number of urgent development projects for museums, including one called 'The Spread of Ecological Knowledge'. The objective of the project is to determine how ecologically orientated activities might be integrated with the work of Swedish regional museums, whose activities are concentrated mainly on cultural history and art. A further aim of the project is to study and experiment, at the Skansen open air museum in Stockholm, with the spread of ecological knowledge, and we hope to be able to create a powerful focal point there for ecologically orientated museum education. Ever since its beginning in 1891 Skansen has had an ecological bent. With a high attendance (some 2 million visitors each year) it should be relatively easy to develop Skansen further in this direction. The National Museum of Natural History in Stockholm has been proposed as the scientific and administrative base for the project, and would also be responsible for the execution of the project together with Skansen and the National Council for Cultural Affairs. The proposal has met with a very positive response and resources were set aside for it by the Swedish parliament in June 1987. The project will continue to the end of June 1990.

The 'Spread Ecological Knowledge' project

The project strives to achieve a real integration of ecology, in the activities of the regional cultural history museums, and by implication to reveal how nature and culture, past and present, interact to form the total human environment. We find the essential elements to support human life, and for humanity's material and spiritual culture, in the interplay between human beings and nature within the ecological framework.

In Sweden, museums are autonomous institutions with their own governing bodies, aims and traditions, so that the way in which this integration is developed will vary from museum to museum. Nevertheless great interest in the project has been shown by the regional museums.

In an effort to strengthen the place of ecology in documentation and information dissemination activities in the regional museums it will be necessary to link the local situation and people's everyday lives with the traditional areas and forms of work of museums. Since throughout history humanity has taken

the global ecosystem as its starting point, and been active within that system, there should be no intrinsic difficulty in finding such connections. Museums and history are full of ecological information, even if, until now, visitors have not usually looked at the material from this point of view.

Two main themes

The problem lies rather at another level: that of being able to find subject areas for documentation, exhibitions displays, and other activities with a high degree of both local relevance and general interest. Two subject areas seem to be well suited to this approach. Inherently interdisciplinary, the shifting structure and use of the cultural landscape during different periods, as well as the occurrence and use of natural resources, may be placed scientifically on the border between cultural history and natural history. The cultural landscape forms not only the basis of our life-support system; it has also in turn been reshaped by us through time. Moreover, particularly for early subsistence societies, but also in newer industrialized society, it has shaped humanity's imagination, and indeed its whole world-view. This is a natural basis for an 'ecosystem' type of thinking. Alternatively, to apply an ecological perspective in the regional museums, one could start with humanity's economic life. The landscape and natural resources are the rerequisites for agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining, shipping, etc. In order to broaden and strengthen the more limited, albeit more concrete, perception of reality determined by local conditions, the work of museums should also be set in a larger frame of reference: the natural parameters for life on earth and humanity's influence on the environment in general. Without such perspectives, we cannot inspire understanding of global events or create conditions, also in an environmental context, for the sort of solidarity necessary with, for instance, the peoples of the Third World.

Ecology, humanity

Meanwhile, it is important that the basis for ecologically oriented work in museums be not just a matter of crisis-consciousness. Ecology embraces so much and can be endlessly exciting. It can give insight into the fascinating causal connections in nature, into patterns of dependence and co-operation between living creatures and their environment, thereby illuminating other forms of life than our own. By creating new perspectives on life in our own society, ecology can create – or re-create – a respect for life and an understanding of the battle for self-preservation taking place in nature, and a sense of responsibility for the environment. Ecology and other sciences also give us a rigorous basis for feelings of solidarity, not only with the all the peoples of the earth, but with all other living creatures.

Humanity's interference with the earth's ecosystem is accelerating. The results are often described in terms of pollution, poisoning, impoverishment, etc. We know that much of the damage done is irreparable, but also that nature sometimes shows an astounding and impressive capacity for healing itself. For each species or ecosystem that disappears the value of those that remain increases. With each new person is born new hope for life on earth – if we learn to use the earth in the right way.

In spite of the negative trends and prognoses for the future the United

Nations World Commission for the Environment and Development remains confident for the future. Nevertheless, it is quite unhesitating in its judgement:

> Many of the present efforts to protect and uphold the progress of man, in order to meet man's needs and realize his ambitions, are quite simply not acceptable – either in the rich or in the poor countries. They consume too heavily and too quickly already overexploited environmental capital; so that we will not be able to afford them in the future without going bankrupt. They perhaps show a profit in the balance sheets of our own generation, but our children will be the inheritors of the losses. We are borrowing environmental capital from the generations to come without any intention or possibility of paying it back. Our children and grandchildren will condemn our wasteful ways, but they will never be able to collect the debt we owe them.

Inventorying biodiversity: an African perspective

(from Vol. XLVIII, No. 2, No. 190, 1996, pp. 31–4)

Joris Komen

Although the increased awareness of biodiversity preservation has highlighted the crucial role of biological collections in museums, seemingly little attention has been given to the urgency of inventory work. In Joris Komen's view, making a collection accessible and useful to the world community should be a major museum priority. The author is curator of birds at the National Museum of Namibia. He has spent many years working on the endemic avifauna of the south-western arid zone of Africa, focusing on behavioural and vocal character comparisons, mating systems and other 'non-traditional' biological systematic methods.

Museums the world over act as storehouses for artefacts, objects and specimens representative of human culture and the environment. Most museum visitors never see these collections; they see only selections of items presented in public exhibitions. People seem to know very little about the value of these 'hidden' collections and how they are used. Typically, they expect to see curiosities, and this expectation is aggravated by the supposedly 'enterprising' and 'market-oriented' display and education policies of many museums. These policies are justified with appeals to economy, an effacing conviction that museums will only survive a grim economic future on the back of showmanship and box-office appeal.

To present such a critical view of museums may seem unjust, but I believe that we have to assert their roles and responsibilities and, especially, the role of their collections and associated inventories, their expertise and documentation, in the community at large. It is inconceivable that a large national museum would ever be able to display for public viewing any more than a tiny fraction of the collections in its custody. However, this does not prevent such a museum from providing a significant service to society by using its collections for the creation and dissemination of new knowledge.

Museums should be unanimously committed to popularizing the usefulness of their collections, as clearly mandated by their custodianship. Biodiversity conservation programmes demand greatly enhanced knowledge and understanding of the composition of ecosystems, and the detection of environmental change is dependent on comprehensive understanding of effective bio-indicators. The recognition of bio-indicators involves substantial inputs from the taxonomic expertise and natural history collections found in museums. These collections, and especially their inventories, are vital in providing fundamental biodiversity information, and also play an important role in environmental impact assessment. Accordingly, if biodiversity conservation programmes are to be accountably implemented, museums will need to play a front-line role in identifying natural heritage materials that warrant protection, and it would be beneficial to have a well-informed society which recognizes, endorses and supports museums' custodianship of such heritage, without harbouring expectations of seeing dodos on display.

The biodiversity crisis has become a priority in the global environmental community, focusing considerable attention on the urgent need to inventory and describe all living species. The 1.4 to 1.8 million species described by taxonomists account for less than 15 per cent of those that actually exist![1] Although the increased awareness of biodiversity preservation has highlighted the crucial role of biological collections in museums, seemingly little attention has been given to the urgency of inventory work by most museums.

This is especially noticeable in museums of developed countries. Less than 1 per cent of the information in the world's museums is computerized, and, despite the fact that museums in the developed world hold hundred of years of biodiversity data in their collections, few of them have essential biodiversity information immediately to hand.[2] Indeed, when one asks the simple question, 'What species of birds collected in Kenya do you have in your collections?', the inevitable response from most museums in developed countries is 'We can't say for sure' or 'Come back in five to ten years' time, and we'll be able to help you!'

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The biodiversity inventory bandwagon is sagging under a fantastic load of money blithely spent on technology in support of complicated inventory programmes, high-powered computer systems, and huge, centralized databases, which rely on the collation of data from many different sources, and which can rapidly become outdated and even restrictive. Increasingly prominent in museums is a fiercely defended conviction that detail is essential. It appears that inventorying of collections by highly qualified personnel is rationalized by adding complex details; admittedly, this may vitalize an otherwise incredibly boring and arduous task but it does not, however, facilitate the rapid retrieval of essential biodiversity information. In attempting to inventory everything in great detail, the essentials are simply not being computerized fast enough.

Simplify, simplify, simplify

Many, if not most, countries are signatories to the International Convention on Biological Diversity, resulting from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992; An important obligation of the signatories to the Convention is the development of local, national and regional strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. However, such strategies may, in reality, undermine an immediate and urgent obligation to the developing world. These strategies ensure that experts remain employed in locally focused initiatives, without explicit commitment to the very countries most desperately in need of the essential biodiversity information hidden in the museums of developed countries. These museums should be encouraged to adopt a concrete commitment to developing countries; after all, the sheer bulk of their collections originates in the very countries that now urgently need the information!

There are glaring examples of such museums to be found all over Europe, many of which have become extremely popular tourist attractions in recent years, but have concurrently lost considerable credibility as scientific powerhouses. For example, some 1.5 million bird specimens are housed in beautiful conditions at the Natural History Museum at Tring, outside London; these collections are currently maintained by a skeleton staff of only four persons, and their computerized inventories are at a very early stage of development. This, in spite of the museum having an implicit commitment to biodiversity in its mission statement, and having established a co-operative programme to develop global capabilities and resources for the study of biodiversity.[3] Altruistic indeed, but it neatly sidesteps the fact that the museum's own computerized inventory initiatives leave much to be desired.

On the other end of the scale, many natural history collections in Africa are under-utilized, ignored or simply forgotten in Africa, museums are isolated, enjoying only limited local, regional and international contact and scientific collaboration. In many instances these relationships are based on short-term supply-and-demand initiatives, primarily the result of locally curtailed financial, logistic and, especially, intellectual support. It may therefore come as a surprise that many African museums have been strongly committed to biodiversity inventories for some time now. A good example is the Centre for Biodiversity at the National Museums of Kenya, which is well on its way in developing a computerized database and monitoring centre for biological resources in East Africa.[4]

Similar centres have been initiated in Namibia, South Africa, Uganda, Zimbabwe and elsewhere in Africa.

Budgetary constraints are cited by most African museums as a primary reason for slow or limited computerization of collections. Other limiting factors include the conservation of the senior (and usually older!) administrative staff in many museums, a paucity of computer-literate staff, and a plethora of 'unfriendly' software packages being used in the computerization of collection inventories. The very lack of discernable 'multi-platform' compatibility and standardization in database software is a grave cause for concern, as this inevitably puts off any aspiring newcomer to 'databasing', and severely limits the exchange of data. In the cases of museums with large collections, the very enormity of the task has resulted in slow starts in computerization.

There are probably fewer than 100 taxonomists employed in permanent research posts in museums and allied institutions in Africa, the majority of these being in southern Africa.[5] The conservation of biodiversity and the description of unknown species in Africa is largely dependent on the state of taxonomic research as well as the present and future potential for employment and funding in this field at museums. Biodiversity data are essential for education programmes which, importantly, provide the ammunition for career recruitment drives in developing countries.

Throughout the world, the distribution of taxonomists is ill-matched to the species-richness of taxa and to work remaining to be done on different groups. The vertebrate fauna are studied by a disproportionately high number of taxonomists, while invertebrate taxa are neglected. It is necessary to redress this imbalance globally, by encouraging the inventorying and taxonomic research of invertebrate groups. Worldwide description rates of new taxa are unacceptably low, given the urgency of the task, and a revision of museum working methodology is clearly necessary.[6]

Besides the description and identification of species, existing collections must be computerized with an immediate focus on collection locality and date information so as critically to identify the biogeographic areas where new specimens should still be located and collected. Furthermore, museum scientists should be engaged in taxonomic work, as well as in recruiting and training others to become adept at computerized inventorying and field collecting. The brilliant concept of 'para-taxonomists', developed and successfully implemented by the National Biodiversity Institute (INBio) in Costa Rica, should urgently be adopted by more museums throughout the world.[7]

Some radical methods should be adopted to inventory essential biodiversity information. Simplified, minimal inventory programmes, limited to as few data-entry fields as possible (taxonomic name, locality and date), should be developed in such a way as to facilitate their use by computer-illiterate persons. Such relational databases, with enhanced iconographic and multimedia capabilities, should be cross-linked with locality gazetteers and geographic information systems, without effecting complicated training processes for the personnel involved in data-capture. By implication, considerably more expertise is needed in the actual development of appropriate software.

We should be implementing long-term institutional mechanisms to encourage

and facilitate the supply of expertise from developed countries and, furthermore, enhance and optimise the use of such capabilities already in place in Africa. Local, regional and international operational partnerships, based on mutual interest in museum-based material, information and research resources, have become increasingly viable as a result of improved means of communication and, in particular, the rapid transfer of information made possible by computer technology. It follows that museums should increasingly be able to host and assist each other, providing appropriate support and facilitates for research, training, technological exchange and public education. Ultimately, museums should evolve beyond pandering to myopic public voracity for exhibitions and rather define themselves within the context of their substantive role in the responsible service of society.

Notes

1. P. H. Raven and E. O. Wilson, 'A Fifty-Year Plan for Biodiversity Surveys', *Science*, Vol. 258, 1992, pp. 1099–1100.

2. C. K. Yoon, 'Counting Creatures Great and Small', *Science*, Vol. 260, 1993, pp. 620–2.

3. The Natural History Museum. *Annual Report for Science*, 1992, London, The Natural History Museum, 1992.

4. National Museums of Kenya, *Saving a Nation's Finite Variety. The Biennial Report of the National Museums of Kenya July 1980–June 1991*, Nairobi, National Museums of Kenya, 1991.

5. D. R. Drinkrow, M.I. Cherry and W.R. Siegfried, 'The Role of Natural History Museums in Preserving Biodiversity in South Africa, '*South African Journal of Science*, Vol. 90, 1994, pp. 470–9.

6. P. Alberch, 'Museums, Collections and Biodiversity Inventories,' *Trends in Ecology and Evolution*, Vol. 8, 1993, pp. 372–5.

7. R. Gámez, Biodiversity Conservation through Facilitation of its Sustainable Use: Costa Rica's National Biodiversity Institute', *Trends in Ecology and Evolution*, Vol. 6, 1991, pp. 377–8.

Part III – The transfer of knowledge

Children city in City of Sciences and Industry, La Villette, Paris, France Photographer: Dominique Roger; copyright UNESCO

The concept of an international travelling exhibition was advocated by the UNESCO Museum's Programme when the Organization first came into being. It can be seen as pioneering the enterprise of circulating cultural information in which museums would become both the suppliers of materials and supervisors.

The nineteenth-century museum characteristically catered for individual enjoyment, but changing public expectations were taken into account in the twentieth century. This resulted in the museum's primary objective becoming collective education, with emphasis being put on ensuring contact with the material and real world through the use of the collections. Originating in the United States,[1] this conception favoured visual experience and the needs of the learner, and made the museum a place which played a very effective role in the transfer of knowledge. The previously inaccessible collections became tools for providing knowledge to young visitors through individualized play activity. Young people still constitute the category of visitors at which the majority of the museum's knowledge transfer resources are aimed.

The museum did not escape the theorization of its functions in the urban and functionalist fever of the 1970s. Its architecture was now seen as constituting a social space designed for communication, and its collections as having to be presented in a way which ensured the optimum conditions for transmitting meaning. Exploratory analyses were made of the social, physical and psychological aspects of museum work. These analyses adopted the language of experimental science, an expression of the desire to provide knowledge transfer models with a scientific basis. A new type of museum was required which had a much broader approach. It would cover a wide range of subjects and address the major contemporary issues by means of objects, writings and field studies. This was the trend which would lead to the present credo governing the diffusion of information.

