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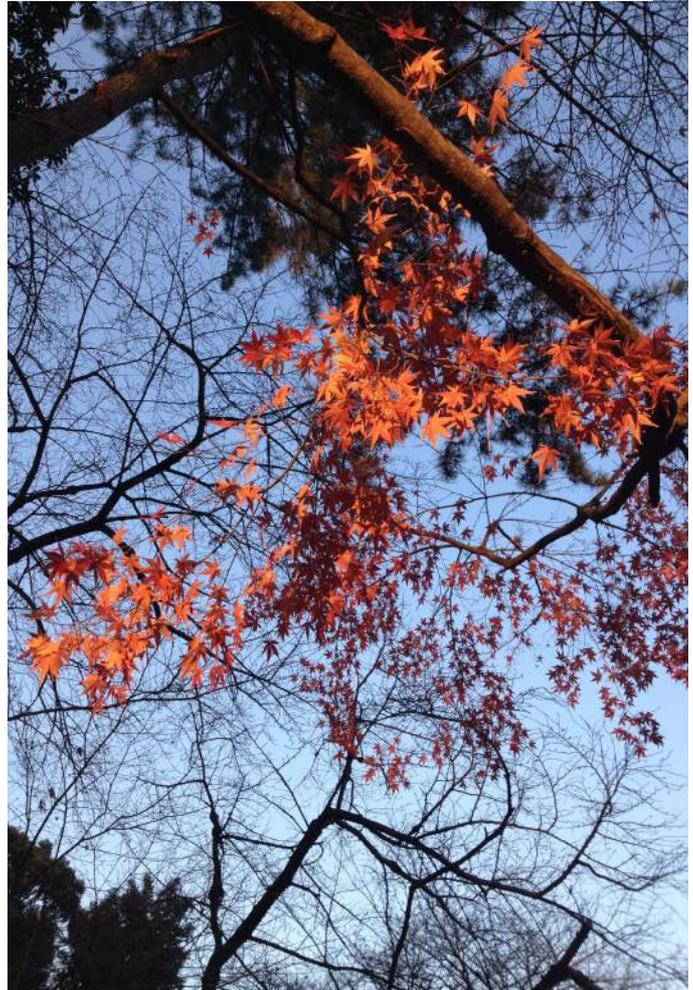
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**Seasons Greetings to everyone in  
 ICME &  
 Very Best Wishes for 2016 &  
 Beyond from Viv**

**1. WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Dear ICME Friends and Family,

I am writing at the end of 2015 and hoping the year’s end finds you all very well. As we approach the end of the year, wherever we are in the world, it is a time of reflection and in this last News of 2015 I want to briefly reflect on our past

achievements, and our dreams for 2016.

At this time last year, thanks to a grant from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), I was in Tokyo working with Dr Yoshikazu Ogawa and his colleagues in the National Museum of Nature and Science (KaHaku). Each morning I had the pleasure of walking to work through Ueno Park. The weather was mild for the season and the remains of the copper maple leaves glowed in the sunshine.



*Playing the saw*

I passed a musician, playing the saw with incredible skill and creating the most beautiful musical sounds.

The Japan Gallery was my favourite one at KaHaku. There was a chance for visitors to enter one of the display cabinets just after the display of the Edo family group and below you see my daughter Erika entering into the spirit of the exhibition.



*Japan Gallery at KaHaku December 2013*

KaHaku holds an excellent collection of Jomon pottery, which is now part of the new exhibition in the Japan People and Nature gallery that reopened following a two year refurbishment only after my return to the UK. However I was fortunate to visit the Hachiro Yuasa Memorial Museum, at the International Christian University Museum and discuss the Mingei (folk art) Collection Movement with the Director Akiko Fununo, Curator Reiko Hara and Dr Richard Wilson.



*Mingei Ceramics in the Hachiro Yuasa Memorial Museum*

Weather can change rapidly in Tokyo just as it can in London where we island people also have four distinctive seasons. When the snows fall in Ueno Park the historic lanterns look even more spectacular as you see from the two I show below: one with watchful white cats and one with Japanese people in the western dress that was fashionable for the wealthy at the time.



