



THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF MUSEUMS // CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MUSEES

October 1980

80/CG.28

I C O M '8 0

TWELFTH GENERAL CONFERENCE OF ICOM

THE WORLD'S HERITAGE - THE MUSEUM'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Panel Discussion

Chairman: Irina Antonova (USSR)

Louis Lemieux (Canada):

"Museums - Natural Heritage"

Amalendu Bose (India):

"Towards a Museum Policy on the World's Scientific Heritage"

Alpha Oumar Konaré (Mali):

"Museums - Ethnological Heritage"

Luis Lumbreras (Peru):

"Museums - Archaeological Heritage"

Nikolai Ivanov (USSR):

"The Twentieth Century Heritage and Museums of History"

Louis Lemieux

Director

Museum of Natural Sciences

Ottawa, Ontario (Canada)

Plenary Session: 27 October 1980

MUSEUMS - NATURAL HERITAGE

Louis Lemieux

Generally speaking, the purpose of museums is to demonstrate the products of nature and the works of man so as to promote interest and an appreciation and disseminate knowledge of them. The task of natural history museums is to expound the natural phenomena that constitute the environment and the natural heritage of the society which it serves.

Indeed, the museum can no longer be satisfied to present the first level of knowledge which is the identification of an object, be it animal, plant, mineral or fossil. It must be aware of the issues which society faces in its relationship with its environment, familiarize itself with possible solutions and present them with great objectivity in its exhibits and public programmes.

There is no shortage of problems: utilization and sources of energy; the population growth and its consequences; the provision of food to the earth's population; desertification; deforestation; the loss of environmental quality due to pollution; the many species threatened with extinction, etc. Each of these issues presents facets that are particular to the diverse human societies that populate the planet, and it is the role of the museum to approach them in a manner appropriate to the societal context in which it operates.

However, there is an almost universal fact that causes deep concern and apprehension, and that is the cutting off or isolation of man from his natural environment, with the dreadful consequences that follow. Throughout his history, man has lived in close association with his environment, utilizing it while respecting it. But recently, dazed by an industrialization and a technological advance which have progressed at a rate unbound, man has lost contact with nature. He no longer knows her, therefore cannot understand her, much less appreciate her. The decisions he makes, when faced with types of development that impair his environment, demonstrate his ignorance; as a result, man's natural environment deteriorates at a rate such that it may soon become unfit for life to prosper.

Today, the major challenge for natural history museums is to re-educate man on the importance of his natural surroundings for his own well-being and to make him appreciate his heritage so that he will learn again to preserve its quality and to maintain with it the harmonious relationship that interdependence commands. If that can be achieved, and as man becomes conscious of all the values involved in the formulation of judgements and the making of decisions, many other problems will find their solutions.

Louis Lemieux
Director
Museum of Natural Sciences
Ottawa, Ontario (Canada)

TOWARDS A MUSEUM POLICY ON THE WORLD'S SCIENTIFIC HERITAGE

Amalendu Bose

The scientific and technological progress of mankind has been studied by specialists all over the world and various treatises have been published which have discussed in detail the impact of such progress on our civilization and the role of science as a whole in the cultural life of man. Individual contributions of some of our predecessors have no doubt played a great part in the past and any history of science will record in bold letters their achievements. But our scientific heritage is the sum total of the great discoveries and scientific practices that have taken place in different parts of the world, simultaneously or one after the other, and which have influenced one another to a great extent and all these together constitute a comprehensive record of that heritage. The presentation of this scientific heritage in its proper perspective is the duty of all historians of science as well as of the science museums of the world, but a museum policy on this subject is not yet crystallized.

Although man appeared on this earth about a million years ago, the last 10,000 years saw the development of his skills and the application of his reason to satisfy his daily needs. The scientific discoveries and the technological applications followed in succession. Thousands of years appear to have been required for man to emerge from the food gathering stages of his existence to those of a settled society depending on agriculture and husbandry, from which more centuries were required for civilizations as we know them today to take form. The rapidity of the scientific discoveries, their practical application and technological development, and the resulting material progress during the past eight decades, have no parallel in earlier human history.

Asia appears to have been the setting for a number of these beginnings of civilizations which actually went on for long periods and assumed distinctive forms. In fact the Orient with its great Eastern civilizations, engendered a proper and ideal environment for the growth of scientific ideas and many a craft and technique. There was a dynamics of give and take, of such ideas and techniques among the different Asian civilizations over a long stretch of time.

Sustained endeavours were there towards a fusion of understanding of the universe, of the world of form, matter and motion; of the environmental flora and fauna; of the art of healing; of arithmetic, geometry and other mathematical sciences both practical and theoretical; of use of minerals and metals for an enriched material life.

Museums of science seldom highlight the scientific heritage of the world but attempt to project the glories of the region without mentioning that it required the contribution of a series of thinkers from different parts of the world, and extending over a long period of time to pass the fruits of their labour to successive generations before the recorded invention could result.