Informatics, which initially gained ground through the use of documentary databases, testified to the increased application of science to knowledge transfer. It also brought profound changes to the organization and functions of the museum as a space for dissemination of knowledge. The present use of the multimedia plays a strategically important role in the evolution of museum policy. The transposition to the museum of forms of logic and habits originating from other media ensures renewal, as much as it raises questions about the future of the museum's specific characteristics in a knowledge society.

Note

1. The Exploratorium, which was opened in San Francisco in 1961, was the pioneer for science museums for children.

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Explaining art visually
(from Vol. I, No. 2, 1948, pp. 148–52)

Katherine Kuh

Katherine Kuh was Curator of the Gallery of Art interpretation and Associate Curator of Painting and Sculpture at the Art Institute of Chicago. Editor of the Institute's quarterly publication, The Bulletin.

The confused public reads books and magazine articles about art, listens to countless lectures on the subject and submits to frequent gallery tours. The radio tells about art; films show how to paint a picture, how to make sculpture, how to prepare a fresco. These may all be legitimate and useful ways of explaining art to the public. But too often these techniques are chiefly literary and verbal. I am becoming more and more convinced that what the layman needs is a visual explanation of art in terms of the material itself. Because this method has been exploited so little and used so rarely by art historians and museums, it has as yet remained unnamed. During the war, of course, visual aids became valuable educational adjuncts. The Armed Forces early realized that written instructions carry more weight when accompanied by illustrative material. They found that men, who in an emergency could not remember the written word, were better able to recall a pictorial image.

For the past several years the Art Institute of Chicago has been experimenting with visual techniques in its Gallery of Art Interpretation. So far as we know this is the only permanent gallery of its kind in the United States, though many American museums arrange explanatory exhibitions from time to time. Specifically, the Gallery of Art Interpretation tries to answer visually some of the many inevitable questions which puzzle the museum visitor. If a written statement about art can be proved visually, the result becomes less a literary theory and more a pictorial image.

What we have learned in the Gallery of Art Interpretation results almost entirely from a trial and error system based on the reactions of large numbers of visitors. We now know that dramatic lighting, asymmetrical installation with much rest space, a short pithy title and a completely non-technical condensed text are 'musts'. By means of asymmetrical installation a feeling of intimacy and emphasis can be achieved. Because an educational exhibition should include all manner of objects, such as photostats, blow-ups, wire constructions, maps, montages, reproductions, originals, diagrams, still-life set-ups, shadow boxes, dioramas, plus whatever more is needed, the installation must remain fluid. Rigid rules about eye level heights or conventional symmetry can be abandoned. The varied objects must be arranged and installed for comfort and for beauty. An exhibition architecturally designed to lead the visitor from one connected panel to another will do so more successfully with plenty of rest space. I am inferring that most educational exhibitions tend to be too crowded, too dull and too insistent.

A title which catches the public imagination is a good idea. For example, in selecting the name for an exhibition about Tintoretto, we avoided such *clichés* as 'Tintoretto the Venetian' or 'The Baroque Tradition and Tintoretto', in favour of the more timely 'Close-up of Tintoretto'. An exhibition entitled *From Nature to Art* explained visually how and why the artist distorts. Because the American public resents and suspects modern distortions in art, we carefully avoided the word 'distort' and in its place substituted 'transform'. Two other shows, *Looking at Sculpture* and *Explaining Abstract Art*, were both well revealed by their titles. *Still Life Comes to Life* attempted to demonstrate the many rich and varied approaches artists have used in handling still life. This subject was chosen knowingly because still-life painting has always been comparatively unpopular with the lay public. The exhibition, *Space*

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and Distance, as the name indicates, is concerned with a visualization of the difference between these two evasive elements in art. Because the layman is particularly confused by the modern artists' constant references to space relations and spatial concepts, this subject was chosen.

Long typewritten wall labels (the curse of educational exhibitions) have been eliminated in these shows along with all technical words. The interpretative exhibitions should *show* rather than tell. Its function is not to present an illustrated book on the wall, but to encourage the visitor to learn by *looking* rather than by reading. Brief terse captions help to point up the explanatory material. All lettering should be large and integrated architecturally with the objects on the wall so that one reads as one looks. The intention is not to keep the visitor balancing from one foot to the other as he absorbs literary ideas about art, but to allow him to move with comfort and ease, learning about art in its own visual language. Certain ideas cannot be successfully conveyed in this manner and naturally should be avoided. A good rule is to make only those statements on the wall which can be proved by visual examples, comparisons or contrasts. Also, it is well to remember that descriptive rather than emotional adjectives are better. Words like 'quaint', 'beautiful', 'charming' are relative and personal; they only help to confuse. Adjectives should be factual and concrete.

A visual technique we have found invaluable is based on the comparative method. For instance, in the exhibition *Space and Distance* the statement is made that the artist suggests space on a flat surface by means of colour. To prove this, two comparisons are used. By changing a small area of colour in a painting by Miro the space relations in the canvas are completely altered. This the visitor sees for himself when he compares the two pictures. A text of only one short sentence is needed. Likewise two Japanese prints, identical except for colour differences, are shown together and prove the same point. In the exhibition *Still Life Comes to Life* a Spanish still life from the Art Institute collection is explained in terms of its carefully composed design. Next to it are four smaller copies in which various comparative changes have been made. In one, each object in the picture has been altered, though the colour and composition remain the same, proving visually that in this case subject matter is less important than design. In another copy, one object has been omitted; everything else remains the same. The composition collapses. The visitor accepts and understands these statements because he sees the proof with his own eyes. He is being shown rather than told.

There is no doubt that an explanatory gallery in a large museum can prove useful in more ways than one. Experimental techniques are frequently worked out here and then transferred to larger and more formal exhibitions. Equally important is the opportunity to integrate art objects from different periods and places by borrowing original material from all parts of the museum, including Oriental art, decorative art, prints, drawings, paintings and sculpture. Rigid museum departmental boundaries are broken down and art objects are seen more intimately in a new and fresh setting. I am inclined to believe that most educational exhibitions use too few originals and too many reproductions. Great works of art, if sensitively installed, are in no way visually damaged in an explanatory setting provided the

interpretative material remains subsidiary to the original work of art. This can best be done through spacious installations and careful lighting.

Repeatedly we have found that legitimate audience participation has been helpful in educational shows. To avoid pedantry and at the same time to stimulate interest, questions are asked of the onlooker which lead him to make comparative evaluations. For example, a photographic blow-up of a distorted running figure by Picasso is copied in correct proportions. The caption reads, 'Does this exaggerated figure by Picasso seem to be running faster than the correctly proportioned copy?' The visitor makes up his own mind to accept an otherwise difficult distortion because he understands the reason for it. Poetic effusions accomplish less than literal questions designed to help the onlooker evolve his own answers.

We have tried other types of audience participation. In one instance a small relief sculpture was placed in a deep shadow box and the visitor was invited to turn on and off various different lights, each of which changed appreciably the appearance of the sculpture. The caption read, 'Sculpture is more affected by changes in light than is painting', and not even the most sullen iconoclast could deny this statement after proving it to himself.

Variety in installation techniques helps to avoid monotony, but this is not to say that any modern gadget is the answer. Objects projecting a few inches from the wall sometimes can be used successfully for emphasis. Chicken wire, glass, cardboard, mirrors, corrugated paper, plastic and many other materials enrich textures and help to avoid the usual deadly appearance of educational exhibitions. It must not be forgotten that good proportions, intelligent use of colour and variety in both scale and form are justifiable means of obtaining a dramatic presentation, without which the interpretative show defeats its own purpose. After all, the idea is to interest and to educate. Once and for all, let us eliminate the old-fashioned static glass cabinet crowded with too many objects and too many labels.

Here it might be helpful to explain briefly the actual step-by-step procedure we have found best for organizing educational exhibitions. Because the curator starts with an idea only and not with a collection of art objects, the problem he faces in an explanatory show is totally different from that of the more orthodox exhibition. First he must decide on his audience. In the case of the Art Institute our audience is the average layman and it is to him and to his interests that the Gallery of Art Interpretation is dedicated. In a university museum or a research gallery the audience might conceivably be on an entirely different level. Our second step, after selecting the subject to be explained, is the preparation of a scenario, keeping in mind always the floor plan of the gallery so that the exhibition is conceived in terms of its architectural limitations. Budget and available art material are also items which influence and sometimes restrict the scenario.

Basic to a successful visual analysis is the absolute necessity of keeping the general idea simple. Explain only what can be explained visually and above all avoid covering the history of art in one show. If the visitor leaves with two or three new ideas fully absorbed, that must be considered enough. We find it best to include in the original scenario, which

becomes our working plan, much more material than can be comfortably used. Elimination takes place during installation, thus permitting less rigidity in the final selection. In other words, a written scenario is not the ultimate solution; the actual material on the wall becomes the true arbiter. Meaning should never be sacrificed to an attractive installation, but both can be happily combined by a certain amount of ingenious juggling.

At one time, by attempting to control circulation in the Gallery of Art Interpretation, we hoped to have our various exhibitions unroll step by step, logically and even sometimes chronologically. Using architectural and psychological directives we tried to regulate the order and sequence in which the visitor viewed the installations. But recently, by doing away with arrows and signs, we encouraged the visitor to move freely where he wanted, for we have found that exhibitions conceived in terms of self-contained units, all of which contribute in a similar manner to a central theme, are more successful. Regimentation, directives, orders and aesthetic preaching weary the onlooker. He prefers to move at his own pace.

The explanatory exhibition is only one answer to art education, but it is a field which has been sadly neglected and only rarely modernized. I might say, in conclusion, that there is one definite danger inherent in such exhibitions, the danger of dogmatic formalism. A factual statement coupled with its visual example can sometimes tell too much or too little. Nuances, subtleties, pros and cons are apt to be lost, though careful wording in the brief text greatly diminishes this danger.

Museums and temporary exhibitions
(from Vol. IV, No. 1, 1951, pp. 5–10)

Introduction by Grace L. McCann Morley

Grace L. McCann Morley was Director of the San Francisco Museum of Art from 1934. D.Litt. Paris 1926. Ll.D. honoris causa, Mills College 1937. Curator of the Cincinnati Art Museum, Ohio, 1930. Second Vice-President, American Federation of Arts, 1939. Counsellor for Arts at the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, 1941. Member of the Committee of the Fine Arts Buildings of the International Exposition in San Francisco and Director of Pacific House 1940. Member of the Committee of Experts on the Arts, State Department, 1940–1945. Author of numerous articles on Contemporary Art and Latin American Civilizations. 1946–1949 on leave from San Francisco Museum of Art, Consultant for Museums, UNESCO Preparatory Commission, then Head of the Division of Museums.

The importance that museum leaders today accord to temporary exhibitions is clearly indicated by the kind and quantity of replies to the enquiry on the subject undertaken early in 1950 for *MUSEUM*.

The enquiry has made it clear that temporary exhibitions are now nearly everywhere a normal part of museum operation. In many museums in Great Britain, and some on the Continent and elsewhere[1] temporary exhibitions were the result of a valiant struggle to maintain exhibition services to the public when valuable permanent collections had to be put into safer shelters and galleries were left empty. Those that began to use temporary exhibitions in Great Britain then do not intend to return to the static displays of the past, and elsewhere also, despite limitations of space, costs, and the work involved for inadequate staffs, temporary exhibitions are not likely to be entirely abandoned. The information assembled revealed too that temporary exhibitions are by no means confined to art museums and galleries, as had been quite generally assumed, though until now it is there that they have reached their greatest development. Just as circulating exhibitions furnish a pattern of co-operation likely to be extended eventually to other museum enterprises, temporary exhibitions undoubtedly indicate an increasing tendency on the part of museums toward active participation in contemporary life.

Though recognition of the usefulness of temporary exhibitions seems now to be universal,[2] there were some reservations and specific difficulties described. Above all there were repeated regretful references to the time and effort taken by the preparation of temporary exhibitions away from curatorial responsibilities and from scholarly research on permanent exhibitions and collections.

One scholarly and conscientious curator, reporting on the enviable record of temporary exhibitions in her own museum and on the schedule organized in recent years by museums of all kinds in her country, goes so far as to call temporary and circulating exhibitions the 'fashionable disease' of her museum generation. She justifies the reproach by describing, in addition to the disadvantages usually attributed to temporary exhibitions, the unfortunate temptation they provide for over-spectacular display and publicity seeking when emphasis falls so strongly on making museum materials attractive to the lay public. However, she too describes their advantages, even for museums rich in well presented permanent collections.

One director, while conceding that changing exhibition bring in visitors, deplores their tendency to deflect the attention of the public from what he considers to be primary obligation of his museum and gallery: the acquisition of fine examples of art for the permanent collection. Another art leader, whose country is rich in art in its original setting, agrees to the need for temporary exhibitions for modern art in order to make new works known. He disapproves of them, however, for older art, not only because of risks of damage and loss, but because he believes that art should not be divorced from the surroundings for which it was created, and its unity with its setting destroyed by display techniques dictated by the taste of today. A hardworking director phrases well a reservation felt and implied by several when he speaks of the distortion and overstimulation of public interest by too large and too spectacular exhibitions. It is impossible for even experts to assimilate them completely in the time available, and they are quite overpowering to the ordinary visitor. By

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contrast, such over-spectacular exhibitions cause fine permanent and smaller temporary exhibitions to pass unnoticed.

Many directors have considered carefully the problem of coherence and deliberately plan a co-ordinated exhibition programme referring directly to collections. They place temporary exhibitions close to the permanent exhibitions upon which they have some bearing, and use them either to supplement what is not comprehensively included in the permanent collection, to examine in detail aspects normally presented only in a general way, or in some other fashion to augment or broaden their normal resources.[3] Many thoughtful museum directors and curators also appreciate the advantages of temporary exhibitions as a means of educating and encouraging research work on the part of the staff.

Temporary exhibitions can also be used to build up permanent collections. Some museums, for instance, use them to present to trustees or governors and to the local public a group of objects – works of an artist, of an art movement, of a period, folk art, examples of of historical periods or decorative arts styles, scientific specimens – with the understanding that one or more items are to be selected for accession to the permanent collection. Loan exhibitions, assembled from private collections, have often been the occasion of gifts to the museum of art objects and paintings, examples of folk arts and scientific specimens, and are therefore often cited as a most helpful kind of temporary exhibition. Such exhibitions are a means too, of discovering material buried in private collections, and not only can they enrich museum collections but they may result in the increase of scholarly knowledge, and further research. Folk art museums frequently make a temporary exhibition the occasion for surveying the resources of a region or district and bringing to light, and if possible into their own collections, examples in private hands.

The distrust of display techniques in temporary exhibitions as sometimes 'over-spectacular' and inappropriate to art of the past, specifically mentioned by two museum experts and implied by others is a point that deserves serious thought. There is no doubt that temporary exhibitions, designed to attract public notice and to justify publicity, lend themselves to more extreme techniques of exhibition than would be acceptable for permanent exhibitions. The short period of showing eliminates fear that the appearance will pall and be out-dated before the exhibition is over – a risk that cannot be taken for a permanent exhibition, and which automatically tends to impose sobriety. Several directors noted specifically, however, that they did not 'dramatize' temporary exhibitions but followed their normal installation practice, so that temporary exhibitions harmonized with their permanent displays. Several added that they nevertheless endeavoured to give to each exhibition a different appearance from that of the preceding one. Some deliberately plan more elaborate or striking display of temporary exhibitions to provide variety for their exhibitions halls. A few consistently use temporary exhibitions as a testing ground to try out new methods and styles of installation before adopting the most satisfactory ones for their permanent exhibitions. Here it is perhaps as well to point out that the enquiry and the resulting information and discussion concern temporary exhibitions in museums, that is institutions having permanent collections and carrying on research. Exhibitions in expositions and fairs, in commercial places, and even in exhibiting centres not unlike museums such as Stockholm's Liljevalchskonsthall, Brussel's

Place of Fine Arts, Paris' Grand Palais and some of the exhibition halls and art centres in other places are not being considered here. The problems and aims are often somewhat different, and may range from those identical with museum's to frankly commercial displays. All such successful exhibitions have an influence nevertheless, often an extremely stimulating one, on museum exhibition techniques. Scientific exhibitions in world fairs have, for example, greatly influenced the development and methods of scientific and technical museums. Any discussion of installation should, in fact, cover all kinds of exhibitions everywhere, and not only those in museums.