Lantern with cats



Lantern with Japanese in 'fashionable' Western dress

More recently, I am happy to report that our 2015

ICME meeting in Vietnam was most successful with three main events. Le Thi Thuy Hoan, welcomed us for registration at the Vietnamese Women's Museum and guided us through the galleries on 21 October. Then ICME went on a pre-conference tour from 22-24 October to the UNESCO World Heritage sites of Halong Bay and Trang An. Finally Dr Trong and his team at The Vietnam Museum of Ethnology in Hanoi kindly hosted our annual conference and gave us excellent tours of the extensive galleries from 25-26 October. You will hear details of our Vietnam meeting from our three fellows, Wycliffe Oloo Omondi from Kenya, Kennedy Atsutse from Ghana and Mario Buletic from Istria later in the News.

First I will briefly summarize some key issues raised at the ICME Board Meetings. The Board held two meetings during conference. Mario Buletic, Sylvia Wackernagel and I discussed ICME business on 24 October 9.30-11.00am travelling on the bus towards Ha Long Bay, and on 26 October Zvezdana Antos, Mario, Sylvia and I held another meeting 1.00-2.10 at the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology. The Board discussed a number of points including: the ICME Mission and Delegation of Power discussed in the last News. We also considered ICOM Special Project funding for Accessioning Africa year 2; ICME Elections 2016; Changing the ICME website; Establishing an ICME Facebook; Publications; and the triennial meeting in Milan 2016. It is the year 2 plans for *Africa Accessioned* that may be of particular interest to ICME News readers and I highlight the main ideas here.

### Special Projects: *Africa Accessioned* (AA) year 2

Jeremy Silvester, Sylvia Wackernagel, Tone Simensen Karlgård and I worked hard to submit a project *Africa Accessioned: Collections Make Connections Across Cultural Landscapes* to ICOM for Special Project funding. This project follows on from 2014 Special Project funding when ICME established a small working group and began to establish a database resource listing the location of African ethnographic collections held in European museums. Four African

countries provided the initial focus for the project: Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

In 2015 with bilateral assistance from Finland a Namibian delegation visited the major collections from Namibia held in Finnish museums and produced a report indicating the type of collaborative projects that might be developed as a result. The report indicates the ways in which the AA project can have a 'multiplier' effect in generating increased co-operation between museums internationally, using collections as a springboard. It also points to the positive effect of digital repatriation, reinforcing the Pitt Rivers Museum work with Haida and Blackfoot Nations. The project has begun to 'map' relevant collections held in museums in Finland, Germany, Sweden and the UK.

In 2016 our original AA group will be joined by Norway and Swaziland who have expressed a wish to work with us. Our aim in 2016 is twofold. First we seek to develop bilateral reports for other countries for example: Botswana-Sweden, UK-Zambia, Germany-Namibia, Norway-Swaziland. Second we aim to provide a searchable database on the web, accessible and appealing to a wide range of audiences, which will provide information about collections that originate from a particular country and contact details for museums where they are held. Initial research points to open access software such as OMECA or Collective Access, but the intern will engage in a more detailed survey of programmes to ensure the best fit for AA.

A major aim of the user-friendly web platform will be to facilitate extended dialogue and communication between those museums and sister museums linked to communities in the regions where artifacts were originally obtained. We aim to work profitably with the transcultural aspect of the museum world, where many African museum displays feature objects of daily life (furniture, costumes and artifacts) made in Europe, whilst many European museums contain displays of ethnographic collections from Africa. It will show the ways in which centuries of cultural exchange have shaped cultural

landscapes.

*Africa Accessioned* on the web will provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and raise themes of importance to ICOM pointing to the dynamic nature of cultures and societies and the complexity of object biographies. It will present a challenge to the stereotypes and prejudice that lingers from the colonial periods, by stimulating collaborative global research. Most notably it will provide a platform for African voices to engage more effectively with the material culture and intangible heritage housed in museums.

We should hear the results of our *Africa Accessioned* funding bid early next year and will report back to you in the March news. Meanwhile. Fingers crossed for all of us!

Now I must outline the features of this ICME News. Next, at 2, we offer readers the three richly detailed reports on our 2015 meeting in Vietnam from the ICME Fellows: from Kenya Wycliffe Oloo Omondi, from Ghana Kennedy Atsutse and from Istria Mario Buletic.

Following the evocative words and images of our Fellows, at 3, we call your attention to the forthcoming elections in Milan 2016. As you know from previous Newsletters the current Board suggest changing the ICME Board membership to fall in line with the other ICOM ICs, to have 'at least five members' rather than 'no more than nine members' as agreed at the 2014 Board meeting. This slightly changed wording allows us to welcome more colleagues to join the ICME Board. Please *do* consider joining us on the Board, we need *you!*

If you would like to offer your time and expertise to help shape the future of our committee please contact the elections committee. Annette Fromm will be assisted by Zvezdana Antos and Anette Rein to organize the elections. The first call for election to the ICME Board has been sent out via our list. Here I remind you that the deadline for nominations is Friday January 29<sup>th</sup> 2016.

