

ICME NEWS 57, July 2010

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1. WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT

professionals, the other on sustainable heritage. In late May the annual American Association of Museums (AAM) conference brought together about 5,000 museum professionals from 50 different countries. Many papers in multiple sessions were delivered on topics related to museum curation, education, presentation and interpretation, administration and much more. In addition the AAM is attempting to expand beyond the borders of the US and reach out to attract museum practitioners, especially from Central and South America, the Caribbean and Asia. Late June found me in Evora, Portugal at the second conference on sustainable heritage sponsored by the Greenlines Institute. This was a much smaller group, but with global representation.

The presentations at each conference had a very distinct approach. Speakers in Los Angeles provided insight into the practical experiences in the museum profession. Audiences were able to learn of successes and failures of different types of museum programs. The speakers in Evora, actually a very varied group including those involved in tourism and hospitality, cultural geographers, heritage studies and museologists. Presentations also addressed how projects were accomplished and their impact.

Speakers, many of whom were from academe, also integrated theoretical frameworks into their presentations.

In November, ICME will meet in Shanghai in conjunction with the ICOM triennial and General Assembly. Based on the preplanned sessions and the many papers independently submitted, we are looking forward to a robust collection of presentations and discussions that merge the practical and the theoretical. In response to the call for papers to directly discuss the topic of Challenging

discussion about facing challenges in ethnography museums. The joint session with the ICEE (Exhibition Exchange) committee will also present different approaches to the different ways to present the same material. The program committee is working on choosing the best of the many papers to ensure that many different approaches in ethnography meetings are presented. And, of course, elections for a new ICME board will be part of the annual meeting.

In a short time, a separate ICME registration form will be sent out. This will

allow us to know how many people are actually planning to make the trip to Shanghai. One evening a reception at the National Museum is planned so we can meet our ICEE colleagues. It will be necessary to register in advance for this evening although there is no fee to attend. Following the hard work of ICME meetings, the annual dinner will be held. For this there is a fee and the need to preregister as well. And of course, there is the infamous or famous ICME post-conference tour. Information on how to register for this activity appears elsewhere in this newsletter. When you have received this form and completed your plans, please be sure to return it.

We encourage the largest possible attendance and participation in all of our meetings. For so many reasons this is not always possible. Maybe you have an exhibit opening at the same time. Maybe you face financial obstacles, which I

joining ICOM and ICME in Shanghai. In that case we are asking all speakers to

asking all who do come to submit their photographs, to be memorialized on the website.

Oh, if only life would slow down in the summer! Nevertheless, I wish each of you a lovely summer.

Annette B. Fromm 3060 Alton Road Miami Beach, FL 33140 305-532-3530

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2. CALL FOR CANDIDATES FOR THE ICME BOARD

Committee membership is open to all ICOM members in good standing upon request and without undue delay or restrictions. Elections shall be held every third year, normally during the ICOM Triennial Conference. Members are eligible to stand for election.

The chairperson shall be elected prior to the other members of the Board. The chairperson and the other members of the Board shall be elected for three years, and their mandate can be renewed once. A member of the Board may subsequently be elected chairperson. However, no one may remain on the Board for more than twelve consecutive years.

According to the rules for ICOM International Committees elections of new members for the ICME board will be done at the ICME general meeting to be held on Wednesday afternoon, November 10.

All ICME members wishing to be considered for the ICME board election are invited to submit their candidacy to the election committee.

Please include the following information in the submission:

1. Name and relevant personal data

2. A brief biography/CV.
3. A statement of what you wish to accomplish as a board member, is also welcome.

to: t.c.s.karlgard@khm.uio.no

The Nominations will be posted in the ICME Newsletter on September 30.