Though the greatest contribution to temporary exhibitions is undoubtedly the emphasis their use has put on museums' responsibilities towards and their relations with the public, they must be credited with broad influence on museum thinking and operation in other respects as well. They have everywhere fixed attention on the appearance and effectiveness of methods of display, and have encouraged a critical attitude and a desire for improvement. The opportunity they offer for trying out new and striking exhibition styles and techniques, devised especially for certain types of material and for specific purposes has had a general influence on all exhibition installation. They have tended also to broaden the range of materials used for exhibition, to emphasize the value of supplementary material, bringing into many museums reproductions[4] for educational displays, and other aids such as models and diagrams, thus varying the methods of visual communication on which museums rely to accomplish their work.

Many museums in provincial centres and small cities reported the need to use temporary exhibitions, where the proportion of the public interested in museums is small, to assure the repeated visits required to reach a good level of annual attendance. In the smaller places the problem emerges clearly. For museums in centres of population, tourist cities with a large transient population interested in sightseeing, the problem is obscured by a large casual attendance in no way dependent on the museum's programme – beyond the fact of its owning important examples perhaps – and probably in large proportion made up of persons coming for a single visit. Undoubtedly changing exhibitions with their promise of new fare and the publicity which they occasion are the most effective means of encouraging frequent visits. Even for the great museums, which offer in permanent exhibitions all that one can absorb of art or science in a year of repeated visits, other distractions of contemporary life provide competition. Only the changing attractions of temporary exhibitions and their recurrent publicity can hope to overcome this to some extent.

It is clear from this survey of temporary exhibitions in general, as from any consideration of circulating exhibitions, that they are much more used and have been more fully developed in the fine and decorative arts than in any other field. However, several articles in this number indicate the success which historical exhibitions can have, and the contribution they can make, to understanding between nations when they are exchanged internationally.

Notes

1. An interesting example is reported by Egypt in regard to the museums of Cairo: the

Museum of Arab Art took the occasion of having to puts its collections in a safer place to organize in its empty galleries temporary exhibitions of great artistic interest borrowed from private collections. The Museum of Modern Art, Cairo, is the only other museum which presents occasional temporary exhibitions of local artists or local art groups, although the Egyptian Museum has recently, as an exception, organized temporary exhibitions of paintings of monuments relating to its own collections, and from time to time it places recent acquisitions on view in its central hall before installing them definitively.

2. The report on Sweden, where temporary exhibitions in all types of museums have long been a feature of the national museum movement, emphasizes their generally recognized importance: even small provincial and local art galleries and historical museums, otherwise inactive, have a room, a corner, a screen or a showcase labelled: Temporary exhibition.

Though not all countries could be included in so brief a survey, a sampling of each area of the world has been presented. For example, of the Latin American countries only Mexico (*MUSEUM*, Vol. III, 4, p. 292) is known to have a national circulating exhibition service, and temporary exhibitions are usual there in archaeological, historical and art museums. It is in South American art museums that temporary exhibitions are usually found. Argentina is a pioneer in that regard and the art museums at La Plata and Rosario and in a few other provincial cities have long records of activity. Uruguay's capital, Montevideo, has many changing exhibitions, and recently an art museum that makes much of temporary exhibitions has been established at São Paulo, Brazil (*MUSEUM*, Vol. I, 3–4, p. 138).

3. Few museums go as far in integrating temporary exhibitions with permanent displays as P. Nørlund, Director of the Danish National Museum, Copenhagen, advocates in recommending the placing of such exhibitions in the midst of exhibited permanent collections. He prefers exhibitions that are not too large and sometimes scatters the different sections in the appropriate chronological location throughout the museum in the case of those covering several periods. An example is the *Little Table, Set Thyself...* exhibition seen by 50,000 people in 10 days. Visitors passing through different parts of the museum in search of the exhibition's various sections could hardly fail to broaden their museum experience, and the association of the material exhibited with the appropriate setting provided by permanent displays was advantageous.

4. Some museums never use reproductions; others use them only for auxiliary, purely educational, purposes in study exhibitions for school service, for loan; a few use them for temporary exhibitions. Aberdeen reports that it was the first museum in the country to show the UNESCO exhibition of colour reproductions on modern art. This exhibition, because of its quality has had great success, has been shown in museums as well as in other places of exhibition in centres where there are no public collections on modern art, and has made a genuine educational contribution. Only the Science Museum of London reported going beyond visual methods by planning temporary exhibitions for the blind, in which the objects may be handled, and labels are in Braille as well as in ordinary printed text.

Museum, psychology and architecture
(from Vol. XXVI, No. 3, 1974, pp. 157–77)

Manfred Lehmbruck

Manfred Lehmbruck was born in Paris, 1913. After studying with the architect Mies van der Rohe, and working in the office of Auguste Perret in Paris, carried out numerous constructions: Reuchlinhaus Cultural Centre, Pforzheim; Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg; Federsee Museum, Bad Buchau, University institute buildings, Braunschweig, etc. Now working on cultural building projects: Museum and Cultural Centre, Rottweil, the German Academic Foundation, Würzburg, etc. Member of the ICOM International Committee on Museum Architecture and Techniques.

Sociology: Social context and place of action

Sociological questions today lie at the heart of intellectual debate; they influence and modify the museum's view of itself and consequently its architectural structure.

The museum is particularly well suited to serve as an experimental sociological model, since it is, on the one hand, a place where individuals develop an awareness of self and society, a feeling of togetherness, while on the other it exerts a three-dimensional effect within a verifiable and limited framework. It can also serve as a sociological model because in a society regulated by the division of labour it is one of the last free spheres of existence.

Since sociology deals with all human relationships, which are almost as difficult to grasp in their complexity as reality itself, all we can attempt to do is to formulate a few major points sufficient to trace the outline of pragmatic spatial models. A familiar difficulty arises here since the sociologist speaks a generalizing analytical language while the architect speaks a pragmatic language incorporating spatial and material images, which means that specific scientific concepts have to be accommodated within an over-all conception forming a representational whole.

As stated earlier, this paper will deal with the complex web of problems surrounding the modern museum largely owing to its pluralistic nature – as regards both the content of the collection and the sociological composition of visitors. It stands to reason that the smaller, more homogeneous and specialized a museum is, the easier it will be to solve the problem of co-ordination, even though it thereby loses something of its specific character.

The museum's position in relation to the public can be defined as an interaction between sociological self-representation and self-realization. The museum curator here acts as a catalyst.

He and his few fellow-workers have to cope with a phenomenon of extreme and baffling complexity.

It is therefore desirable that, whenever a museum is built, a systematic sociological study should be carried out, including an analysis of structures and trends and the formulation of value systems, leading to scientifically based forecasts. The most difficult part of this task – the preparation of pragmatic models – can be accomplished only by an interdisciplinary team which is capable of evaluating accurately and sufficiently far in advance the repercussions on the spatial representation.

The starting-point will be an analysis of the circle of people participating in the museum-event. On account of his paramount importance, the visitor will be the main object of discussion here, museum workers, scientists and so on being mentioned only in so far as they enter into contact with the visitor, as informants or guides for instance.

From the sociological point of view a distinction can be drawn between actual and potential visitors. Statistics should be collected on both groups, including demographic characteristics, origin, occupation, education and ecological data. The question of catchment area should be studied in detail, for, unlike schools and hospitals, a museum does not cater mainly for local users but for widely-scattered groups, including tourists merely passing through.

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Equally, a museum will not have the same features in an industrial society as in an agricultural society. If the latter is progressing towards an industrial society, its future sociological development must be thoroughly studied.

Research into potential visitors has an important part to play whenever a new museum is built, giving rise to theories, hypotheses and forecasts. However desirable it may be to attract the largest possible number of people (in theory, everyone) to the museum, the task of the sociologist consists in recognizing limits and defining the circle of people who are likely to be involved in view of their capabilities, attitudes or geographical circumstances.

Psychology: Perception and behaviour

The prime importance of psychology is immediately apparent from the fact that the museum's fundamental tasks are to arouse and sharpen sensitivity. In this article we shall deal with two aspects: the psychology of the perception of objects and that of architecture. Psychosociology and sociopsychology are involved in these two aspects, but should nevertheless not be considered separately. It is an established fact that the way one looks at an object is governed by psychological laws similar to those governing the way one looks at architecture, since both fall into the category of eco-psychology. Furthermore, in the museum the two should merge in a single experience.

The museum provides us with an ideal opportunity to study the relationship between the environment and the mind, for its demands – both varied and lofty – are circumscribed within a limited spatial and temporal framework. Moreover, there are wide areas in which research of this kind, though highly necessary, is still in its infancy, and the margin of interpretation is great compared with the measurable values of physiology, for example. In this field, however, as in others, statistics, questionnaires, the way in which the pupil dilates and contracts, and so on, give us clear information about the interdependence between the internal and the external world. Architectural alterations should be carried out step by step, and should be based on scientific data. It is a matter of urgency that definitive conclusions be drawn from such research, in order to counterbalance the certainties of the exact sciences and technology. Indeed, it is in the field of museum architecture that psychological knowledge should be recognized as providing decisive criteria; it should supply sound arguments for making the 'conservation machine' work more efficiently.

The following analyses will concentrate on the part played by the unconscious, for its role is central although it seldom receives much attention. The interaction between consciousness and the psyche – as may be shown, for example, in the so-called 'reward' test – should form the basis for all architectural planning.

Space

Human perception obeys the rule of biological equilibrium; in other words, contradictions are not eliminated, but are maintained in a state of tension and simultaneously counterbalanced. Furthermore, these contradictions must be recognizable as such through a structure which contains them.

The same psychological pattern also governs the museum visitor, who must

find a balance between the drives which urge him on and those which restrain him – between emotion and criticism. All perceptions are accompanied by intellectual activities, which may be described as a configuration of forces. The latter are based on constants, such as direction, size, shape, colour and so forth, which underlie the visitor's reaction.

The museum is a special kind of space in that, besides the man-space relationship, there is also a complex space-object relationship. Ideally, architecture and object form a whole, usually such a whole as may have existed at a moment of creation. In a museum with several different departments this whole cannot be reconstituted, because the object has been removed from its context. However, it is quite possible to reproduce the inherent conditions of the environment of a work of art, for example, when these remain abstract: scale, light, direction, etc. Only the recognition of the harmony between the object and the space, inasmuch as this is a discovery of identity, can constitute an aesthetic experience. Moreover, a display which has been carefully planned down to the last detail may very well conflict intolerably with the space. For this reason it is essential to remember that space-object identity strengthens the visitor's capabilities from the point of view of the psychology of perception.

Psychic motives and reactions associated with movement

The need to move is an elementary drive in the human being; the pleasure which he takes in his own abilities generates a feeling of freedom. In space, a subliminally perceived restriction causes a profound disturbance. Transposed into the context of museum structure, this means that the structure should always clearly invite the accomplishment of an appropriate 'task' and offer a possible satisfaction, which should coincide with the suggested circuit to be followed.

Taking possession should follow curiosity, conquest and assimilation, in accordance with a psychological gradation consistent with a 'space strategy'. An opportunity should be provided for the closest possible contact with the object.

Identification and place of movement

For the well-being of the visitor, it is very important that he should be able to find his bearings, that he should be able, at any moment, to see where he is in relation to a known point. Direction-finding is a primary instinct in man, who gradually becomes master of his environment by means of a system of guidemarks. By its very nature, the museum tends towards the principle of spreading out (breaking up of the distance to be covered according to direction, distance and time) rather than towards that of compression (shortening of the route by technical means such as lifts, escalators, etc.).

It is a fundamental requirement in museum architecture that the visitor should be able to have an over-all view of the space in which he moves. Nothing can take its place, not even electronic guidance devices. Nevertheless, considerable attention should be paid to proportions and to modulation, for the visitor must perceive and decide step by step.

The requirement that the space in which one moves should be 'open' is derived from a conception that is the opposite of the 'surprise effect' which is sometimes sought

after and which can be achieved only through a deliberate lack of visibility. The contents of an exhibition may very well be like a 'dance of the seven veils'. It is of the essence of architectural solutions to enable this intellectual contradiction to be removed by spatial means; for instance, a 'diversion' from the circuit may connect up with the 'current' of the over-all space.

The idea of 'fluid' exhibition space has already been interpreted literally several times, resulting logically in exhibition rooms with curving shapes (no corners, unbroken transition from ceiling to walls and to floor). Here, two psychological principles are in conflict:

1. The visitor's awareness of place and sense of direction lose their simplicity and clarity owing to the interpretation of shapes. Lacking systematically arranged guidemarks, he is in a state of uncertainty.

2. The blurring of outlines reduces the number of intersections of surfaces, which are a nuisance. The background is calmer and contemplation of the object is freed from surrounding optical 'interference'.

The highly formal treatment of space requires very careful placing of the object reminiscent of baroque ideas. Thus the collection is the determining factor: flexibility is almost impossible.

Museum circuit

The visitor's feet may follow a wide variety of circuits which may be analysed as psychological seismograms. We shall deal only with movement in a straight line and with a winding track, which are the manifestations of different types of behaviour in response to the environment. Because of haste and lack of time, a visitor may follow a straight track in which he gains little from a sensory point of view; if he is unpreoccupied and makes real contact with the exhibits, he will take a winding path, resembling the subtle movement of animals. Conversely, the circuit traced out by the architecture suggests the corresponding behaviour.

In the initial stages as in the final stage, the pattern of tracks also has various psychological aspects, which we shall now attempt to describe, setting aside questions of organization:

1. The circular pattern leads back to the entrance, and raises the following problems: the goal suggested is identical with the point of departure, it is possible at any moment to estimate approximately the amount of effort needed to complete the circuit, and a 'return crisis' may occur.

2. The linear pattern has the following advantages: entrance and exit do not coincide, the amount of effort needed is unknown, and the goal may be unconsciously considered as genuine 'progress'.

It should also be emphasized that, for reasons of psychological economy, the visitor should never pass the same way twice.

Space and object

Every object needs space if its qualities are to be brought out. Every visible form projects itself beyond its limits and to a certain extent invests the 'empty' surrounding area with its presence. Only a few of the countless systems of spatial

relationship that is theoretically possible to construct around each figure are spontaneously perceived; namely those which give rise to the simplest conditions for the figure and the observer. Since the spatial characteristics of the environment determine the shape and the position of the visible object, space must be organized in a way which is in harmony with them. From the point of view of the psychology of perception, the object and the surrounding space must therefore form a whole, the exact definition of which, however, is constantly changing. Just as man should determine his relations with what surrounds him, an outstanding object should be regarded as a 'living being' whose environmental conditions should be the best possible in each case.

In a museum the object exhibited indisputably has pride of place and not the architecture; but the latter must be regarded as a decisive factor in the environment, and not merely as a visual 'accompaniment'. It may be said, however, that in many cases it is possible to reach a consensus as to whether a display is good or bad – in other words, psychological dynamics has its own laws which, unfortunately, have been insufficiently studied hitherto. The relations between several objects and between objects and space form a constellation of sizes and shapes, proportions and distances, etc., which is, in principle, subject to the same criteria of *gestalt* psychology as a work of art. However, the 'environmental conditions', the relative masses and the structures induced are so complex that, in general, the goal can only be attained by way of an empirical approach.

