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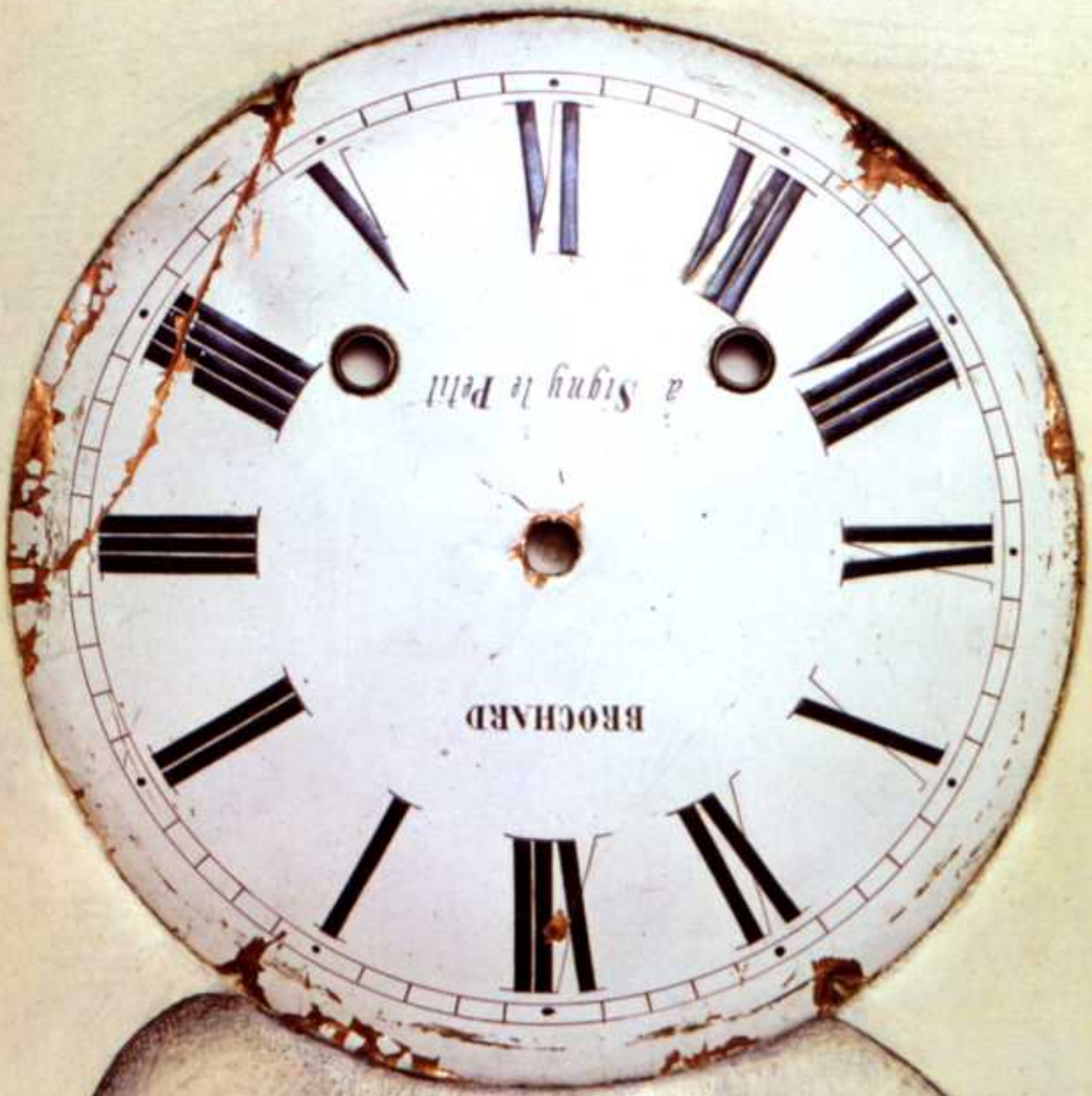


Managing change

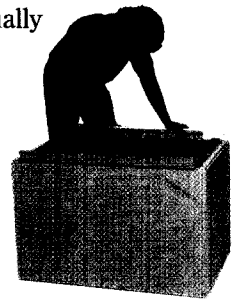
Children in African museums

The museums of Marseilles

8 things you always wanted to do with a showcase - but were afraid to try

The trouble with high-performance showcases is that they tend to be hard to build, and even harder to move. Lightweight demountable systems, on the other hand, are easily handled, but tend to be lacking in performance.

If you are familiar with this dilemma, you will be pleased to hear that the new MONO showcase solves it. Although designed primarily for temporary and travelling exhibitions, it is equally at home in a permanent installation. With its precision-made frame, concealed locks and tamper-proof hinges, it performs to the highest security and environment-control standards.



Here are some of the things you can do with a MONO case:

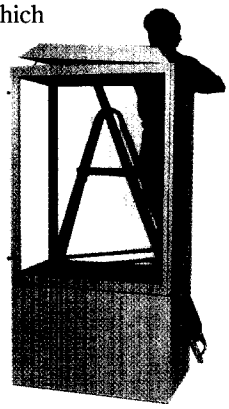
1. Build it yourself. Do up sixteen screws to put the MONO structure together: fix the infills with snap-in-beads: and it's done. It's quick and easy: allow an hour the first time you build it - even less once you know the routine.

2. Move it to another room. The MONO frame is rigid and light - and the 9.5mm glass, is 20% lighter than the 11.5mm material normally used in frameless cases. So it will often be possible to move a case without dismantling it.

3. Put it in store. When taken apart a MONO case occupies very little space. We can supply protective cartons and a trolley to hold the elements, ready for wheeling into your store-room, or onto a contractor's vehicle.