At 4 Laurie Kalb outlines the ICME work to date for the ICOM triennial meeting in Milan. We are

grateful to Laurie who has been leading our activities for the 2016 conference with great efficiency, including the joint session we are planning with the Costume committee.

Thanks to Mario Buletic, our webmaster, you will see the ICME call for papers at the ICME website. Our call also appears at ICOM website along with the Costume / ICME joint call for papers. The whole Board worked hard to encourage creative responses to the ICOM theme of *Museums and Cultural Landscapes*. We note the ICME call and the Costume/ICME call for workshops, performances, panels and papers at 5 in this News.

Finally at 6 our editor Jen Walklate shares her experience of the conference, *Museum Temporalities*, hosted by my dear friend Wayne Modest at the Rijksmuseum Volkekunde, the Research Centre for Material Culture, in Leiden, the Netherlands. The rich programme she outlines is one I am very sorry to have missed, but hopefully there will be a publication in due course. I will pester Wayne about that in 2016!

Now it only remains for me to send you all my warmest wishes for the New Year. May you have good health, happiness, peace and prosperity in 2016, and beyond.

## **2.a. BRIEF REPORT ON ICME 2015 CONFERENCE.**

**By Wycliffe Oloo Omondi**

### *Introduction.*

This is a brief report on the ICME (International Committee for Museums of Ethnography) 2015 conference held in Hanoi-Vietnam in October 2015. The conference program was divided into two major parts, encompassing a pre-conference tour program running from 22nd October to 24th October 2015 and the 2015 ICME annual conference whose main theme was *Museums and Communities: Diversity and Dialogue*. More importantly papers presented during the conference focused on case studies from five continents of the world namely, Europe, Africa, America, Asia and Australia.

### *Experience and benefit.*

The conference brought on board contemporary global trends in museums as represented by various speakers with diverse background both geographically and culturally through articulate presentation of a number of papers that not only touched on pertinent issues affecting museums globally but also raised a number of questions relating to diverse community voices, museum's and power, collaborations and representations among others. From the discussions it dawned on me that across the globe, contemporary museums are concerned with almost similar issues when it comes to the question of community engagement. That community diversity and the various voices in the community may actually be considered as strength rather than weaknesses.

I also learnt the importance of re-engaging with community members to not only participate in the development of exhibitions but also the significance of allowing community members to access "their collections" which are conserved in museums, as is the case with the Danish National Museum allowing a descendant of "Native America" the right to perform religious rituals on a museum religious collection, Queensland Museum creating new digital opportunities for communities to access cultural objects, the Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo working with Congolese community in Norway, Vietnamese Women's Museum and the representation of community voices in the museum, among many other examples. I am sure community participatory approaches can be applied in Kenya's situation especially given that most Regional County Governments are currently agitating for the creation of Regional Ethnographic Museums and I will definitely not hesitate to take the above approaches.

### *Conclusion.*

The conference and the tour were indeed a big plus to me for it was a learning opportunity in addition to sharing heritage knowledge with people from diverse background. The tour was extremely marvellous, visiting the UNESCO's

World Heritage Sites of Ninh Binh, the Dinh and Le Temples of the Ancient Capital Hoa Lu, things that I had only read in books, and Halong Bay, the famous breath taking landscape of the Red River Delta (See attached photos). I am sure all this would not have been possible without the assistance of the organizers of the conference spearheaded by the ICME chair and the host, ICOM Vietnam. To all I say a BIG THANK YOU.



*Visit to Dinh and Le Temples of the Ancient Capital, Hoa Lu*



*Boat Ride in Trang, A UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Landscape, visiting over 11 caves*



*Demonstration of the cultivation of pearls*



*Breathtaking Halong Bay World Heritage Site*



*At a craft shop in route to Halong Bay*



*At the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology*



*At the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology in the company of Mario and other ICME participants*



*Delicious meals*



*Presentation at the Conference*



*Fellowship beneficiaries: Kennedy, Mario and Wycliffe*



*Last Dinner! Tone, Viv, Wycliffe and Jari*

## **2.b REPORT ON ICME 2015 CONFERENCE**

**by Kennedy Atsutse**

I was granted a fellowship award by ICME to be part of its annual conference in Ha Noi, Vietnam. I am a curator working with the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, and fervently working to present, interpret and conserve my country's cultural heritage. In doing so, I aspire to build a career in heritage for myself. As a member of ICOM and ICME for that matter, I always crave opportunities to learn and share experiences. My first opportunity came in 2013 where I was a grantee of ICOM, and participated in the Triennial Conference in Brazil, where I met ICME members for the first time.