Alpha Oscar Fonard

TOWARDS A MUSEUM POLICY ON THE WORLD'S SCIENTIFIC HERITAGE /2

The year 1980 is declared International Year of the Child. It proves the need felt by each individual to identify himself better, to know his own past, to know his own roots. So what do we ask of the science and technology museums of today? With their aid, an acceptable scientific and dynamic profit of a number of themes in astronomy, mathematics, medicine, chemical techniques, etc., can be developed, not with a view to extolling the scientific past of the East, but presenting, of necessity, a continuity of human endeavours which have in their own way engendered the present. There is no denying the fact that the history of science and technology would be an incomplete picture without its protolayers from the Orient.

and material culture, social organization, cultural expression".

Amalendu Bose
Former Director
National Council of Science
Museums, Calcutta (India)

The ethnological heritage is not only what is being created at each instant, what is to come. The museum is the most complete, the most totally prepared institution to insure the safeguarding of the ethnological heritage.

Which museum, which museum today?

It is no longer a question of a museum alone, the only repository of ethnological objects, nor of a folklore museum, or only of an exhibition of crafts. Man in his social and natural environment should be at the base of every enterprise. This concept has made the ethnological museum evolve towards "Ethnological Museums", towards new forms of museums such as the "citadel museum", the museum of the land, the eco-museum, etc. The museum should be close to the land and the man who live there. It should have multiple aspects, and lighter structures of museums should be conceived.

Which collections?

All things created by man should be preserved, used to their utmost; this can be achieved according to a programme, to a corpus established by the founders and the beneficiaries. The development of urgent ethnology is imperative and calls for a mobilization of all forces. The collections will first be based on the needs as expressed by the population concerned. The exhibition will be dynamic, made by nationals for their countrymen. An exhibition on another country should always be done in "agreement" (that is, in collaboration) with the subject-country.

Some important questions

- It is necessary to ensure a serious training programme, complete, open to the greatest number of ethnologists (ethnology should be valorized). Ethnology seen from within, and national ethnologists, should be preferred.
- Ethnographic museums should favor research and cultural action. The study of social structures and architecture (the context of life) should not be neglected.

Every type which leaves the country must be preserved. It is difficult to carry things of a people with ourselves. The museum should be a great storehouse.

MUSEUMS - ETHNOLOGICAL HERITAGE

Alpha Oumar Konaré

The year 1980 is declared International Heritage Year which in itself proves the need felt by each individual to identify himself better, to be understood, to achieve personal fulfillment. It also proves a great awareness of the whole process of cultural dislocation: "environment - culture - science" through the rapid disappearance of traditional social structures, caused by certain technical innovations, by intolerance (particularly religious), by certain forms of tourism, by the deterioration of Nature...

The International Heritage Year is above all that of the ethnological heritage. What is the ethnological heritage? It is: "artistic and material culture; social organization, cultural and ideological expression".

The ethnological heritage is not only what already is but also what is being created at each instant, what is to come. The museum is the most complete, the most totally prepared institution to insure the safeguarding of the ethnological heritage.

Which museum, which museums today?

It is no longer a question of a museum alone, the only repository of ethnological objects, nor of a folklore museum, or only of an exhibition of crafts. Man in his social and natural environment should be at the base of every enterprise. This concept has made the ethnological museum evolve towards "Ethnological Museums", towards new forms of museums such as the "citadel museum", the museum of the land, the eco-museum, etc. The museum should be close to the land and the men who live there. It should have multiple aspects, and lighter structures of museums should be conceived.

Which collections?

All things created by man should be preserved, used to their utmost: this can be achieved according to a programme, to a corpus established by the founders and the beneficiaries. The development of urgent ethnology is imperative and calls for a mobilization of all forces. The collections will first be based on the needs as expressed by the population concerned. The exhibition will be dynamic, made by nationals for their countrymen. An exhibition on another country should always be done in "agreement" (that is, in collaboration) with the subject-country.

Some important questions

- It is necessary to ensure a serious training programme, complete, open to the greatest number of ethnologists (ethnology should be valorized). Ethnology seen from within, and national ethnologists, should be preferred.
- Ethnographic museums should favor research and cultural action. The study of social structures and architecture (the context of life) should not be neglected.

Every thing which leaves the
 many
 - difficult to give insight of a people what constitutes them
 - research based on social structure

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY HERITAGE AND MUSEUMS OF HISTORY

Nikolai Ivanov

The twentieth century brought new dimensions to mankind's development, and its impact, especially that of recent decades, has naturally caused museums of history to repattern their work and to expand their social function and role. The involvement of museums in the present era may be justifiably described as a sign of the times, an act of national consciousness.

The rapid development of history museums with exhibitions on the present era and a diversification of topics is observed in many countries. But showing the present age creates many new, intricate and topical problems, such as:

- a) collecting, studying, arranging and preserving 20th century material,
- b) making the most of the cognitive and educational potential of 20th century exhibitions, and presenting to all nations the historical evidence of mankind's progressive development,
- c) learning to preserve historical monuments and all other material evidence illustrating national history,
- d) securing closer ties between history museums and historians, between museology and historiography.

History museums can and must be bastions of true science, employing a scholarly approach to the selection, study and arrangement of exhibits making active and extensive use of all means at its disposal to promote the ideas of social progress, democracy, peace and closer cultural cooperation among nations.

few specific aspects:

Nikolai Ivanov
 Director
 Marx and Engels Museum
 Moscow (USSR)