3. THE AMENABLE OBJECT IN THE MUSEUM AS A CONTESTED SPACE

Dr. Bernadette Lynch

Too often in museums we avoid actual participation with people who bring these troubled realities inside our doors. This is because we are afraid of the responsibility, afraid above all, of what we cannot control. We convince behind the locked doors of our institutions, retreating back to old ways of working that keep us safe. Sharing authority and control remains a fundamental challenge to the power and culture of museums.ⁱ could take up its civil responsibility and use its collections as the catalyst to welcome debate, situating itself right at the heart of civil society; moving ourselves and asking ourselves some hard questions as museum professionals, I propose that we begin to look at sharing authority and practice a radical formⁱⁱ As one community participant noted with regards to his frustrating experience with a museum: not for you to just listen to us being angry ...and just listen. The point is believe I am wrong- but I am willing to listen to somebody who totally disagrees with me.^{iii iv}

There is a powerful role for object handling in terms of learning, enjoyment, health, and civil activism. The objects must be made available not only within the museum, but extending beyond it to hospitals, schools, neighbourhood projects and the wider community. The point is that the object is amenable, acting as conduit for the development of awareness of past, present and future, of new knowledges, shared, debated and negotiated. Thus, the museum, through the use of its collections, is ideally placed to offer the role of public forum, while taking into account that as the Maori academic, Tuhiwai Smith reminds us, (Tuhiwai Smith 1999, 43), "some knowledges are actively in competition with each other." The museum as contact zone is a political space....a contact zone for knowledges negotiated between indigenous and Diaspora peoples and our Western institutions.

It was thinking of museums as sites for civic dialogue and using collections for democratic debate that inspired a set of practices at the Manchester Museum, where, for a number of years I was Deputy Director. Following years of work particularly with refugees and other Diaspora communities in the very diverse city of Manchester where there is a lot of tension between communities, we opportunities for intercultural dialogue through developing an expanded^{vi} The collections in store).^{vii} Collective Conversations is a way of working that provides opportunities for interested individuals or mixed groups to actively engage with museum collections (including handling them), telling stories and discussing them with museum staff and others.^{viiiix}

Collective Conversations allows for unpredictability, including human emotion, to enter the museum.

In such cases, sharing knowledge for the participants is testimony to and restore their spirit. Consequently accounts can collide. In this museum as contact zone, we can be unafraid of these necessary differences, while recasting the role of the museum partner/ participant from
x In this way, participants may come together with museum which are designed to use collections to promote constructive coexistence between different peoples, helping all of us help each other to face this troubled world. 2007, it became evident that many museums were caught out by community expectations, depth of feeling and the frequent anger and frustration expressed by community partners.

Local Cultures, Global Change, 272

iv: Winnicott, D.W., *Playing and Reality*, London, 1971

v: *See Touch in Museums: Policy and Practice in Object Handling*, ed. By Helen Chatterjee, London, 2008

vi: For further information on this programme see:

<http://www.museum.manchester.ac.uk/community/collectiveconversations/> or contact Gurdeep Thiara, programme director: gurdeep.k.thiara@manchester.ac.uk

vii: In the Collective Conversations process, museum interpretations are groups (intra and inter cultural dialogue) and with academics/curators; all staff are offered training in its use as part of their work in developing themes collections database, website (and YouTube) and exhibitions, as a means of trained in its regular use. National Approaches to Intercultural Dialogue in Europe, (March 2008) was as well as to share some of the responsibility for exhibitions and their of Development Studies, University of Sussex) <http://www.eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0708/DOC2894.pdf>

Dr. Martin Petersen, University of Copenhagen

In the National Museum of Denmark there are a few collections related with Korean shamanism. One of them came to the museum in 1934 in an exchange with Japanese researchers at Keijo Imperial University in then colonized Korea.i In 2005 I went to Korea in an attempt to track the biography of this historical collection, and presented this collection and its history to Korean scholars, shamans and craftsmen.

As is seen from the debate on Western ethnographic museums the last few decades, historical ethnographic collections now and then get entangled in controversies. Claims for repatriation is merely the most obvious example of cases in which politicians of former colonies, university-based anthropologists and local NGOs challenges the ownership and politics of exhibition of ethnographic museums.

On that background not only the historical collection itself but also the current tracking of its history presented an ethical dilemma. What is the point especially since the collection has had a quiet existence since it came to the museum in the 1930s?

Korean researchers, craftsmen and shamans reactions to my presentation of the collection did not bring specific knowledge on the biography of this historical collection as such, but indeed reflected the post-colonial debate in South Korea today.