This year's ICME conference in Vietnam, gave me the opportunity to travel to Asia, which is a great distance from my country, Ghana. Though my journey took almost three days, because I had to transit through two countries, it was exciting to meet and see other people and cultures. I arrived in Vietnam to a very favourable weather and welcoming people. The long drive from airport to hotel gave an exposure to the land and vegetation of Vietnam, where again I saw many plants and food crops that are same as those found Ghana.

A few checks revealed that Vietnam, just as my country Ghana, lie in the tropics, accounting for the many similarities in weather and flora. The many rivers and water bodies criss-crossing Ha Noi is a wonderful sight to behold, and indeed, I

learnt from our tour guide later that Ha Noi means "land between rivers".

It was really great meeting ICME family members when I finally arrived in the hotel, but unfortunately I missed the following day's excursion because I was jet lagged and could not meet the time. However, the trip to Halong Bay on the second day was very exciting. On our way, the tour guide spoke extensively about the city Ha Noi and its people. The countryside was good to see, with its rice fields and beautiful tombs.

The time spent in Halong Bay was most memorable. The natural heritage site presented a stimulating environment, and we visited limestone caves on the bay, had interesting moments with the monkeys on the islets, and a lot to eat and talk about while spending time with ICME family on the cruise ship.

The visit to Vietnam Museum of Ethnography offered me a deep insight into the culture and general lifeways of the Vietnamese. The exhibitions are extensive, and I realized close similarities in the woven textiles of Vietnam displayed, and that of Ghana, except for differences in weaving methods. The traditional buildings on this museum's premises also bear great semblance to what we have in the northern part of my home country in terms of structure and material composition. In fact, it was interesting seeing these things and learning about the museum's posture towards creating contexts for local communities to present their cultural heritage.

The conference held in this Museum of Ethnography could not have been better, with regards to the theme "Museums and Communities". Presentations and discussions were held on various sub-themes: Voices, Dialogue and Exhibitions; Identities, Ethnicities and Objects; Difficult Histories, Nations, Ideologies; Digital Objects and Museums without Objects; Audiences and Engagement; Participatory Practice and Exhibitions.

The discussions on these issues were very resourceful, and they exhumed certain metaphors

for me. “Are ethnographic museums new wines in old bottles?” as a presenter asked. What is the place and role of communities in the modern day museum? How do we integrate them in our work? It was pleasant seeing the works ICME members were doing around the world. Many are involved in contemporary works which seek to partner with and integrate local communities.

Of delight to me is the project going on in Montreal, as presented by Dr. Silvia Forni, which is captioned “In the heart of Africa”, where one of the objectives is to promote genuine intercultural understanding between societies, in addressing the issue of stereotyping, a problem faced by museums. What also struck me is the documentation works which are going very digital. It was good seeing three-dimensional (3D) software developed for these purposes, with its participatory design methods aimed at community empowerment, as presented by Dr. Graeme Were, and also the videos shown on intangible cultural heritage. They were interesting and inspiring.

In all, the conference has ignited a better appreciation of heritage in me and also increased the passion to do and achieve more, in progressing the agenda towards a more collaborative future, at least, in my part of the world. Of paramount importance to me are the delegates I came in contact with. The networking I established would go a long way in aiding my work here at the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, and I look forward to meeting these amazing people again.

On the other hand, the conference offered me the opportunity to take time off work and visit Vietnam, and Asia for that matter – it was a holiday to remember. It felt good to see a country bouncing back and making great strides. Lingering in my mind is the good food we had all round, the visit to Halong Bay and the water puppetry show.

The people of Ha Noi are very warm. They are nice to strangers and always willing to help. This made moving around town and finding stuff to buy very easy. I think it’s a safe and great place to

be. Thank you ICME!







expected and normally the aftermath of ICME meetings tells you that what you get and bring back home is much more precious. The conference that we had this year in Hanoi-Vietnam was not an exception, just another good reason to wait impatiently for the next year.

Being a part of the organization team was a strong enough motivation to participate. Besides that, this year's conference main theme was another good reason. The conference title describes best what most of participants' museum work is about. Whether we are looking at the practical museum work through the research practices, curatorial work, exhibitions planning and their production, educative approaches or fieldwork documentation - the dialogue, collaboration and engagement with communities in the frame of inclusion of cultural and social diversity, are always present as the principal guidelines to follow.