Keeping a record of the cultural heritage in the National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City

(from Vol. XXX, No. 3/4, 1978, pp. 179–84)

Noemí Castillo-Tejero

Noemí Castillo-Tejero was born in Mexico City, 1933. Master's Degree in General History, Autonomous National University of Mexico, 1951–53. Master's Degree in Anthropology and Archaeological Sciences, National School of Anthropology, 1954–60. Higher courses in prehistory at the Archaeological Institute, University of London, 1965–66. Diploma in Planning and Implementing Systems, Bull General Electric, 1970. Professor at the National School of Anthropology (1964–), the Spanish/American University (1976–), the Autonomous National University (1972–), Mexico. Archaeologist at the Prehistory Department, National Institute of Anthropology and History (1960–68). Chief of Section of Electronic Machines (1968–) and the Archaeology Section (1973–), National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City. Publications: twenty-four works published.

The National Museum of Anthropology of Mexico, formerly the National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography, has, throughout a long history that goes back more than a century, seen its collections of archaeological and ethnographic objects of national origin constantly grow.

As a national museum, its main function is to present the Mexican people with information about their history as reflected in archaeological objects, providing a vision of events in our territory since the coming of man to America (about 40,000 B.C.) until the time of the Spanish conquest in 1521.

In its ethnographic sector, it keeps, restores and protects materials from ethnic groups that maintain their indigenous traditions (these still exist in our country), since both the archaeological and the ethnographic aspects form, along with our Spanish roots, part of our national identity.

In view of the need to protect and preserve Mexico's archaeological and historical objects and as a commitment to future generations, the federal government has set up machinery for the protection and care of our archaeological treasure, entailing not only the enactment of laws and regulations but the creation of museums and the establishment of systems for the control of collections.

All this work has gone on steadily increasing since the construction of the present building of the National Museum of Anthropology in 1960; an example is the Federal Law on Archaeological, Historical and Artistic Monuments and Zones (1972), which lays down, as from that date, that all objects that are products of the indigenous cultures that flourished in our country prior to the arrival of the Spanish are to be regarded as archaeological monuments (movable and immovable) and are thus national property, private collections and traffic in any kind of archaeological object being henceforward prohibited. The INAH is the State organization responsible for laying down the guidelines governing research, conservation and supervision of all archaeological material.

Following the construction of the new National Museum of Anthropology building in 1960, the time seemed ripe to set up a new system for the handling and control of collections; the basic requirements of this system were that it should be more rapid and accurate and provide data that could be coded for future processing with an automatic data-retrieval system. Information concerning each object was not to be limited to administrative control requirements but was to provide all possible details for use by research workers, thus forming a vast data bank.

For this purpose the Electronic Machines Section of the museum was created in 1963, its main tasks being to update the system and institute rapid information control.

Research workers in the Machine Section accordingly made a careful study of the information contained in the old catalogue cards, coming to the conclusion that all cataloguers had in the past tried to work as efficiently as possible but that the lack of communication between them at times meant that the information they recorded was hardly systematic and was very subjective.

It was considered that the best way to remove this subjective element in cataloguing – in so far as this was possible – was to prepare terminological dictionaries

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based on existing information so that descriptions of objects would be standardized. Archaeologists and data-retrieval specialists, working as a team, were put in charge of this work.

Once the vocabulary was established, a new format was designed for the catalogue card, which was to contain exhaustive information.

The museum's Electronic Machines Section continued its work, taking into account the criticisms of archaeologist-curators and creating a new and more concise dictionary, the *Diccionario Básico de Términos para Describir y Catalogar las Colecciones Arqueológicas del Museo Nacional de Antropolagía de México* (1972).

Its basic feature was that it helped the systematization of information, since it was an open dictionary to which additions could be made when terms were lacking to describe any of the sections; all changes, when not a question of synonyms, had to be checked by personnel in the Electronic Machines Section. The recataloguing of the museum's collections was thus initiated.

Along with the new vocabulary, work proceeded on the new format of the catalogue card, as regards both the information it should contain and the way it should be systematized. The sections on the card were, in fact, those of the dictionary, being set out in the same order in both so as to save the time of cataloguing staff. Terms to be used in each section were always shown in alphabetical order.

In addition to the cards and vocabularies and so as to facilitate processing, coding systems were prepared. As it was not possible then to know exactly how many terms might be involved and as vocabularies were left open, a three-digit alphanumerical system was devised to code information, giving the possibility of over 40,000 keys. In the recataloguing of more than 60,000 objects new forms have not been required, and it is precisely this part of the card that is designed to provide information for research workers and the data bank.

Since a computer is not yet available, processing has been initiated with Bull 150 peripheral equipment and a tabulator. Catalogue cards are completed manually by the archaeologist-curator in draft form, and secretaries type clean copies of them. These cards serve, in turn, for the recording of information on eighty-column punched cards. When the computer becomes available, in the near future, this information will be transmitted directly from the printing machine to the card without requiring the intervention of the secretaries.

Our data bank for archaeologists is thus constantly expanding, and although we cannot calculate the eventual number of items we believe they may run into millions, since each object means at least one computer card, while for some objects there are two cards or even three.

The obligation on the part of the INAH to keep a check on archaeological objects at the national level stems from the law of 1972, which provides for the creation of new departments, including the Public Register of Archaeological Zones and Monuments, which lists all archaeological objects, including those in private collections, and which comes under the INAH. The register has adopted the system in use in the Museum of Anthropology, the same coded vocabularies being employed.

The Electronic Machines Section has also designed a new card, which is used in addition to the catalogue card and is known as an all-purpose card, being intended for use with all cultural objects of which the INAH acts as depository. The information it contains is the minimum required by each of the departments (Non-national Museums, the Public Register Department, the Inventory Department and the Computing Department). This card has twenty-three data 'boxes', which are coded at the same time as the card is prepared. Since it is an all-purpose card, time and effort are saved, for when the information is required by any of the four departments, a single card is sufficient. This basic card, also has at least one 35 mm black-and-white contact print.

To ensure that the cards, which are generally prepared by middle-level record and inventory staff, are properly filled in and that the information they contain continues to be as systematic as that in the Museum of Anthropology catalogue, use has continued to be made of the dictionaries, but the old (1972) dictionary for archaeological terms has had to be brought up to date and adapted so that it can be used both for catalogue cards and for the basic cards. This has led to the publication of the *Diccionario Básico para Describir las Colecciones Arqueológicas del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia de México* (1975). Since the basic card is an all-purpose one, a dictionary has also been prepared for historical objects, entitled *Glosario Básico para Inventariar las Colecciones Históricas del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia* (1976).

We believe that we have prepared the way for the creation of a national system for keeping a record of collections. We are at present at the cataloguing stage, made all the more difficult because of the accumulation of objects. However, the easy processing afforded by the catalogue cards, dictionaries and coding procedures makes the system simple to operate, and we hope that in under five years this checking work will have been completed and we can go on to the third phase – the general use of the data bank not only for the control of objects but for research work as well, thanks to the help provided by present-day computer systems.

It is our view that the decisive step in the standardization of information was the creation of the dictionaries; before these could be prepared, however, the material to be catalogued had to be ascertained, in order that the vocabularies might be relevant and superfluous terms avoided. The dictionaries were prepared by specialists in their field and had to be sufficiently accessible for use by middle-level staff – in our case, record and inventory clerks.

Since information is coded, it is ready for processing by any existing computer system. Our data bank is already extensive, and although information is still recorded on punched cards, we hope that in the very near future the INAH will be equipped with a computer so that information can be put in memory discs and rapidly handled. The information in question will be constantly available to the research worker, and the data bank will continue to expand, since much still remains to be accomplished in the archaeological field in Mexico. We hope to attain our objective, and for this we count on the support of the authorities, which has sustained us up to now.

(*Translated from Spanish*)

What is an 'intelligent museum'? A Japanese view

(from Vol. XLI, No. 4, No. 164, 1989, pp. 241–3)

Eiji Mizushima

Eiji Mizushima was born in 1956 in Yokohama. Graduate of Tokyo University of Science, in systems engineering. Joined Japan Science Foundation in 1981 and has since been responsible for exhibition system design for science museums. Planned and designed the Japan History Pavilion at Tsukuba International Science Expo in 1985. Leader of Display Engineering Study Project and Museum Engineering Study Group. In 1987/88, visited the Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie (Paris), and the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (Atelier de Bellevue), on scholarship from Japan Science Foundation.

Science museums are undergoing dramatic transformation today. The British Museum in London and the Deutsches Museum in Munich early became models for our National Science Museum, Japan's leading museum in this area. Both European forerunners were oriented towards collecting the heritage of the Industrial Revolution. Prominent discoveries and inventions that altered life-styles and life itself are exhibited along with portraits of celebrated figures. Naturally, they focused on their collections. Thus, Madame Curie's experimental equipment, Newton's reflecting telescope, and Watt's steam engine provide perennial pleasure to people who appreciate their historical significance.

In Japan today, a radically new type of science museum is being built in several places, referred to more often as 'science centres' rather than museums. My involvement in science-centre construction and exhibit design has led me to propose a special construction system, which is now eliciting interest and which aims to produce what I call the 'intelligent museum'. In this connection, a museum engineering study group was formed here several years ago and is now engaged in research on and evaluation of exhibit design and museums' architecture design. This article outlines our experiments and conclusions, with specific reference to museum architecture.

There have been three stages in modern Japanese museum architecture. The first was technological innovation in terms of structure, represented particularly by steel and concrete. In some cases the museum itself was endowed with monumental quality due to its structural characteristics. The second stage saw stress on innovation in electricity, lighting, hygiene and other facilities. Facility improvement stemmed from a concern for comfort in the exhibition environment and good conditions for preservation. The third stage is 'information' on recently completed buildings and their facilities are intimately linked to information and the intelligent museum is in essence one that highlights information and therefore makes structural provisions for information circulation and management.

The background

What is the background to the concept of an intelligent museum?

Technological innovation is progressing at a startling pace in modern Japan. In particular, advances in information processing and communication technologies, and networking as a form of integration of these technologies, are steadily escalating. This process has already touched all areas of society and penetrated even the ordinary home. It is predicted that the movement will proceed further, particularly as society makes the transition from hardware to software, from products to knowledge.

Architecture has evolved apace; cables and optical fibres criss-cross building interiors, and structural provision is made for exchanges of information conventionally written to become electronic. The 'intelligent building' was thus born, erected by office-leasing corporations in the United States in the early 1980s to attract tenant-clients. The concept was transplanted to Japan and began to take on new meanings to reflect conditions here. Though definitions are still far from final – or even clear – the intelligent building promotes efficiency in office and building management, being equipped from the start with sophisticated information and communication facilities

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characterized by flexibility and expandability.

Museum architecture is following suit, and our research team considers that the era of the intelligent museum is not far off. We have experimented with computers and sophisticated information systems for museum construction and exhibit displays attempting to introduce 'intelligent' functions into the museum. But a museum is not an office building and, while sharing certain functions and characteristics, it has other distinctive – even unique – roles and features.

What, then, is an intelligent museum? My idea of an intelligent museum is one that: (a) can control automatically museum operation and management and exhibit management; (b) can control the museum environment (exhibit environment and conservation environment); (c) is structurally equipped, both within and without, with information/communication capabilities; and (d) can control with computers and 'new media' equipment a visitor information service.

Implications for museum architecture

The bedrock of museum architecture is partly the same as that for living space and shelter designed for human beings: to protect and preserve artefacts, paintings, sculpture, historical documents, specimens, scientific heritage, and so on. On the other hand, museums have in addition an exhibition function, which of course also plays a vital role in determining museum architecture. I have, moreover, consistently proposed to expand the exhibition function's definition even to the extent of describing it as 'information'. If collecting and conservation are an information-receiving function, presentation can be thought of, and designed, as an information-transmission function. In speaking of modern museum architecture, I believe that the museum should no longer be seen passively as a receptacle for collections and visitors but, actively, as a device that receives and transmits information and supports various museum activities dynamically.

Internal networking – two examples

Here, I should like to offer two actual examples of computer networking inside a museum. The first is the local area network (LAN) system at Yokohama Science Centre which opened in 1985. The second is a more recent experiment in exhibition evaluation by the LAN system, which our project group conducted.

With progress in new media, the nature and means of interaction between information and the visitor have changed. In the past, the computer itself was an object of study and exhibition at science museums. Today, however, it is no longer a rare machine, and to use computers for communication with visitors is a challenge for museum professionals, as well as architects. One role of computers at the Yokohama Science Centre is to link human beings with different sources of information available to them in our institution. Children are, for example, to gain free access to the exhibits' graphic data base, and also to record information they wish to share with others. Also, information conventionally presented on labels is now displayed on the computer screen.

Inside the centre, several dozen computer terminals are distributed throughout the building and interconnected by LAN to

offer various services, such as guidance to the centre, special visual exhibits and simulation games. Thanks to this sort of interfacing, we are now becoming a much more accessible museum. Even at the Ontario Science Centre and the San Francisco Exploratorium, known for their daring science displays, computer use is limited to stand-alone microcomputers, and inter-terminal communication has not been installed. It should be noted here that enhancement of such interactive telecommunication functions requires structural accommodation, making it all the more important for architects to take full account of the criteria described earlier.

In the example just given, LAN has been used as a means to present exhibit information inside a science museum. Our research group has conducted another interesting experiment with LAN. We acquired monitoring data with computers about how visitors interacted with computers, to find out, *inter alia*, how many visitors actually used the computer, and how much they learned.

Briefly, the objective of the experiment was to measure effects on visitors of exhibition-related computer-aided instruction (CAI) software such as *The Cell, The Volcano, Earthquakes, Computers*, and *Outer Space*. At the same time, an image survey was conducted employing the semantic differential method. Also gathered and analysed were data on how visitors used the computer to seek, acquire and refine information and knowledge (what could be called the computer's 'study function'). How long do visitors use this function? Who uses it? When? How often? What paths of inquiry do they follow? When tested, how accurate are their responses? These were some of the questions on which we wanted enlightenment. After a visitor touched the computer keyboard and answered the first few factual questions (sex, age, software chosen), the entries were registered automatically in the study implementation programme, facilitating aggregation and analysis.

The experiment was a preliminary test for introducing the LAN system in museums, and was conducted for three days in January 1987. Some of its results may be summarized as follows. The total number of computer users during the three-day period was 1.199. The time of use was concentrated between 10.30 and 11.30 a.m. and again 1.00 and 2.00 p.m. (The museum's opening hours are from 9.30 a.m. to 4.50 p.m.). Foremost among users were primary-school pupils, junior-high-school and high school students, and adults in their twenties, thirties and forties. The majority of users were male.

Facts on visitor demographics, earlier known vaguely by impressions, were thus clarified simply and with no extra fuss by actual use of the computer, and we acquired reliable information on how best to improve information equipment and program efficiency, as well as how to pay due attention to different types of visitors and times when they are most likely to seek information and knowledge from the computer. We concluded that an 'intelligent' museum can become a more 'user-friendly' museum.

In conclusion, I wish to stress that bringing an intelligent museum into existence, either by top-to-bottom renovation of an existing institution or rebuilding anew, is fraught with problems for architects and museum professionals alike. Some are questions of detail; others are major issues often requiring costly solutions. All in all, creating intelligent museums is a real challenge, which – if faced squarely – may well lead us to a museum revolution.

Part IV – Identity, property and the protection of heritage

Statue, Tell-Asmar site, Sumerian civilization 2600 B.C., Iraq
Photographer: M.L. Bonsirven-Fontana; copyright UNESCO

The 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict originated from the ruins of the monuments destroyed during the Second World War. The very concrete measures taken at the start of the war to protect heritage were not enough to prevent the loss of irreplaceable cultural symbols. With the end of the war came the international realization that a country could maintain control of its history, and its cultural, scientific and economic development – in short, its identity in the concert of nations – only if the integrity of heritage could be safeguarded. With this realization came a sense of collective property, the desire to protect such property, and a sense of identity. This was what, in large measure, led to the unprecedented number of legal instruments established in the domain of cultural heritage during the second half of the twentieth century. And the museum, the institution which is at the very heart of conservation and heritage research, played a pivotal role in the process of securing these instruments.