Through the encounters with Korean researchers, shamans and craftsmen one gained the impression of a debate, which might be politicized and at times irreconcilable or evasive, but at the same time encompassing far more positions and nuances than that. By extension, I came to realize that these stray paths opened up for experiments both with exhibition concepts and collecting activities.

Departing from the museum with ethnographic objects, in other words, turned out to be an effective methodological approach. The museum anthropologist is no longer a detective on a more or less futile hunt for the past and origin of museum collections. He rather becomes a sort of stage director (hereafter simply exhibitor), who encounters local informants, presents the museum objects and documents local responses to these presentations. This methodological experiment is not least inspired by Alfred Gell, who has reflected on the potential of employing ethnographic exhibitions as thought traps. Things have the agentive power to entrap the museum visitor in an encounter in which the distance to their materiality and history is suspended.ⁱⁱⁱ

In practice, the exhibitor is rarely able to bring the museum objects out of the museum to the audience. The 1934-collection was the stumbling-block, which compelled me to perceive the historical ethnographic objects in a new way, and understand the intercultural encounters around them as a kind of interactive exhibitions. But in itself, the collection was not suitable for experimenting with these notions. It was too entangled in ethical dilemmas.

For the methodological experiment I therefore chose another of the historical collections in the National Museum of Denmark; namely, a 1973 collection of shamanic material culture made by Shin Huy-dong, an overseas Korean living in Denmark. Shin Huy-dong obtained used clothes, hats and paraphernalia from a group of shamans in exchange for new ones, which he bought for them. I did not succeed in finding these shamans, but in the summer 2005 I identified a Korean shop owner, from whose store Shin had purchased new shamanic clothes, hats and paraphernalia in 1973. Now, 32 years later, she was still running the store. She did not recollect the encounter with Shin, and now only sold shamanic material culture to a limited extent. However, that did not affect the methodological experiment with momentary exhibitions in the field.

The encounter with the store owner (the informant) underlined the fact that shamanic ritual objects are embodiments of a long tradition adhered to by dressmakers and hatters. The informant stressed this repeatedly and emphatically. At the same time, however, her response to the 1973-collection also demonstrated how new techniques and designs constantly brings small changes into the shamanic material culture, as for example the multi-colored sponge decoration of a shamans hat in the collection. The Korean shamanic collections of the National Museum of Denmark has use, were considered to be more authentic than new, un-used things. The shaman, not the dressmaker was what mattered.

The store-owner responded with nostalgia by the sight of the 1970s sponge Ethnographic objects can be employed as strategic tools in a re-conceptualization of exhibition and collecting strategies of the

ethnographic museums. If nothing else, it is one way in many for current museum anthropologists to enter the field by departing the museum. The ethnographic objects become collecting devices, which can act as touchstones for encounters beyond the museum.

i: Korea was colonized by Japan in the period 1910-45.

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5. CALLS FOR PAPERS

September 11-12, 'Journeys of Expression VIII: Celebrating through Times of Crisis: Prospects and Potentials for Tourism, Festivals and Cultural Events' Copenhagen, Denmark, http://www.tourism-culture.com/conferences_and_events.html

October 10-12, Fourth International Conference: 'Responsible Tourism in Destinations Living Landscapes of Oman' Muscat, Oman. <http://www.rtd4.om/rtd4/index.html>

November 24-26, National Conference on Preservation and Promotion of Heritage, George Town, Penang, Malaysia. <http://www.usm.my/warisan2010/>

November 29-30, 'The Asia Pasific Century : Challenges to Human Dignity' Putrajaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. <http://pkukmweb.ukm.my/apcukm/>

March 14-16 2011, 'Conservation of Architecture, Urban Areas, Nature & Landscape: Towards a Sustainable Survival of Cultural Landscape' Amman, Jordan. <http://www.csaar-center.org/conference/2011/>

April 5-7 2011, 'Forging the Nation: Performance and Ritual in the (Re)production of Nations' London, United Kingdom. http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/ASEN/annual_conference.html

April 14-16 2011, 'On the Surface: The Heritage of Mines and Mining' Innsbruck, Austria. http://www.tourism-culture.com/conferences_and_events.html