Papers that we had pleasure to share and discuss during the conference at the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology in Hanoi clearly underlined these ideas. Again, it was important to include most different museological experiences that come from a variety of social and cultural contexts. And not without critical reflections about past and present practices, museum policies, relations with different types of power, in order to improve and serve better what ethnographic museums are about – different communities and audiences.

What preceded the ICME conference was the three-day pre-conference tour. But before the official start, we had the chance to visit different museums and cultural sites in Hanoi. The Vietnamese Women's Museum was chosen as a point of departure for 2015 ICME Conference. It is an exhaustive museum, made in a very communicative and contemporary way. It is a perfect example on how to rise traditionally marginalized voices, on how to work together with communities and materialize through the museum display a sense of universal dignity and respect.

We couldn't have imagined a better place for the conference. Our hosts at the Vietnam Museum of

## **2.c ICME 2015 ANNUAL CONFERENCE, HANOI-VIETNAM: MUSEUMS AND COMMUNITIES: DIVERSITY, DIALOGUE, COLLABORATION**

### **Mario Buletic, Ethnographic Museum of Istria - Croatia**

After six years of taking part in ICME committee and participating in its annual meetings, it is something that I already perceive as a tradition. A tradition that is about gathering with colleagues and friends from different professional, social and cultural realities. It is about a particular place where to establish new relationships, professional and personal networks. A moment for reflecting and sharing our day by day experiences. Also to put them aside at the same time, enjoying the good atmosphere, people and the place during the days we are together. It is what generally is

Ethnology guided us through the ethnographic past and present of 54 different groups that live in Vietnam. It was an inspiring journey through museum collections, cultural and social differences, past and present ways of life in different part of Vietnam, including the traditional architecture in an open air exhibit and a new building dedicated to Southeast Asia. Besides these two highlighted museums, Hanoi offers many other places worth of seeing showing the often turbulent national history and cultures of Vietnam.

From the chaotic and vibrant Hanoi, where the street is the stage of countless human activities, markets, cafés, food corners and millions of motorbikes where crossing the street means the complete abandoning of traffic behaviour and logic that we are used to in most European countries, we took the road for a two-day tour in some of the most spectacular parts of northern Vietnam.

Places charged with natural beauty, cultural and historical importance, inevitably means a great tourist potential. Vietnam is not an exception, numerous tourists from all over the world make their presence more than visible. Let's just hope for the best that such natural, historical and cultural richness and diversity will be preserved and kept in the future in a sustainably clever way.

From the temples and caves of Trang An to paradisaical unreal Halong Bay, fed with superb local food, it was a perfect setting for everybody to enjoy and to get to know better each other. Having Kim as the organizer of our visits and Juan as the guide with a great knowledge and sense of humour, meant that we could also go way beyond the descriptions offered by our tourist guides about the details of local ways of living everyday life. So a most sincere and special thanks goes to them, to all responsible persons from Vietnam Museum of Ethnology, to the ladies from the Women's Museum, and all others that made this conference possible and unforgettable. And of course, to all participants, ICME members and friends, with their contributions from the front lines or from the shadow, which since my first conference in 2009 have an important place

on my professional and personal level. See you next year in Milan!





### 3. ELECTIONS OF ICME BOARD MEMBERS, 2016-2019: CALL FOR CANDIDATES

According to the rules for ICOM International Committees, elections of new members for the ICME board will be held at the ICME general meeting at the ICOM General Conference in Milan (4-8 July 2016).

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 (current museum or university affiliation)
2. A brief biography/CV (no more than 200 words).
3. A short statement of what you wish to accomplish as a board member, is also welcome (no more than 200 words).

Please send your submission, by Friday January 29<sup>th</sup> 2016

To the election committee is lead by Dr Annette Fromm: Dr Annette Fromm (annettefromm@hotmail.com)

Dr Fromm will be supported by the election committee including Dr Zvezdana Antos ([zantos@emz.hr](mailto:zantos@emz.hr)) and Dr Anette Rein (ar\_welten@yahoo.de).