Ninety-five per cent of present-day museums were created after the Second World War. Their initial objective was to carry out the systematic inventorying and identification work required to translate the renascent political and cultural aspirations into the material reality of images and objects. This task, which was carried out in the places where the works were conserved, raised the question of the legitimacy of the possession of objects between the societies for which they had original value and the ones which were studying them. The considerable effort made by the museums to carry out international training and equipment programmes constituted one of the responses to the question of the ownership of cultural property. Another was the slow and delicate work, begun after the independence of the concerned countries, to provide information and awareness about the need to guarantee the conditions of legal ownership.

Examples of the restitution of objects showed the construction, in practice, of a global cultural heritage ethic, and demonstrated the recognition of cultural and moral rights as principles of legal right.

At the same time, new civil bodies were created which have legal prerogatives in the field of heritage. They are the associations, councils and organizations which bring together and structure cultural minorities. These bodies revive and – more precisely – reinvest the function of research as well as that of the conservation of museum objects with a social content whose legitimacy is now on a par with that of the scientific content.

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Protection of cultural monuments and museum treasures in the USSR during the Second World War: some technical problems

(from Vol. IX, No. 4, 1956, pp. 250–5)

S. Davydov and J. Matsulevich

The Second World War entailed the loss of millions of human lives and the destruction of numberless monuments of civilization of great historical and international interest. Many monuments in the Soviet Union suffered heavily, and some of them, of value to the whole world, were completely destroyed.

The destruction by the retreating Nazi armies of the great church of the Pecherskaya Monastery at Kiev – an incomparable 11th century masterpiece – was a heavy loss; while certain exceptionally beautiful churches, such as that of the Redeemer Nereditsa (late 12th century), the sanctuaries of Volot and Kovalev, and the Skovorod Monastery near Novgorod, were also of priceless interest for their celebrated frescoes, considered by art historians to be outstanding examples of mural painting.

Other remarkable monuments in old Novgorod, Leningrad and its surburbs, Moscow and the surrounding district also suffered terrible damage. For instance, many famous works by the celebrated architecht Rastrelli, including the palaces and fountains of Peterhof and the former Tsarskoe Selo, were pillaged and destroyed; so was the huge Temple of the New Jerusalem, which the Russian Patriarch Nikon had had built on the model of the famous Church of the Holy Sepulchre, in old Jerusalem. The Nazi armies blew up the magnificent domed roof of this building, decorated by Rastrelli in the 18th century.

These masterpieces of architecture, sculpture and painting suffered to this extent not because the necessary measures for preservation and protection had not been taken in time, but because the Nazi military leaders had given definite orders for the destruction of cultural property on Soviet territory. This destruction of national cultural treasures was a feature of the Nazi war plans, which had the purpose of enslaving countries and nations by obliterating all that could remind them of their independence and their great historical and cultural traditions.

The following statement gives a brief description of certain aspects of the measures taken for the protection of cultural monuments and museum treasures in Leningrad during the Second World War.

Leningrad

From the very first day of the 1941–1945 war, the State services responsible for the protection of monuments and museums in Leningrad took emergency measures to guard against the destructive effects of enemy bombardment and gunfire. But as it was quite impossible to remove all works of art from the zone of military operation in the time available, many, like the city itself and its heroic population, were forced to undergo the rigours of the siege. Among these were numerous architectural monuments and sculptures in the streets and parks, for whose defence and protection various arrangements were made. In addition to the special protection provided for certain parts of buildings – doorways, windows, etc. – the buildings themselves were camouflaged, entirely or in part, the method being particularly suitable for the loftier portions, such as the spires and dooms of churches.

Protection of museum objects (Hermitage State Museum)

Leningrad – a city which is in itself a museum – suffered a particularly lengthy siege. It was systematically shelled

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everyday by the enemy artillery, which did very serious damage. It was essential therefore to lose no time in removing the most valuable items from its vast collections. Under enemy fire, the population worked devotedly to save this cultural property. The collections in the Hermitage Museum were divided into three categories. Items in the first category were first moved to safety by air; those in the second category were taken later, by rail and boat; those in the third category were not removed, but extensive precautions were taken in the museum either to protect them on the spot, or to transfer them to the ground floor (parts of which were windowless, while elsewhere the windows had been blocked up) or the basement.

All the records concerning the Museum objects, and in particular the lists of their whereabouts, were kept up from day to day so that the place of each item was precisely indicated.

Packing materials and methods were adapted to the character of the various items – pictures, drawings, engravings, miniatures, large bronze or stone statues, small, wooden or terracotta figures, coins and medallions, porcelains, earthenware, majolical glass, tapestries, carpets, textiles, etc.

The cases were made of dry, stout wood (the boards being 25 to 30 mm in thickness); they were made watertight by lining with plywood, oilcloth, sheets of lead or other waterproof material. They were not ordinary packing cases, but were made to order, to precise measurements, and adapted to the objects they were to contain. Some of them had to be divided into compartments by partitions or slats covered with felt or rubber. Large and exceptionally valuable statues with fragile projections were put into double cases, the space between the inner and the outer case being filled with resilient material (straw roping).

The packing was done in such a way that neither jolting nor overturning of the case could affect the position of its contents. These were suspended, as it were, in such a way that, whatever the position of the case, the entire weight would never come to rest on any fragile portion. The items to be packed were wrapped in soft paper. Between them and the sides of the case, paper-wrapped cushions were fastened with string in order to deaden any shock or blow from outside.

When a piece of sculpture was packed, it was immovably fixed inside the case by cross-pieces, exceptionally fragile portions being surrounded by plaster.

Pictures were taken out of their frames and fixed in packing cases with vertical compartments. A thin layer of paper was sometimes pasted over the surface of a painting, depending on the state of the preservation. Larger canvases were taken off their stretches and rolled on cylinders, with the painted surface outwards; paper was placed between the surfaces. The whole thing was then enveloped in sacking and oilcloth and wrapped round with strips of cloth. Finally, the rolls were put into packing cases where they were attached to special supports. Carpets and tapestries were also rolled on to cylinders and covered with paper lightly sprinkled with insecticide.

Items in the third category were divided into two groups – architectural features and objects, which though movable, were extremely heavy.

(a) Architectural features such as mosaics, relief decorations on walls, mosaic

pavements, fountains, etc., were protected by rubber-covered panels, sandbags, protecting walls, etc.

(b) Movable objects in the third category consisted chiefly of *objets d'art* used in the furnishing of the museum itself – pieces of furniture, chandeliers, Ural stone vases, mosaic-topped tables, bronze standard lamps, candelabra, clocks, crystal girandoles, mirrors and decorative carvings. These items, displayed on the upper floor of the museum, many of them under glass ceilings were taken to safety on the ground floor or in the basement. As most of them were very heavy and at the same time very fragile, it was impossible to remove them without dismantling them. To take them off their pedestals, it was necessary to put up scaffolding and to use pulleys and winches. The monumental vases in Ural stone (malachite, lazulit, red quartz) were removed from their plinths and stands, and each of these parts was packed in a case, where it was firmly fixed by wooden cross-pieces and by a padding cushions wrapped in soft paper surrounded by string. Before the malachite mosaic vases were packed, gauze was pasted over the entire surface to prevent the malachite from crumbling. None of these heavy fragile items was removed and taken down to shelter until it had been firmly packed into a case.

Experience showed that it was very difficult to move the big lazulite or porphyry floor lamps, which were over 3m high, and had many bronze arms. The main standard was therefore packed in one case, and the bronze arms in others. The various parts of the mosaic-topped tables were also packed separately. The decorative bronze figures on the legs were removed, gauze was pasted over the mosaic surfaces themselves, and wooden panels fitted above this. Monumental marble or bronze statues were pushed sideways into special packing cases, the pedestals being fastened to the bottom of the case and the statue itself being held in place by wooden cross-pieces. The big crystal chandeliers, consisting of cut drops and bronze frame, were partly dismantled in situ and then lowered from the ceiling with pulleys. They were then hung on frames specially constructed for them in the basement.

The storerooms in which items in this third category were placed under the constant supervision and control of the senior scientific staff of the museum, and in the event of danger, the objects were removed to safer places. All removals necessary for the preservation of the museum objects were recorded on permanent topographical inventories. The accuracy of these records was of great help in reconstituting the museum displays after the war.

(Translated from Russian)

Problems and possibilities in recovering dispersed cultural heritage

(from Vol. XXXI, No. 1, 1979, pp. 49–57)

Luis Monreal

Luis Monreal is Former Acting Director of the Marés Museum, Barcelona; ex-Professor of Museology at Barcelona University (1970–73). Member of various archaeological missions in Nubia, Sudan, Egypt and Morocco (1962–66). Secretary-general of ICOM since 1974. Author of numerous works on art and archaeology and particularly a study in seven volumes on collections of paintings in the museums of various countries.

Wars, invasions, occupations of foreign territories, illicit trading and commercial interests are some of the factors instrumental in the dispersal of the cultural heritage of many countries. Aware of the equal rights of all its members to culture, the world community should not accept the vicissitudes of history as permanent and unchangeable. For this reason, UNESCO is advocating that measures should be adopted at government level which are aimed at preventing further loss of cultural heritage and at the return or restitution of cultural property to its countries of origin which had been deprived of it.

These two actions are in line with the concern expressed by the non-governmental organizations maintaining relations with UNESCO. In the case of movable cultural property, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) launched a campaign among its members, in the 1960s, to combat illicit trading in cultural property. At the moment, it is actively promoting and supporting, as a professional specialist body, efforts to reconstitute dispersed heritages.

The fight against illicit trading in cultural property

Illicit trading is still, today, the most real threat to the unity of the cultural heritage of nations. It includes all types of crime, such as theft, reprehensible according to natural law, and offences under the legislation adopted by each State regarding the transfer and export of cultural property.

There was international recognition, a few decades ago, of the size of the problem of illicit trading. Noting the paradoxical fact that museums, which are public institutions of science, culture, and education, can acquire objects that are known to be of doubtful origin from the moral viewpoint, ICOM drew up and published a document on the ethics of acquisition.[1] Studies carried out by the specialist ICOM Committees have also helped museum professionals to develop a greater awareness of this problem. As a direct result, different national museum associations and institutions in various countries have adopted codes of ethics[2] which define the attitude museums, as public institutions, should take towards illicit trading and the behaviour curators should adopt towards such delicate issues as the acquisition of objects from foreign countries, expert evaluation in a private capacity, and their relations with the art market. At government level, the awareness has led to the adoption by UNESCO in 1970 of the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property which has so far been ratified by thirty-nine Member States.[3]

Arguments in favour of lawful trading in cultural property

Spreading knowledge of the cultures of the world so that peoples can understand each other better, and thereby live in peace side by side, is another of UNESCO's constitutional objectives. The idea that there is a heritage common to mankind implies that means must exist to facilitate the lawful exchange of objects between nations.

Some of the museums of the world have very rich collections, wide in historical and geographical range, which enable an international public to realize the universality and plurality of culture. These museums are, as it were, a mirror in which the whole of mankind can be seen through creations achieved throughout

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generations. These institutions are of service to the international community and should, therefore, be preserved under the best conditions.

There are other museums, however, whose collections are incomplete and not adequate for the purpose of 'enabling a people to recover part of its memory and identity'. Strangely, many of the objects lacking in these museums are to be found, sometimes in great numbers, in museums in other countries. For this reason, ICOM has for some time been entertaining the idea of promoting more international exchanges which are based on cultural grounds rather than political circumstances. It should be pointed out again that many exhibitions organized from one country to another comprise famous works of art because they are arranged to coincide with the visits of heads of State and are designed solely to create a favourable climate. The motive is valid since the exhibition contributes to a better understanding between peoples, but this should not be the only motive justifying exchanges between different countries.

To promote the circulation of cultural property according to broader criteria, ICOM conceived in 1968 the idea of creating a special unit within its secretariat to facilitate and co-ordinate international exchanges.

This project led some years later to the adoption of the Museums Exchange programme (MUSEP) which started working on an experimental basis in September 1978. This programme provides for the following activities: (a) collecting information and relevant practical details about museums willing to exchange or loan objects or receive loans; (b) proposing different forms of contracts for the adoption of bilateral agreements between museums; (c) offering technical and legal advice for solving any problems which may arise in carrying out the exchanges and (d) acting as negotiator between institutions concerned. In short, MUSEP will help to put into effect the Recommendations Concerning the International Exchange of Cultural Property, which was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its nineteenth session on 26 November 1976.[4]

This recommendation has many objectives: first, to create awareness of the need for a more equal distribution of the heritage; secondly, to use in a rational way the often very important collections held in store in most museums; thirdly, to offer museums a new channel for the lawful acquisition of objects missing from their collections. The recommendation mentions the legal forms that these international exchanges can take whether they are carried out on the basis of a mutual transfer of ownership, or on the basis of two-way long term loans and deposits. The latter method is designed to enable exchanges to take place, including those between countries whose legislation concerning the cultural heritage does not foresee the relinquishment of ownership by the State.

It must also be mentioned that this recommendation should have two subsidiary effects: it should launch the idea that exchanges of cultural property do not go against ethical norms and, in certain cases, it should help to reconstitute a dispersed heritage. It is thus one of the instruments that make it possible to obtain the return to its country of origin of cultural property which is a fundamental part of that country's heritage, a requirement to which the Director-General of UNESCO referred in his appeal launched in June 1978.

Finally, to complement this recommendation, UNESCO is preparing another: Recommendation for the protection of Movable Cultural Property[5] aimed at urging Member States to take the necessary actions, especially by giving government guarantees, to which make the circulation of cultural property possible or easier.

The return of cultural property to its country of origin: principles, difficulties and possibilities

The resolutions adopted by UNESCO should be put into practice according to a series of principles which should be firmly rooted in the minds of the parties involved: (a) the cultural heritage is a basic element of a people's cultural identity, and it should not be deprived of it; (b) the restitution of dispersed cultural property is an act of international solidarity which concerns not only belligerent States or former colonial powers but also those who, often by legitimate methods, have benefited from the dispersal of these heritages; (c) a policy of returning cultural property to its country of origin should not result in the dismantling of museological institutions – of the kind to which we have previously referred – which offer a panoramic view of man's activities down through the ages and therefore play a key role in contemporary society, making people understand the universality and the plurality of culture.

If it is to be scientifically done, the reconstitution of cultural heritages should be carried out keeping in mind two fundamental requirements: first, the necessity for every country to be in possession of the objects and documents which, because of their socio-cultural value, are essential for an understanding of its roots; secondly, the necessity for the country to which the cultural property has been restored to guarantee that it will be preserved, used for the benefit of the public, and given the protection of the law. It is obvious that the restitution operation should be preceded as often as possible by the following measures: (a) assessment of the losses suffered by the different cultural heritages, so as to enable priority to be given to the countries which deserve to benefit most from the international solidarity drive; (b) an inventory of objects preserved in the countries of origin and a survey of measures taken on a national level to identify, preserve and present them to the public; (c) a country-by-country inventory of objects in foreign collections.

Many other difficulties stand in the way of the reconstitution of dispersed heritages. Among these we must recall the lack of awareness among the international public of the moral and ethical reasons for such action. The information campaign organized by UNESCO with the help of ICOM should do a lot to surmount this problem. We must admit, to be realistic, that there is an urgent necessity for this campaign; on the one hand, the media, especially in countries possessing objects which might possibly be restituted, were reticent about UNESCO recommendation and the Director-General's appeal; on the other hand, a general lack of knowledge about the ethical basis for such action, about principles and means proposed for returning cultural property to its country of origin, and understandable reservations about the size of the whole operation, explain the negative reaction in some sectors. It is indeed a great pity that the generous initiative of the international community has come against a wall of hostile public opinion founded on insufficient and tendentious information.