April 28-30 2011, 'Memory, Mediation, Remediation' Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. http://www.wlu.ca/page.php?grp_id=146&p=16581

May 11-15 2011, 'Taking Malta out of the Box: Island Cultures, Economies, and Identities' Valletta, Malta. <http://www.islanddynamics.org/>

July 5-7 2011, Malacca International Heritage Conference 2011

Malacca, Malaysia. <http://www.malaccaheritage2011.com/>

September 5-7 2011, STREMAH 2011 - 12th International Conference on Structural Repairs and Maintenance of Heritage Architecture, Chianciano Terme, Italy. <http://www.wessex.ac.uk/11-conferences/stremah-2011.html>

6. CONFERENCES

August 15-19, 'Building Capacities for Cross-Cultural Communication', Washington DC, US, <http://www.csrs-nps.org>

August 18-20, Africa Media & Democracy Conference, Accra, Ghana, <http://www.amdmc.org/>

September 10-11, 'Museums and the Market', Leeds, UK, <http://www.mghg.org/>

September 17-18, 'Saving Private Reels: Presentation, Appropriation and Re-contextualisation of the Amateur Moving Image', Cork, Ireland. <http://www.ucc.ie/en/filmstudies/research/conferences/amateur/>

September 23-26, '4th Global Conference: Multiculturalism, Conflict and Belonging', Oxford, UK, <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/at-the-interface/diversity-recognition/multiculturalism-conflict-and-belonging/call-fhttp://www.inter-disciplinary.net/at-the-interface/diversity-recognition/multicu>

September 23-24, 'Icons and Iconoclasm', Charlottesville, Virginia, US, <http://fid2010.wordpress.com/>

Science, and Heritage in 21C', Seoul, Korea (South). <http://www.vsmm2010.or.kr/>

November 1 to 3, 4th Asian Cultural Studies Association (ACSA) Conference on The Visual Imagination: 'Across Boundaries', Bangkok, Thailand. http://www.gse.au.edu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=130&itemid=98

November 7-12, ICOM 2010 'Museums for Social Harmony', Shanghai, China. <http://icme.icom.museum/index.php?id=95#c205>

November 11-13, 'Word/Image/Culture', Carrollton, Georgia, US. <http://www.westga.edu/forlangconf/>

November 12-14, 11th International Joint World Cultural Tourism Conference, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China. <http://www.kasct.co.kr/>

November 15-19, 'GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM' Nelspruit, Mbombela, South Africa.
<http://www.mbombela.gov.za/International%20Conference1.html>

November 16, 'UNFIXED - photography, postcolonial perspectives and contemporary art', Dordrecht, Netherlands. <http://www.unfixedprojects.org/>

December 9-11, Contained Memory Conference 2010, Wellington, New Zealand.
<http://www.containedmemory.org.nz/>lturalism-conflict-and-belonging/call-f

7. WORDS FROM THE EDITOR

The status of objects in ethnographic museum has been contested over the years. As a classical debate the distinction between presenting objects as unique pieces of art or as elements of an overarching cultural context is still present today. Can we expect objects to be comprehended by museum audiences merely through their aesthetic qualities or do we need to conjure up a cultural context around these objects to make them meaningful to audiences?

The question is therefore, whether the insights gained from the development within academic anthropology may propose new approaches to objects within museums. The two articles featured in this newspaper suggest so. While debates within museums tend to focus on exhibitions, these two articles proposes other ways in which objects of museum collections may become valuable in the near and the distant fields of the museum.

In her article on Amenable objects, Bernadette Lynch argues that objects can be applied as important points of departure for interacting with the Diaspora. Applying objects in interaction with communities Lynch observes how objects have a capacity for opening for strong narratives. But more than that, the aspect of touch, may become central for the way in which museums can contribute to put marginalised parts of the public in an active relationship to the surrounding society.

Thus, all in all, what these two articles suggest is that, more than art to be revered, cultural documents to be preserved or property to be contested, museum objects can be activated in everchanging constellations thus constantly moving the perspectives in the prism between museum, audiences and originator populations.

Deadline for the next ICME News letter is September 20. Please send news and contributions to editor@icme.icom.museum

Peter Bjerregaard
Editor, ICME News