The Nominations will be distributed on the ICME website on Monday February 8<sup>th</sup> and in the ICME Newsletter in March 2016

### 4. ICME ICOM MILAN 2016

Plans are underway for an exciting ICOM triennial meeting in Milan, Italy, to take place from July 3 – 9, 2016 with the theme “Museums and Cultural Landscapes.” In anticipation of the 2016 conference, ICOM Italia sponsored a two-day planning meeting in Brescia and Milan over the weekend of November 27 – 29, 2015. It included a day-long public conference in the beautiful and historic Lombard town of Brescia addressing the theme of “Museums, Territorial Systems, and Urban Landscapes,” visits to ancient, Medieval and Renaissance UNESCO sites, and a trip to Milan, where ICOM subcommittee presidents and delegates met at the 2016 conference site and discussed logistics for the meeting.

Within the larger ICOM scheme, ICME has already begun shaping its own program for the Triennial, consisting of panels, collaborations, and excursions throughout the week. The call for abstracts has gone out, under the heading “Curating and Engaging: Peoples, Places and Entanglements in an Age of Migrations,” with a deadline of Friday 26 February 2016. See [icme.icom.museum](http://icme.icom.museum) for more information

During the week of the Triennial, other engaging events are planned. On July 4, the second day of the conference, ICME will co-host a joint panel with the ICOM Textile Committee on the subject of “Museums and Cultural Landscapes: Costumes, Textiles and Museums of Ethnography.” A call for abstracts will go out shortly for this interesting collaboration, with a deadline of February 26, 2016.

Another exciting event will take place during the off-site meeting day, on July 7, when ICME has been invited to hold a session and have behind-the-scene tours at Milan’s newly-opened Museum of Cultures (MUDEC), located in the old Ansaldo Factory complex in the hip neighborhood of Milan and dedicated to a constant dialogue with the international communities in the city.

Along with panel presentations, ICME is also exploring local excursions in and around Milan to

museums and other sites of particular interest to museum ethnographers. Our annual post-conference tour is also in the works and we look forward to sharing more information about this trip early in the new year.

Stay tuned for more updates on the web and in the newsletter!

## **5. ICME CALL FOR CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS/ MILAN-ITALY, 3-9 JULY 2016/ MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPES**

### **ICME 2016 ANNUAL CONFERENCE – CURATING AND ENGAGING: PEOPLES, PLACES AND ENTANGLEMENTS IN AN AGE OF MIGRATIONS**

In an age of migration what new approaches can ethnographic museums employ to progress what Édouard Glissant terms 'Relation', specifically concerning museums and places. Drawing on Glissant's creolisation theories we recognise peoples, cultures, ideas, information and knowledge do not remain static in the global world and curators may profitably use creolising strategies. A Creolising museum in diverse cultural landscapes implies more than simple mixing or métissage; it is rather about building community anew, recognizing the complexity of identities and the dynamic nature of culture.

ICME calls for your abstracts outlining innovative museum practices that reflect the challenges of globalization, mobility and migration. As people, objects, knowledge and information continue to travel what are the ties that bind communities in an inclusive sense of belonging? What are the distinctive features of community identity? How, if at all, can ethnographic museums establish closeness across cultural divides and facilitate mutual understanding and social cohesion? To what extent can ethnographic museum spaces, collections, practices and policies empower communities and build fresh identities? Is there a mediation role for the ethnographic museum in cultural exchange? What strategies can the ethnographic museum use when representing

multiple cultures, even clashing perspectives, in contemporary societies?

We welcome your ideas for papers, workshops, performances or forums on this theme. Please send the conference committee (Viv Golding [vmg4@le.ac.uk]; Laurie Kalb (Laurie Kalb [laurie.kalb@alice.it]); Sylvia Wackernagel [swackernagel@yahoo.de]; Mario Buletic [mario.buletic@gmail.com] Martin Earing [earringm@si.edu] and Clara Arokiasamy [clara.arokiasamy@btinternet.com] an abstract of around 200 words, together with your museum or university affiliation, by Friday 26 February 2016. The conference committee will notify all applicants of their decision by Friday 11 March 2016.

### **MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPES: COSTUMES, TEXTILES AND MUSEUMS OF ETHNOGRAPHY**

#### **ICOM INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR MUSEUMS AND COLLECTIONS OF COSTUME AND ICME (INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR MUSEUMS OF ETHNOGRAPHY)**