Other difficulties are of a psychological nature. In some cases, the return of cultural property to its country of origin may seem to the State or foreign institution which possessed it for years like implicitly recognizing that possession was up till then illicit. But, as we have already mentioned, in many cases the property in question was acquired in a perfectly lawful way according to the legislation and geo-political situation obtaining at that time. Finally, there are still numerous legal obstacles to be overcomed, as was pointed out by the meeting of experts organized by UNESCO in Venice in 1976,[6] including constitutional and legislative situation in many countries which make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to transfer ownership. In Mexico, for example, private individuals only have the usufruct of cultural property.

All the difficulties mentioned above can no doubt be overcome on the basis of goodwill; by the catalysing action of UNESCO, its Director-General and the International Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in Case of Illicit Appropriation which UNESCO has created. In any case, it seems evident that the task of reconstituting dispersed national heritages will gradually be achieved thanks to the opening of bilateral negotiations resulting in agreements on deposits, loans or exchanges between museums, in accordance with principles set forth in the recommendations of the nineteenth General Conference of UNESCO.

Finally, the viability of the UNESCO campaign for the restitution to their countries of origin of fundamental elements of their cultural heritage has already been proved by the return of objects to Peru and Panama by five American institutions, namely the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, the Brooklyn Museum, the Oakland Museum, and the Pennsylvania University Museum and finally, by the transfer to Papua New Guinea by the Museums of Sydney, Australia, and Wellington, New Zealand, of various highly important ethnographic objects.

It can therefore be said that the Director-General of UNESCO's wishes are already being fulfilled for the return to all peoples of 'at least the art treasures which best represent their culture, which they feel are the most vital and whose absence caused them the greatest anguish'.

There still remains one serious problem of a technical and political nature: a good number of developing countries do not yet have the appropriate means of ensuring that their most fragile movable property will receive the treatment indispensable to its safeguarding, and are even unaware of the utility of it. The solution in this case would seem to lie in decentralizing presentation policies according to the regions of the world facing similar problems, on the basis of the recommendations of ICOM and the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, (ICCROM) in Rome. In any case, there is a growing movement throughout the world that no obstacle can stop of contestations by the frustrated countries and interventions of competent organizations for the return or restitution of exported cultural property.

Notes

1. ICOM, *Ethics of Acquisition*, Paris, ICOM, 1971, 8 p.

2. The Museum Association of Great Britain has published *Guidelines for Professional Conduct* (1977, 3 p.) and *Code of Practice for Museum Authorities* (1977, 6 p.); the Association of Art Museum Directors (United States) has published *Code of Ethics* (1972); the Association for American Museums (AAM) and Canadian specialists are also carrying out studies.

3. UNESCO, Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its sixteenth session, Paris, 14 November 1970 (this text is also available in French, Russian and Spanish). On this occasion the convention was ratified by the following countries: Algeria, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Central African Empire, Democratic Kampuchea, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, German Democratic Republic, Federal Republic of Germany, India, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Panama, Poland, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Republic of Cameroon, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Yugoslavia, Zaire.

4. This text is also available in Arabic, French, Russian and Spanish.

5. Special Committee of Governmental Experts to Prepare a Draft Recommendation and, if Possible, a Draft Convention Concerning the Prevention and Coverage of Risks to Movable Cultural Property, Lisbon, 4–13 April 1978. 'Draft Recommendation for the Protection of Movable Cultural Property', *Draft Final Report*, Paris, UNESCO, 1978, 9 p. (this text is also available in French and Spanish).

6. UNESCO Committee of Experts to Study the Question of the Restitution of Works of Art. Venice, 29 March–2 April 1976, *Final Report*, Paris, UNESCO, 1976, 9 p.

The Museum of Tahiti and the Islands – towards realistic policies and practice

(from Vol. XXXIII, No. 2, 1981, pp. 118–21)

Anne Lavondès

The Museum of Tahiti and the Islands at Papeete was established in 1975 by the elected political authorities in French Polynesia as an important public institution for the implementation of the cultural policy of the territory. The financing and administration of the museum are the responsibility of the territory, while temporary technical assistance, in the person of the curator, is provided by the French Government. The present curator, Anne Lavondès, has been extremely active in attempting to secure the return of Tahitian objects to build up the museum's collection. An agreement with the museum of France to facilitate loans and deposits of Pacific objects is currently being negotiated. While the Museum of Tahiti and the Islands itself will be described in a future issue, Mrs. Lavondès shares with us here some practical lessons gleaned from her own experiences.

The nature of the response to the appeals launched by UNESCO since 1976 and work carried out by ICOM on the subject of the return and restitution of cultural property show that if positive results are to be achieved on behalf of small museums, such as the museum in Tahiti, then the situation needs first of all to be analyzed in a lucid and pragmatic way, as it is useless to merely repeat demands which are good in principle, but which always meet with negative answers.

It is striking to learn in those countries where there are numerous museums, and objects are piled up in the storerooms, how much indifference and ignorance there is, whether intentional or not, of the existence of small museums in tropical countries, for example, and of their often total poverty. Concrete information therefore needs to be spread about these unknown and obscure museums, and also about the important reasons for their existence and what their real needs are. Nor should it be forgotten that it was not so long ago – though it is to be hoped that such times are now past – that some of the great museums themselves brought out of these countries ancient and ethnographical objects.

Other factors also play their part in obstructing the return of cultural property: the longer established the museum and the richer it is in its possessions, the stronger is its reluctance, as if the strength of tradition gave greater importance to the task of conservation, rather that to that of displaying the works of art and making them accessible to a wider public. It is, therefore, often more effective to turn to the less famous museums or to those whose collections of 'exotic' ethnological objects are somewhat marginal.

In some countries, such as France, public collections are inalienable, i.e. the objects cannot be given away, sold or exchanged. They can, however, be temporarily loaned or deposited for a long period.

Some pre-conditions for loans or deposits

It is up to the requesting museums to show themselves to be trustworthy and to provide definite proof of their suitability in every way to receive such precious objects. Experience shows that this is not easy, and that you cannot spread information about a museum, even if it provides good standards of conservation, in the same way as you can make yourself known through publications. I have realized on many occasions that, in spite of everything I had told them beforehand, museum curators or private collectors only began to consider making loans to the Museum of Tahiti and the Islands after they had visited it.

Once the curator of the requesting museum has provided the necessary proof, he must then know exactly what he wants. For the time being, it would seem totally unrealistic and illusory to suppose that the museums are going to provide lists of their possessions and make offers on the basis of these lists, even if there are some remarkable exceptions to this rule. I have myself compiled inventories of Polynesian objects that are to be found in museums, particularly in French museums. As a rule they include, in addition to photographs and drawings, information giving the identification, localization, description and size of the object and, as much as I can discover during a first approach, about the object's history. Additional information may be added at a later date so as to complete the documentation. Several of these inventories have already

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been published. This preliminary work is very important: mainly because it contributes to the task of making a general inventory of cultural property, but also because we thereby learn where Polynesian collections are to be found.

It seems to me that it is one of the fundamental rights of the curators of newly established or growing museums that they should know where and how objects originating in their region are conserved. It also seems reasonable that their present owner should be responsible and answerable for the proper conservation of such object. This side of the question, which is extremely important, has not perhaps been sufficiently emphasized and experience shows that just because an object is in a European or American museums, it is not necessarily well looked after. Many examples to the contrary might be cited, and it can certainly be stated that henceforth *some objects would be very much safer in their country of origin*. It is therefore high time, if it is not yet too late, that those countries well endowed with artistic treasures became aware of this problem, which is their problem too, and showed themselves to be as uncompromising about conservation standards in their own countries as they are about those in the requesting countries. Otherwise, they should let objects, which are gravely at risk freely leave the country, if they are not capable of protecting them.

Leaving aside the large ethnographical museums, which normally provide adequate information, too much reliance should not be placed on the existing documentation for the identification and localization of Polynesian objects. The task of completing this documentation in an efficient manner is a service, which the scientific staff of the requesting museums may be able to perform. Thus the descriptive lists of Polynesian objects, which have been compiled by the Museum of Tahiti and the Islands, together with the accompanying photographs, have been sent first and foremost to the museums, which own the objects concerned. This is a way, perhaps of some psychological relevance, of not appearing solely in the role of a suppliant before discussions begin. These inventories also provide an opportunity for fruitful exchanges of information with museum curators and staff, who thus attain a better understanding of the difficulties facing small, newly established museums. I should like to thank here all the curators who have been so helpful whenever I have undertaken this task.

The examination of the collections in the museums themselves, rather than the mere inspection of abstract lists, makes it easier to narrow down choices and make reasonable requests. At the beginning, we avoided asking for very well-known objects, or for pieces which the museum takes particular pride in displaying. Most of the objects, which we have requested, though not always with success, have been in the reserve collections and sometimes even their curators do not know what they are. In such cases I have had personally to identify them as Polynesian, and it has happened that some pieces that had been put to one side, as it were, have turned out in fact to be extremely valuable!

The history of European museums and of ethnography, which was for a long time regarded as part of the natural sciences, explains why so-called 'exotic' objects collected during scientific expeditions or by individual travellers, when they are not collected together in the large ethnographical museums, are dispersed all over

the place and are often to be found in natural history museums where they do not really belong.

Much greater specialization by museums nowadays has resulted in these exotic objects being relegated to the reserve collections, as they no longer fit in with the collections of European regional ethnography or with painting galleries, in the many museums that are devoted more and more exclusively to the fine arts.

Even if these marginal collections sometimes suddenly become of interest to their curators or to the local communities who own them as a result of requests having been made, I think that it is among such collections, and also in the well-stocked reserve collection of the large ethnographical museums, that objects to be requested as a priority should be sought, rather than among the finest pieces which have been on display for a long time and are known by all and sundry as belonging to such and such a museum. To locate these marginal collections takes a lot of time and work, as they are often not very well known.

Tahitian strategies

In undertaking these investigations on behalf of the museum of Tahiti and the Islands, my main aim was to get back for the Polynesians objects which they had otherwise had little opportunity of seeing. I also wanted gradually to try to fill in some of the enormous gaps in own museum's collection. I very much agree with H. Specht 'that more attention should be given to items of more mundane nature, especially those illustrating the economic and technological aspects of each cultural heritage' (*Museum*, Vol. XXXI, No. 1, 1979). But one of the difficulties arises from the fact that, for Polynesia at least, it is rarely the most common object, which have been collected by sailors or missionaries. It is, for example, almost impossible to find an ancient Tahitian paddle, however mundane such an object might seem. On the other hand, however, the Museum of Tahiti and the Islands has received on indefinite deposit, even without having requested them, some very beautiful so-called 'ceremonial' paddles, which are completely carved, from the Austral Island. It is the Musée de la Marine in Paris, which has been responsible for this particular loan, and we would like to extend our thanks again to the former curator, Luc Maric Bayle, as well as to the present curator, Commander F. Bellec.

At the moment, the Museum of Tahiti and the Islands also has on display thirty-seven remarkable ancient Polynesian objects from the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lille (France). They have been deposited with us for two years, under contract, and we are particularly grateful to Hervé Oursel, the curator of the museums in Lille, to the Lille City Council and to Mr Ladais, Director of the Museums of France, for their understanding and kindness. We should also like to thank TENETE, the local ecumenical association, which has presented to the museum on indefinite loan several very beautiful objects that it had been given by the Maison Généraliste des Pères de Picpus in Rome and the Société des Missions Evangéliques in Paris.

As has been already stated, it is not possible to obtain objects from public collection in France other than on the basis of loans or deposits, either for a definite or indefinite period. This procedure would appear to be the best policy for us in any case, as it has numerous

advantages: it does not suddenly deprive museums of objects which in some cases they have possessed for a very long time; it reassures the depositors, who can check that the objects are conserved under the best of conditions and they also have the opportunity to study how the objects stand up to different climatic conditions; it also provides greater reassurance for the curators receiving the objects, as it allows them to send some of them back before the end of the contracts, if that proves necessary for their protection; and finally it allows small museums without large financial resources to display for the benefit of the local people a large part of their heritage, thanks to these renewable deposits which only entail limited expenditure. It should be stressed that it would be of great help to these small museums if the lending countries were generous enough to bear the transport and insurance costs, or even if this were undertaken by international bodies such as UNESCO.

This solution of making loans and deposits could be regarded as a preliminary test for both types of museum: a compromise between 'all or nothing', which should satisfy all the parties, at least during the first stage, while at the same time revealing in technical terms under what climatic conditions it is reasonable to conserve or exhibit particular objects.

Illicit export

'Reassurance' is to some extent the watchword of the policy which we are trying to put into practice and which is also being applied in another field, that of illicit export. While appropriate legislation is an absolute necessity, reliable information is equally important, and for years we have been attempting to persuade local collectors that they have nothing to fear from the museum and that we are not seeking to take away their objects; this argument has often been used to justify the sale of objects to passing visitors. ('It's better to sell them than have them stolen'.) One of the approaches we have chosen is to help collectors by providing them with descriptive inventories and photographs of their collections. During the last few years many of them have preferred to deposit their collections with the museum in order to ensure their safety. For any such deposit, however small it may be, a written contract is drawn up and, at the same time, the owner receives an illustrated, descriptive inventory of the collection deposited. Objects deposited in this way may possibly be integrated into the permanent exhibitions, but in any case they are displayed at least once in a temporary exhibition. Other collectors wishing to sell their objects have offered them first of all to the Museum of Tahiti and the Islands, which likewise gives priority to local sellers when their prices are reasonable.

Since the 1920s numerous scientific – many archaeological – expeditions have visited the different Polynesian archipelagos. Archaeological objects and also documents (lists of their genealogies written down by the Polynesians) were exported for the purpose of scientific study by research workers. Not only do the results of the work carried out by these various expeditions not always reach Tahiti, but in addition it is often very difficult, if not impossible, to get back the original documents or the objects which were removed. As an illustration, I should like to quote the 'frank' answer given in 1979 to a letter in which I had asked the American Museum of Natural History in New York to return some objects, at least as a loan, and in particular

some pieces of pottery found during excavations in the Marquesas Islands, which are very important for an understanding and for the public display of Polynesian prehistory. The letter stated, 'I am afraid that we will be unable to grant the permission you ask. ... This department has a standing policy against the lending of previously illustrated material. ...'

The acute paradox in this situation is that the objects, which were courteously requested for loan, legitimately and legally belong to the Territory of French Polynesia. Far too often objects are only partially returned after they have been studied and this depends on the unilateral decisions of the foreign research bodies concerned.

Without dwelling further on the struggles ahead to obtain the return of this type of cultural property, let us at any rate hope that the time is past when, even at the scientific level, the underpriviledged countries were regarded as places to be exploited, from which things were taken and nothing was ever given in return; let us hope that we can now look back on the whole period as no more than an unpleasant historical memory.[1]

A judicious purchasing policy

Another aspect of the strategy followed by the Museum of Tahiti and the Islands for the return of cultural property is its purchasing policy. It is well known that Polynesian objects of art and ethnography are extremely expensive, and this means, once again, that choices have to be made. First of all, we prefer to acquire, at auctions held outside the territory, ethnographical objects to fill in the gaps in our collection, rather than to obtain a unique and very spectacular item, which would use up all our funds at one go. For us the ideal situation is to be able to deal directly with the owners of collections, which are up for sale. Success comes more easily if proper guarantees are provided concerning methods of payment and the safety standards, which the museum can offer for the conservation, and display of the objects. Mention should be made here of the efforts made by the territory and the clear-sightedness of the elected representatives, who have allowed the museum to borrow the money necessary to buy in succession two parts of the Hooper collection: the first including items from the Society Island, and the second of objects which come from the Marquesas and Austral Islands. These acquisitions were possible thanks to the understanding of the owner of the collection, particularly Kenneth Hopper and Steven Phelps, and their representative, Hermione Waterfield.

It may also happen that, when auctions are held, we may be able to gain the confidence of the owners of objects, to the extent that they agree to deposit some items with the museum. Sometimes, it is the owners themselves who suggest this, especially if they already know the museum as a result of having visited it beforehand.

With regard to the very beautiful items which we are unable to acquire and are unlikely to receive on loan, one of the ways of still displaying them to the people of the Territory would be to have good copies made of them. It would seem to me to be only fair if the museums that own such items were themselves to provide copies for the requesting museums. The organization of such programmes could be spread over several years.

A practical solution

I should like finally to put forward a solution that seems to me to be worthwhile, at least initially, for small museums with very limited financial resources. It is possible to arrange an interesting presentation of the local culture cheaply and with limited risks, by displaying maps, photographs, drawings, explanatory boards, natural-history samples, archeological objects, copies of ethnographical objects, etc., in an exciting and attractive way. I will take as an example the small Museum of Easter Island, which offers both the Easter Islanders themselves and passing tourists a panorama of this fascinating island, which is unfortunately all too often forgotten at international conferences. At the same time these museums should concentrate all their efforts on fitting out special premises for temporary exhibitions, designed according to the international standards for museum and suitable for housing under excellent conditions of safety, genuine objects from other museums, either on loan or longer-term deposit. Such exhibitions would principally be for the benefit of the local people, who would thus finally recover possession of their heritage.

I would not wish the above remarks to be regarded as a rigid programme or a list of definitive recommendations. Other projects are under way, following different strategies. What I have tried to show here is that with regard to the return and restitution of cultural property, as in many other fields, it is necessary to display not only imagination, but also realism and a great deal of persistence.

(*Translated from French*)

Note

1. Cf. *Study of Current Policies concerning Archaeological Excavations: Suggestions for the Housing of Objects in the Countries in which they were Discovered*, carried out by UNESCO in 1978, in association with the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies (ICPHS) and the International Council of Museums, UNESCO document CC/MD/40, available upon request from the UNESCO/ICOM Documentation Centre, 1 rue Miollis, 75015 Paris.

The rape and plunder of cultures: an aspect of the deterioration of the terms of cultural trade between nations

(from Vol. XXXV, No. 3, 1983, pp. 152–7)

Hugues de Varine

Hugues de Varine was born in 1935 in Metz, France. Degree in history, 1955. Higher studies diploma in history, 1951. Ecole du Louvre, 1956–58. Director of the Cultural and Technical Documentation Centre at the French Cultural Mission to Lebanon, 1958–60. Deputy Director of ICOM, 1963. Director of ICOM, 1965–74. Research director in the Service of Studies and Research (1975–81) and head of the employment cell, Department of Cultural Development (1981–82) at the Ministry of Culture, Paris. At present, Director of the French Institute in Lisbon. Author of La culture des autres *(The Culture of Others), Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1976.*

Writers, doctors and psychologists have said repeatedly that one of the essential causes of the catastrophic development in the scale of drug trafficking and use lies in a disintegration of post-industrial society, above all among the young. Is there not a similar problem at the root of the sudden increase in the illicit trading in the thefts of art objects, antiquities and other cultural goods throughout the world today? What we shall endeavour to do in these pages is not to map the development of a trend but to apprehend a contemporary situation, one that is more complex than it at first appears, since it is not one phenomenon but several that we shall have to take into consideration.

The primary phenomenon – one that in fact governs the others – is the emergence of the concept of cultural goods or property. Paradoxically, it is only when goods have been divested of their intrinsic purpose, losing their primary functional utility, that they are termed cultural property, providing they are considered worthy to be preserved, admired, i.e. used of another secondary function. Such may be the fate of crucifix, the music of ritual dance, a steam engine or an *incunabulum*. This concept of cultural property is closely linked with those of 'traditional values', the concern for continuity, the search for 'cultural roots'. It is this very combination that has given rise to most public and private collections, the listing of monuments and the creation of learned historical societies. Moreover, the very rarity of these vestiges of the past leads to their enhancement both in intellectual terms (what is rare is beautiful), and in economic terms (what is rare – or scarce – is dear).

Here, a question arises. Do what are customarily termed cultural goods not undergo a process of cultural transformation? Is a thing created by man for a specific purpose and then discarded not re-created by another man (or by society) for another purpose? It is at this point that the museum and its role must be considered. There are two types of museum: those that present artefacts isolated from their contexts (generally – and significantly – referred to as 'works') and those that, artificially but as honestly as possible, re-create complete units that may be termed ecological units. The transformation, which occurs in the former case has every likelihood of prompting the viewer to interpret the artefact as having a 'sacred' value, thus resulting in the twin forms of enhancement referred to above. If, then, this line of reasoning is accepted, the museum (which in fact reflects the main trend of present-day education in the fields of art, literature and history) merely creates a new consumer item, of which only the material substance is derived from the vestige of the past that it had been intended to present.

Another illustration of this confusion between cultural goods and consumer goods may be found in the recent evolution of so-called 'contemporary' art. The economic tandem of the museum and gallery (the latter being understood in the commercial sense) operates not so much as an instrument of cultural development but rather as an advertising medium for an essentially marketable type of production. Under the guise of other nobler notions, we find the same concepts of promotion, marketing, distribution, production – whether mass production or not – and technical progress that characterize the whole modern economic system.

The second phenomenon, also of an essentially modern kind, is the rapid development of the international

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circulation of persons and goods, which enables an ever-broader and untrained public to gain insight into societies and cultures that would otherwise have remained for it swathed in the mists of legend. Such exchanges, so conducive to understanding coexistence and co-operation among individuals and peoples, nevertheless have their negative features, even if these have, for obvious reasons hitherto been kept out of the public eye wherever possible. This is in our view a mistaken attitude inasmuch as it is always wise to learn as much as possible about what cannot be prevented, in order to devise appropriate remedies or palliatives.

The third phenomenon, a direct consequence of colonization, at first of a political and subsequently of an economic and cultural kind, might briefly be defined as an artificial acculturation of the exotic. The two phenomena already referred to have resulted in a profound failure on the part of the Europeans to understand the real values enshrined in non-European cultures, combined with the ever-more pronounced rejection of these same values by non-Europeans themselves subjected to an intensive bombardment of concepts and techniques imported in the name of development. This has led to a sudden discovery of 'primitive art' at the very moment when its creators are turning away from it in a search for the symbols of so-called modern civilization. The trend to invest cultural goods with materialistic values, which began in Europe and the United States, is thus spreading rapidly to the rest of the world.

Should we, indeed, express our indignation, or even astonishment, at the fact? In a world in which the rich understand little other than the power of money and where the poor are reduced to making the most of what wretched resources they possess, it seems quite natural that all the factors mentioned above should combine and bring about, initially, the mass 'desacralisation' or 'defunctionalization' of the products of ancient or present-day cultures and, subsequently, either their destruction or their economic recycling as a result of their 'resacralization' and also their 'monetization'.

We use the term 'monetization' here quite intentionally. During the 1960s, there was a move in the wealthy countries, which rapidly gained ground, to diversify ways and means of saving, speculating and making profitable investments. One of the consequences of this has been the discovery of the rapid appreciation in the values of 'works of art' initially and, later, of all 'cultural goods' which for some at least appear to be taking over from gold and precious stones as a source of profit. The increasing rarity of such goods, added to the growing interest that they arouse in ever-more highly intellectualized peoples, the differences in price levels between producer and consumer countries (the Third World and the industrialized countries, Europe and North America, South-East Asia and Japan, to mention the three pre-eminent exchange networks), the small scale of the commodities concerned and the fact that they are little affected by the currency devaluations have all proved to be weighty arguments, whose incalculable consequences will one day have to be analysed.

The fourth and last phenomenon – albeit a very old one – is snobbery, which has launched many on their careers as collectors and has led to the inordinate enrichment of certain museums, the mounting of stupendous and often artificial exhibitions, and the publicity given to the prices reached at public auctions and to values fixed for insurance

purposes. In the most privileged social classes, the possession of works of art purchased, even illegally, for king's ransom constitutes a patent of nobility, the token of belonging to a 'higher culture'.

Thus we may fairly say, at the risk of oversimplifying a complex problem, that cultural property as a whole passes from the cultural to the economic sphere and, accordingly, is henceforth subject to the laws of the latter.

The demand

Naturally, the demand for cultural goods, essentially in liberal capitalist countries, has in principle no direct bearing upon the licit or illicit nature of the supply. We may regard it as being essentially normal and honest, the result of a series of causes and circumstances as described above. This demand is generated by certain sorts of people.

First, research workers need materials that they can use directly if they are to accomplish their work: artefacts and specimens, works of art, documents collected on the site, manuscripts, etc. These researchers tend to try to have the materials they collect as primary documents shipped home to their usual place of residence and work in order to study them in the best possible intellectual and technical conditions. This sometimes leads to their resorting to illicit practices. However, it is the intensification of research that must above all be taken into account. A discovery concerning the Anatolian Neolithic, a tribe in the Philippines or a Maya site, which formerly would have remained limited to a very small number of specialists, all of them scientists, is known almost immediately today by thousands or even millions of people whose interest in it is no longer purely professional but is prompted above all by curiosity and sometimes by greed or snobbery.

Secondly, museums, closely associated with research and with the various scientific disciplines, are in much the same situation, but are far more open to public curiosity. They play a much more extensive role in transmitting information and moulding the public's taste. Most (one is tempted to say, almost all) have little chance of enriching their collection except through occasional purchases at public sales, from dealers, or thanks to donations by collectors. Indeed, it must be recognized that the museum is the normal final resting-place for cultural goods that have been shorn of their sacred and functional properties.

Thus while museums alone account for only a tiny and virtually negligible proportion (in quantity if not in quality) of the overall demand for cultural goods, they nevertheless are, in a way, its justification. This is true more especially in the United States thanks to the particularly favourable conditions from which donations benefit in terms of tax relief. From this it should not be concluded that museums have no direct impact upon demand. Their impact is in fact exercised in three ways: through field research or by making the type of purchases described above; through the publicity which they give to certain art forms and certain cultures, in particular by means of exhibitions and public relations campaigns; and through their relations with private collections, particularly, but not solely, in the case of private museums (i.e. in the United States).

Thirdly, collectors are by far the most important factor serving to swell demand,

particularly for illicitly obtained goods. They constitute an increasingly large and, in social, economic and cultural terms, relatively diversified international caste. Their motives are many and varied, virtually all collectors are, in this respect, self-centred: the sole criteria by which they are guided, within the limits of their financial resources, are their own pleasure and interest. Such collectors are for us of the greatest importance in so far as they are concerned by the licit or illicit nature of their acquisition only if they run a major risk. Moreover, being generally neither scholars nor scientists, they do not require any precise identification, certificate of origin or related documentation.

Collectors and museums only seldom have an opportunity to acquire items at source, partly, indeed, because such acquisition is illegal and because they do no possess the logistical infrastructure required for clandestine operations. While in some cases, as was witnessed in 1969, during the affair of the Raphael painting sold and apparently transported by members of Boston Museum staff, no intermediary is involved, it is generally with specialized dealers that the purchaser must do business. Accordingly, while the dealers essentially constitute one of the main cogs in the machinery – which will be studied below – that keeps the trade going, they are also one of the components of the demand for cultural goods. Possessing, as they do, substantial resources, they are frequently the 'creators of trends in taste'. The best known of them are also collectors, patrons of the arts, members of the academics and of museum boards, and can afford without undue risks to turn a blind eye to the law, if not of their own country, then at least of others. They do not dirty their hands by engaging in shady dealing and appear as (or make themselves out to be) benefactors of mankind intent in bringing cultural and works of art to the notice of the general public.

Together with museums, the dealers have become the true promoters of this demand, which in liberal economies operates as the driving force of all markets. Naturally, they are also – since the concept of scientific research conducted in the field of both unfamiliar and unthinkable to them – the agents of the transformation of cultural items into consumer goods. For them, the artistic ethnographic or archaeological object is what the filler of veal is to the butcher or the necklace is to the jeweller: an article to be sold, for profit, even though the one is considered nobler than the other.

What is described above is in no way new, with the exception of the impact of tourism. What is perhaps more serious, for we have no idea how it may escalate in the future, is the recent phenomenon of investment funds operating in the art market. Many companies of this kind have been set up in recent years, first in the United States and subsequently in Europe, occasionally in tax havens, which obviously boost their profitability and afford them a greater measure of impunity. They operate both as buyers and sellers on every market, and possess their own economic forecasting agencies as well as considerable advertising resources.

This creates a major risk, inasmuch as it may quite conceivably lead to a rapid increase in the proportion of the artistic heritage thereby withdrawn from the present-day market, the creation of a parallel market between investment funds, the drawing of a veil of secrecy over transactions (facilitated by the anonymity of the partners involved) and the systematic use of statutes of limitations

(involving periods ranging from five to thirty years) in order to 'legalize' artefacts that have been stolen or clandestinely exported from their countries of origin. What in any case is undoubtedly to be feared even more is the role played by funds boosting the demand for and 'monetizing' cultural goods, thereby leading to the final transformation of the consumer item into substitute legal tender of gold bullion, serving indefinitely as currency but acquiring a bonus value as a result of the contemporary cultural boom.

The supply

In any market economy, the supply follows, or endeavours to follow the demand, at least in principle, for means exist of artificially boosting demand. Such means have not yet been developed to the full, in so far as cultural goods are concerned; it is, however, possible to distinguish between those that are deliberate (manipulations of public opinion by art galleries, and certain critics, exhibitions arranged to promote sales) and those that are unintentional (government policy of mounting exhibitions on a bilateral basis for prestige purposes, so-called 'cultural' tourism).

Thus supply tends to follow demand yet seldom manages to catch up with it, since art prices rise more rapidly than do other values, even when allowance has been made for inflation and the risks involved. One has only to visit auction rooms, bazaars and souks or antique shops in order to realize the plethora and variety of the goods on offer, whether the prospective purchaser be a museum, the typical keen collector or a speculator. However, these merchants of culture are simply unscrupulous, albeit essential intermediaries between the illiterate peasants and the magnates, between the ruined aristocrats and the American Museums, between the hardened criminals and the strong-rooms of Swiss banks. They stimulate supply though they are not suppliers themselves. However, their role is a vital one since without them it would be absolutely inconceivable for the Anatolian labourer or the Andean shepherd to be aware of the trends in taste in the major cities of the industrialized West.

Most of the poorest countries in the world today happen to be the richest in cultural items, by virtue both of the complexity of their still vital spiritual and human values and the stratification of civilizations that have succeeded one another for hundreds and indeed thousands of years. However, precisely because of their constantly evolving present-day cultures, these countries have not yet acquired the urge to 'sacralize' the past, which as we have seen leads straight to 'monetization' of cultural goods. For the majority of Africans, Asians, and Latin Amerians, an object shorn of its functions or, *a fortiori*, one that is found buried in the ground, loses all meaning and may be reused however one pleases, either to form part of a treasure trove possessing symbolical or mythical virtues or, more frequently, for some entirely new purpose. For example, the stones of the temple may be used to build modern houses, or the ancestral tombs may be plundered for the gold, as occurred throughout ancient Mediterranean civilizations. In no case does the artefact acquire a cultural significance. It is in a way destroyed. Likewise, brutal changes of political regime bring considerable destruction in their wake as a result of the imposed transformation of cultural values.