What people wear – how they cover their heads, feet, bodies – in different cultural landscapes speaks of identity and place. Around the world we clothe ourselves in diverse and often extraordinary ways: for protection against the elements of heat and cold, for celebrations on life journeys of birth, movements from childhood to adulthood, marriage and death. Costumes and textiles have an important place in the cultural landscape of the ethnographic museum, past, present and future. Traditionally ethnographic displays point to techniques of production, materials, makers and users, in ways that remain relevant today as the V&A exhibition *The Fabric of India* (2015-16) highlights, with dye plants sitting alongside the exquisite collections. Anthropologists have long embraced visual methods such as film and with increasingly sophisticated technology films can bring audiences closer to distant cultures, as well as allowing 'others-within' to see aspects of themselves reflected within the museum walls,

bridging age and culture gaps between peoples. Recent co-curation projects – wardrobe ethnography – with youth audiences has also shown the museum can become an exciting site for young people to spend time and energy, for their ideas to be taken seriously, their fashions respected and how cultural horizons can positively fuse. Similarly, collaborative work with artists such as Yinka Shonebari, who draws on the politics of production and colonial histories in his work, can help attract diverse audiences by disrupting simplistic narratives.

The Costume Committee and the Committee for Museums of Ethnography will hold a joint meeting on 6 July to discuss these ideas. We invite you to send the conference committee (Viv Golding [vmg4@le.ac.uk]; Laurie Kalb (Laurie Kalb [laurie.kalb@alice.it]); abstracts of around 200 words proposing a paper, workshop, or panel outlining your thoughts and work in this area, with your museum or university affiliation by **Friday 26 February 2016**. The conference committee will notify all applicants of their decision by Friday 11 March 2016.

## **6. MUSEUM TEMPORALITIES: TIME, HISTORY AND THE (ETHNOGRAPHIC) MUSEUM: CONFERENCE REPORT FOR ICME**

by **Jen Walklate**

Sometime in October, I received an email from Wayne Modest, asking me to speak at his conference on Museum Temporalities, hosted at the Rijksmuseum Volkekunde, the Research Centre for Material Culture, in Leiden, NL. Obviously, I had to say yes: it was too good an opportunity to pass up.

So, on Tuesday 24th November, I flew out to Schipol from Birmingham, and made my way towards Leiden on the double-decker train. I was lucky enough to be staying in the Pavilion: a building at the back of the Volkekunde which is now used to house visiting scholars, but which was a part of the Museum's original purpose as a hospital, acting as the wing for the treatment of infectious diseases.

On that first afternoon, I was lucky enough to make the acquaintance of Susan Crane, a historian from Arizona who wrote the book *Museums and Memory* (something I referenced in my own thesis). We were both speaking at the event on the last day, and had rooms next to each other in the Pavilion.

The conference was scheduled for the Thursday and Friday, so on the Wednesday I spent some time wandering around the city and the Volkekunde, which has a fantastic collection, displayed in a cohesive, aesthetic fashion - its displays are fascinatingly diverse in content, but the form has a singular identity which is appealing if somewhat passifying of the objects themselves. I then walked down the main shopping strip in Leiden, before heading back to the Pavilion to get ready for an unofficial speaker dinner, supplied by the Research Centre and hosted by the ever genial Wayne at a local Thai. I met many scholars and practitioners there whom I admire greatly, and some I had never heard of but who's work is fascinating. There were people from all over Europe and the US: including some from Paris, who, in the wake of the previous week's terrible incidents, came along anyway, and were warmly welcomed.

The next morning, the conference began. The initial aim was to bring together 'scholars and curators to think critically about the often tense relationship between ethnographic curation and display and notions of time'. The conference intended to engage with such political issues as the representation of cultures as out of time, and the challenges of preserving in perpetuity. These issues, along with the event's central questions of memory, history, the afterlives of objects, chronology, and (impermanence) were always going to make for an interesting and dense experience. I don't think it's forward of me to say that this definitely happened.

The first day opened with Peter Pels, and my main focus in his speech was upon an alternative history of museum development: one focussed less upon cabinets than upon World's Fairs and the shows of PT Barnum. His aim was to work

against epochal thinking, or, how to go beyond the complex of modernity and tradition.

Next up was Johannes Fabian, author of *Time and the Other*, speaking on his understanding of the reasons for the popularity of this particular book, and his thoughts on working with objects. He pointed us to a wonderful film, *Statues Also Die*, by Chris Marker, which I have since watched: and if you haven't done so, it is a powerful, though not unproblematic, indictment of colonialism in museum attitudes towards objects: specifically, those of African origin. I'd recommend it to those who haven't seen it.

Something I particularly enjoyed about this conference was its inclusive nature in terms of museum disciplines. Though ethnographic museums were nominally the focus, the speakers included conservators, historians, designers, and security specialists, as well as the typical gamut of ethnographers. Next on the agenda was art historian Cecilia Hurley, who's discussion of the canon brought up notions of power and selection, what makes a masterpiece, and how art might be able to liberate ethnography. It was at this point that Wayne began to raise the notions of the fetish and rarity - how might they be recovered, along with wonderment, and without the violence that is implied within their names.

After coffee, we returned to session two, on Historical Displays, Evolutionary Narratives, and the Question of Origins. This session was led by Monique Scott from Bryn Mawr, and Benoit de L'Estoile, from The French National Centre for Scientific Research, and the Ecole normale superieure, Paris. Monique spoke upon the interpretation of African heritage through origins exhibitions found in natural history museums, and how many visitors found them to be colour-coded narratives of progress from black, prehistoric Africa to white, historical, contemporary European man. Dioramas, of course, became an issue at this point: what stories do they propound, how and why?

Benoit's paper focussed on the question of how museums deal with the tensions between their past and future orientations. He suggested that

maybe it is more useful to consider the manifold ways in which the past manifests in the present than to focus on memory: especially in relation to the issue of colonial legacies, and how museums might attempt to represent the contemporary.

The final session of the day was presented by Renata Peters and Frederic Keck, and in this once again the diversity of speakers selected was shown. Renata is a conservator who currently works for the Institute of Archaeology, University Collage London, as the coordinator of the MA in Principles of Conservation, the UCL Conservation and Development Research Network, and the ICOM-CC Objects from Indigenous and World Cultures Working Group. Of course, ICOM's desire to preserve in perpetuity was raised, and it is interesting to see a less than positive take on this desire to keep eternally. Renata made reference to the idea that some objects are meant to decompose, and that the placement of sacred objects in secular settings can in certain circumstances be considered an act of desecration. Particularly in relation to ethnographic objects, this is something which should always be considered.

Frederic's often very funny presentation came from the perspective of someone working in security, assessing risk, stockpiling and biosecurity. He spoke of the idea that storage can become an 'endangered ecology', when few people have access to it, and we questioned the attribution of value - from whom it comes, and why.

The final couple of hours of the day were devoted to the Gerbrand's lecture, this year given by Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett - and it does not do justice to say that her discussion of the Museum of Polish Jews, in which she has been involved, evoked an incredible space - one which I intend to visit very soon.

I was able to speak with Wayne over dinner, hosted at a very upmarket restaurant, *Bistro Bordo*, in the centre of Leiden, which provided me with a wonderful vegan meal. We conversed about enchantment, the carnivalesque, and the day in general. I was very lucky to be able to talk

to Mary Bouquet also, who was sharing my session the next day. The wine was very freely flowing, and the company wonderful.

We all dragged ourselves (very willingly) out of bed for the final day of the conference the next morning. The opening presentation came from Philipp Schorch, whose presentation focussed on how Hawaiian conceptions of temporality affect curatorial behaviour and choices, and attitudes towards objects. Genner Llanes-Ortiz followed this up with a paper focussed upon the often difficult curation of Mexican indigenous art, and the different ways in which history is spatialized in museums.

Session Five was the one in which I was speaking - and I hope that my presentation on Carnival Temporality and the Ethnographic Museum was well received. Mary Bouquet followed with her discussion of velocity within the newly developed chronologies of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

The day, and the conference, ended with session six: Sensing Time: Museums, Memory and Historical Consciousness, hosted by Susan Crane and Riemer Knoop. Susan's presentation focussed on photographs, and how their supposedly timeless qualities relate to the concept of Nothing. Riemer presented on the notion of institutional forgetting: and how biographical thinking might be a productive approach to addressing time and history within the museum context.

What do we do with this? Where do we go from here? There are many questions which remain to be asked, but I hope and believe this conference was the beginning of a productive conversation. And, if nothing else, it reminded us that museums are, temporally at least, very, very messy.

## **7. WORDS FROM THE EDITOR**

Well, that's the end of another year of ICME's work, and probably the end of my first year as Editor of this lovely newsletter. I'm going to keep this brief, because I think you've heard plenty enough from me in the report above. So, I just want to say, thank you very much for all the

support and readership over the last year, and for all your wonderful adventures. I'm really looking forward to hearing more from you - do please email me anything you would like to go into the News, and I'll do my best to make sure it's there! As of the day before writing this, the solstice has happened, and the days are now getting longer. My grandfather always says that this marks the first day of spring. So, there you are.

All, then, that remains for me to say, is I hope you have/or have had, depending on when you read this, a wonderful Festive Season, and a very happy and healthy 2016!