Such acts have a cultural value in themselves, man having a perfect right to rework his own materials in order to build a new edifice which will mark a stage in his evolution. There is no suspicion here of

artefacts being placed on any market, either national or, *a fortiori* international. By contrast, the phenomenon which we are analysing here is altogether more serious because it is of an essentially negative kind; moreover, it is occurring at a time when the relative poverty of the Third World countries is increasing at such a vertiginous rate, above all where the poorest sectors of their populations are concerned. When such a situation is compounded by the existence of pressing demand, it is only to be expected that objects of no practical value are offered for sale in vast numbers, since there is no natural moral law against it. Why invoke national laws, about which people usually know – or can find out – little or nothing, or the alleged duty to protect the national heritage – an invention of intellectuals? Such criteria cannot penetrate the world of the poor and the illiterate. Can a peasant be asked to give up, for legal or ethical reasons, the opportunity to boost his annual income through the occasional sale of items of pottery turned up by his plough? Now, it is only a step from the lucky, and profitable, find to the systematic collection of such objects, a step that is quickly taken when the middleman from the city or the collector 'boss' is constantly clamouring to buy ever more. So it happens that tens of thousands of peasants in Costa Rica find it more remunerative to devote their energies to clandestine archaeology than to traditional crop farming; that the Peruvian highland dwellers are busily destroying thousands of Inca tombs, bringing the gold jewels plundered from them to the millionaire Mujica Gallo, whose famous Gold Museum is so admired by tourists, themselves indifferent to the mountains of documents and artefacts thrown onto the rubbish heap; and that the ritual sculptures of the Yoruba of Nigeria become the temporary property of Hausa traders in Ibadan.

To this it will be retorted that museum staff themselves, from the director to the attendant, sometimes sell off the collections in their charge. What is astonishing, however, is not that such dishonest stewards exist, but rather that they are so few of them. It should not be forgotten that there still museum directors who earn less than $20 a month, even when their duties and responsibilities are of higher levels than those of the university lecturer. Let no one say, with the placid logic born of a clear conscience: 'What hope is there, since those people sell off their own museums? Their artefacts would be better preserved and more highly respected in our countries'.

It is therefore quite in the normal order of things that poor countries should be exploited for their cultural heritage but also that their people should become accomplices of their exploitation. We ourselves have on several occasions noticed in Africa, in the Middle East and elsewhere, the contempt shown by local officers and intellectuals, all trained in Europe, for their own traditional cultures, which they regard as being at once unworthy to be shown abroad and an obstacle to the modernization of their societies. To be sure, these same worthies do not hesitate at international meetings to chant the time-honoured slogans about the illicit export of cultural property. But once they return home, what do they do to stop it, to show their pride in the past, and to carry along their peoples in that continuous process by which man creates himself, a process compounded of traditions, external influences, and useful technology, and which is the only true development process?

It should not be supposed, however that it is only the poor countries that supply the international market with cultural goods.

The demand that generate this supply knows neither geographical nor economic boundaries. The rich countries are also plagued, for no less various but extremely different reasons, by this modern affliction. First of all, the existence of an art and antiques market, in every country, the mobility of cultural property and even its exportation are long-established and perfectly natural phenomenon which have, over the past few decades simply grown out of hand as a result both of the organization and general extension of the market and increasingly artificial notion of the art work or *objet d'art*, itself linked to the sacredness of culture.

The supply, determined as it is by a growing demand generally situated beyond the country's borders, cannot by itself account for the real situation. The simultaneous expansion of cultural gangsterism, the legal international circulation of cultural goods in the form of spectacular exhibitions, and the soaring prices charged on the major art markets inevitably lead to the intervention of the insurance companies. The values involved (in monetary term) are such that no one, whether museum director or private individual, would accept the risk of destruction or theft without adequate cover. Hence the emergence of a new form of trafficking that does not fit into the previous categories: kidnapping, or rather 'artnapping', holding the insurance companies to ransom for the return of the stolen property, or claiming the reward for its recovery. While only two recent cases of political extortion have to date come to light, one in Italy perpetrated for social reasons, the other committed on behalf of the people of Bangladesh (the theft of Vermeer's *Love Letter* in Brussels), cases of criminal extortion solely for profit have become increasingly frequent in recent years following the spectacular theft of Goya's *Wellington* in London in the early 1960s. Negotiations are generally conducted in secret, with the result that the general public and even the specialists are unaware of what has led to the discovery of the stolen works after a varying length of time. The most disquieting feature of this process is the danger to which it generally exposes works of art of the highest quality, since the purpose of the exercise is not to resell them in good condition but rather to restore them to their rightful owner. As in all cases of extortion, such operations would seem to be conducted by isolated, not very well balanced or well organized individuals; their actions are unpredictable and safeguards are therefore not possible.

To conclude by way of a tentative moral judgement, it would seem proper to emphasize the fundamental responsibility of the countries, museums and collectors that form the demand, a responsibility that cannot be attenuated by the fact that the suppliers also exist. There will always be suppliers, whenever an opportunity arises to make a quick profit, one that appears to have any serious consequences. The rule whereby, in any society in which liberal capitalism prevails, it is the supply that generates the demand for consumer goods. In the case with which we are concerned here, there is indeed, advertising of cultural goods directed at potential consumers, but this is carried out by the museums and dealers in their own countries, under the pretext of providing education in the case of the former, and of carrying on normal commercial operations in the case of the latter.

(Translated from French)

A link with the people: the Alaska State Museum

(from Vol. 46, No. 2, No. 182, 1994, pp. 6–10)

Steve Henrikson

The entire notion of museums and the collection of artefacts is fundamentally alien to the partly nomad culture of Native Alaska. How then, should a museum such as the Alaska State Museum go about catering for its client population? In this article, Steve Henrikson outlines some of the museum's responses to this challenge. The key word? Communication! The author is Curator of Collections at the Alaska State Museum and specializes in Northwest Coast Indian art. His Tlingit name is Ch'eetk' (Little Murrelet).

For many, the name 'Alaska' conjures up images of pristine wilderness and abundant wildlife: land recently emerged from beneath glacial ice, through which passed the first human inhabitants of North and South America via the land bridge from Asia. Alaska is also known for its Native cultures, and for the period in which the Russian Empire, succeeded by the United States, developed and profited from the land's rich natural resources. In June 1900, only a few years after the famous Klondike gold rush brought thousands of fortune to seekers to the Yukon river, the United States Congress created a museum to preserve the diverse and fascinating history and cultures of Alaska. Today, the Alaska State Museum houses an important collection of Native Alaskan, Russian and American artefacts and artwork numbering more than 20,000 pieces.

The Alaska State Museum, like other northern museums, faces challenges in collecting and preserving artefacts, and using them to teach visitors about Alaskan life and culture. The harsh environment, where temperatures can fluctuate rapidly and to extremes, and where earthquakes, floods and other natural disasters are common, makes it difficult to maintain stable and safe conditions for fragile museum objects. Great distances between communities and isolation from the rest of North America often makes travel for training, research, conservation projects and collections-access difficult and expensive. With these challenges come unique opportunities, among them the potential of a close relationship between Alaskan Natives and museums.

Alaska's 86,000 Native American residents represent more than 15 percent of the total population of the State. At the Alaska State Museum, approximately half of the collection and half the permanent exhibition space is comprised of Alaskan Native art and artefacts, ranging from pre-historic ivory figures to contemporary basketry. Alaskan Natives have great influence in the conduct and direction of museum programmes – the appropriateness and accuracy of exhibitions, docent tours, children activities, and collecting policies have all been formulated with guidance of Aleut, Alaskan Eskimo, Athabaskan and Northwest Coast Natives. As living representatives of the cultures covered in the museum's collection and educational programmes, Alaskan Natives carry enormous moral authority and scholarly influence in these areas, and are frequent visitors to the museum: parents teaching their children about their history and traditions, and artists studying traditional techniques, drawing inspiration from the original artefacts.

While the collection includes items from tribes across Alaska, objects from the tribes in south-eastern Alaska – the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian people – are particularly numerous. These tribes have inhabited the islands and shores of the Alaskan panhandle for centuries, their own histories extending back before the last ice age. The cultures of the Northwest Coast are among the most technologically sophisticated on the continent: the rich environment gave rise to elaborate hunting and gathering strategies, involving well-designed tools and techniques for the harvest and preservation of food. With the arrival of the Europeans and Americans sailors in the late 1700s, the collection of Tlingit and Haida artefacts began and 100 years later, natural history museums were amassing large collections of ceremonial and utilitarian objects. The collectors often viewed their activities as a way of preserving Alaskan Native cultures, which they perceived as being in decline due to Euro-American pressures.

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Today, Native cultures are still alive and well in spite of the stress of new economic, social and religious orders, and continue many traditional activities. Retaining traditional knowledge and skills is made difficult, however, by the dearth of original artefacts in Alaska. Museums are generally viewed as hostile mausoleums, inaccessible to all but a select few, keeping the people's spiritual and ceremonial treasures locked away. Nevertheless, Alaskan Natives are frequent visitors to Alaskan museums, are active in museum organizations and on governing bodies, and have made an impact on their operation and policies. The Alaska State Museum maintains an especially close relationship with the Tlingit and Haida tribes.

Collection policies and the Kiks.ádi Frog Crest Hat

In 1990, the United States Congress passed the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGRA), a bold measure guarding against the inappropriate collecting of Native American human remains and artefacts. For museums, the law presents new challenges – a formal mechanism is now in place for the repatriation of Native American artefacts, funerary and religious objects, and communally owned artefacts from museum collections. The law has begun to address the concern that museums possess many artefacts collected unethically or without authorization in the past, and mandates change in the collection of Native American artefact in the future. The law is also a response to the growing realization that the collecting activities of museums contributed to the hardships and struggles of Native American cultures, sometimes making the practice of imported religious and ceremonial activities impossible. With a large percentage of their traditional possessions in the hands of museums and collectors, several generations of Native Americans have lived without full knowledge of the extent and original beauty of their traditional art, regalia and material culture.

The collection goals of the Alaska State Museum include the acquisition of Alaskan Native objects, with an emphasis on retrieving artefacts that were removed from Alaska, in close consultation with Alaskan Native groups. An outstanding example of this collaboration involved the purchase of an important crest hat of the Kiks.ádi Tlingit from Sitka, Alaska. In 1981, this wooden hat, carved with representation of the frog – an important crest of the Kiks.ádi clan – was successfully purchased at an auction by the Alaska State Museum with the central council of Tlingit and Haida Indians of Alaska and the Sealaska Heritage Foundation – two Native organizations active in the preservation of traditional Tlingit and Haida culture.

The Frog Hat (*Xixchi S'aaxu*) is believed to be at least ten generations old, and is itself a copy of an old hat that had decayed beyond use. The wooden helmet is surmounted by a stack of six basketry rings, representing the slaves that were killed when the hat was formerly commissioned and named. Crest hats are worn by the most respected leaders of a clan during traditional ceremonies (such as the *potlach*, a funeral ritual), and are considered to be owned by the entire clan. During the 1970s, the hat was sold to a collector without the clan's permission, and when the hat came up for auction in New York in 1981, the clan recognized an opportunity to reclaim their property. The Kiks.ádi clan sought the assistance of the Alaska State Museum and the Native organizations, and an agreement was

drawn up listing the responsibilities of each party towards the hat's purchase and preservation. The hat is jointly owned by the museum and the Native organizations, and the continuing ritual use of the hat by the Kis.ádi clan is authorized, while the museum can exhibit the hat and is responsible for its preservation and security.

Totem poles, fish traps and raven's tail robe

South-eastern Alaska is famous for the totem poles that used to stand in traditional Tlingit and Haida villages, and today, the preservation of these monumental sculptures taxes the resources of museums. In the late 1960s, the Alaska State Museum, working together with the Alaska Native Brotherhood (ANB) and the Smithsonian Institution, surveyed the totem poles and sculptures that remained unprotected, and found that forty-four were in salvageable condition after at least eighty years of exposure to the elements. Tlingit and Haida elders were gathered together to decide what should be done. Should the poles be allowed to weather and decay naturally, or should the best poles be rescued and preserved as an inspiration for contemporary Native artists? In 1970, the poles were carefully removed from the village sites and brought to Keitchikan, where they formed the basis of the Totem Heritage Center, an institution devoted to the perpetuation of traditional Northwest Coast art.

The removal of the poles was completed after much research and consultation with the elders. In most cases, the original ownership of the poles could not be determined, and the southeast Alaska Indian Arts Council (SALAC) was formed to act on behalf of the unknown clans who commissioned the poles. The council, a group of elders with extensive knowledge of tradition, helps to ensure that the collection and conservation of the poles are done in a culturally appropriate manner.

In 1989, a fisherman in Juneau, Alaska, discovered a large Native artefact of a different sort: a basketry fish trap emerging from the bank of Montana Creek. The trap, 3 metres in length, was constructed from dozens of wooden staves, lashed with spruce roots to wooden hoops forming a large openwork basket. The trap was buried in moist silt and gravel, conditions allowing for the preservation of the wood and roots over the centuries (the trap is radiocarbon dated between A.D. 1370 and 1410). The trap was found within the traditional territory of the Auk Tlingit, who hold the right to use the stream for fish harvesting. The Auk people were excited about the discovery of the trap, which substantiated the antiquity of their fishing rights on Montana Creek, and thought it might be used as evidence in future legal proceedings to protect those rights.

The recovery of the trap was another opportunity for a collaborative effort between the museum and Native organizations. The museum staff was called upon to recover and preserve the trap, and with the assistance of the Sealaska Corporation – a Native-owned company – archaeologists were hired to recover the trap. The excavation plan was presented to elders and representatives of the Auk tribe, who allowed the excavation to proceed, and the delicate trap was moved to the museum where it is currently undergoing conservation treatment. When this is completed, the Auk tribe will be involved in the future exhibition and replication plans.

In addition to collecting and preserving Native artifacts in Alaska, the museum collects information about Alaskan Native objects in other institutions and collections around the world. Centuries of collecting have resulted in Alaskan Native artefacts being distributed around the globe, for all intents and purposes lost to the people who created them. Documentation and photographs of these distant objects are essential to Alaskan researchers attempting to reconstruct and understand traditional art and material culture.

Keeping this in view, in 1981, the Alaska State Museum embarked on its European Inventory Project which aimed at compiling an information file of Alaskan Native objects found in European institutions and collections. A team of curators traveled to museums in London, St Petersburg, Helsinki, Berlin, Hamburg and Bremen, and returned with 3000 detailed photographs and documentation of a wide variety of traditional object types, materials, techniques and motifs. The museum currently allows this information to be used for research, and intends to enlarge its photographic collection as well as creating a computer database of information and images which will facilitate research.

The museum's principal role is not just to preserve ancient artifacts, but also to nurture contemporary Alaskan Native art. In 1990/91, a 'ravens tail' robe was woven at the Alaska State Museum by a group of volunteer weavers. These robes were used by the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian Indians until the early 1800s, and are characterized by the bold geometric design decorating the white ceremonial robes. Only eleven original robes are known to exist in the world, none of which is in Alaska. A recent book on these original garments drew the interest of Alaskan Native weavers, and the University of Alaska began offering courses in traditional weaving. Over 150 students have so far learned the technique, and are now weaving – and wearing – the first raven's tail robes made in Alaska in more than 150 years.

At the museum, the robe was woven in the Northwest Coast Indian exhibition hall as a public demonstration. When it was completed, after 1800 hours of weaving, the robe was donated to the museum. In the traditional manner, the robe was given the name 'Hands Across Time' in recognition of the link the weavers felt to the weavers of previous centuries. Both the weavers and the Native elders who advised them wished the robe to be made available to Native dancers and speakers for traditional ceremonies, so long as strict security and preservation standards would be followed. Since its completion, the robe has been used at numerous ceremonies and performances, and the documentation of each use is compiled at the museum.

The relationship between Alaskan museums and Alaskan Natives is important, and through co-operation the programmes and concerns of both groups are advanced and expanded. The history of collecting has given museums a bad reputation, and the building of trust and goodwill among Alaskan Natives is a continuing challenge. Over time, as these collaborations succeed in preserving important historical information and objects, there is hope for healing. Since Alaskan Native traditions are passed orally and materially from one generation to the next, access to their artifacts is critical to cultural survival. Ultimately, the goal of both museums and Alaskan Natives is identical: the preservation of the past for future generations.

museum international

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