4. Add a timber back panel. Glass and timber panels are interchangeable, and we can supply back panels for use in wall cases, complete with dress panels and fitted if required with our special concealed shelving uprights.

5. Fit new lighting. Without its lighting header, the MONO case is a glass-top unit which can be lit externally. The header is a simple steel box which rests on the top panel. We can supply fluorescent, LV or fibre-optics elements as required.



6. Make it bigger. The fact that your case is a metre long, while your exhibit is 1.5 metres, is no longer an insuperable problem. Your case can be lengthened by substituting longer rails, and new glass panels for sides and top.

7. Use special glass. For enhanced security, you can use multi-layer glass up to 13.5mm thick. For maximum visibility, substitute non-reflective glass. MONO is ideal for use with these special materials, which we can offer at special prices.

8. Go on tour. Using MONO cases can simplify the logistics of a travelling show by reducing the on-site labour needed for case construction and allowing the use of local materials - without compromising your performance standards.

Give it a try. If you like the sound of the MONO system, you can see and try it at our Milton Keynes showroom: or if you prefer, we can bring you a case to evaluate on your own premises. Please get in touch for more details.

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Time Flies, collage and oil by André François, 1974.
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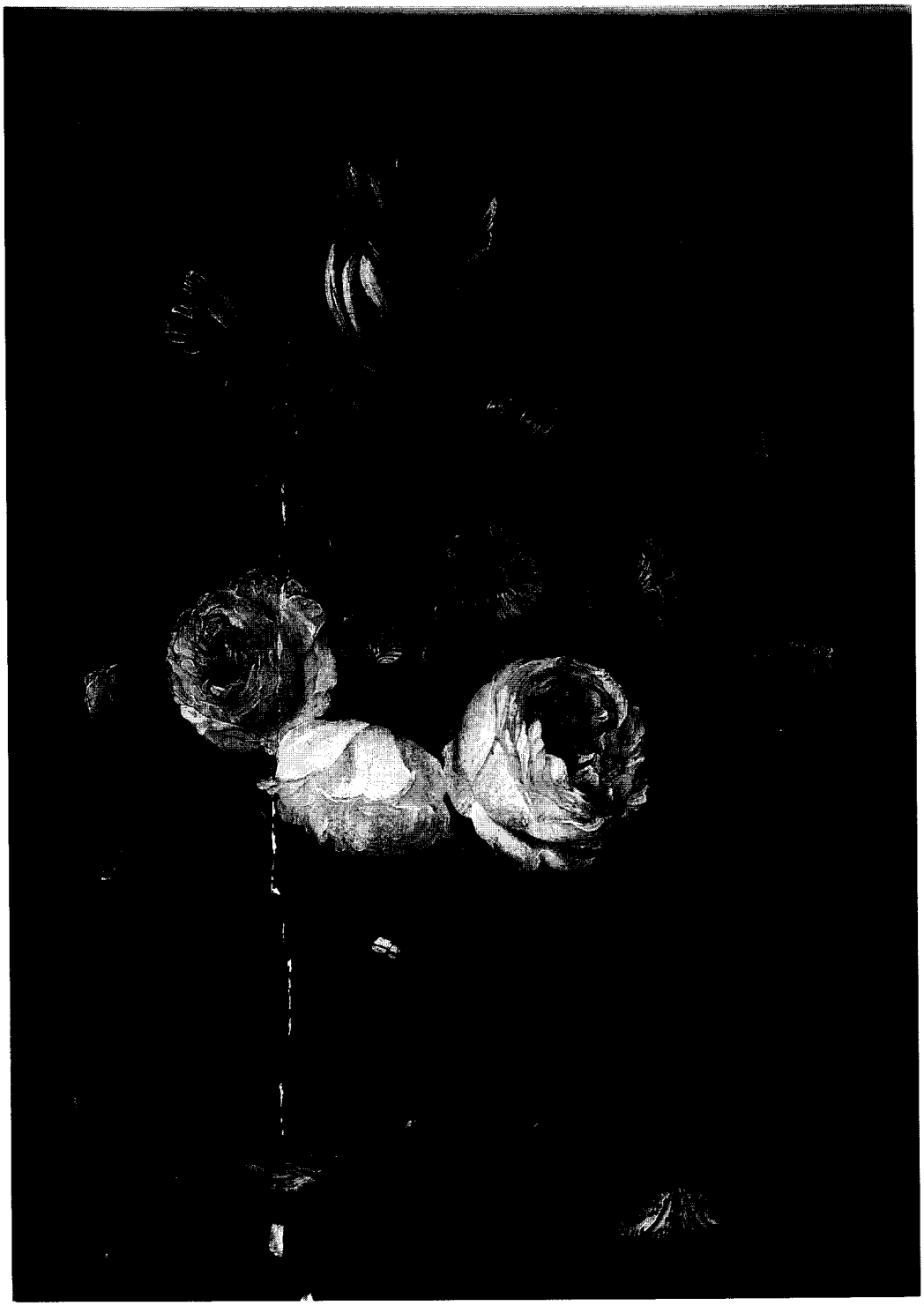

STOLEN

Oil painting on panel by Jan I Van Kessel, depicting a bouquet of flowers in a niche. Signed at bottom centre, it measures 32.5 × 23.5 cm. Stolen from a museum in Tournai, Belgium, in March 1997. (Reference IP11/393/97/N/9573/C.OV-R.68.68.70322, Interpol Brussels)

Photo by courtesy of the ICPO–Interpol General Secretariat, Lyons (France).

Editorial

In the 1980s, museums were seen as shaking off old strictures and confronting a future that appeared bright and optimistic:

> Scattered over the five continents, there are many museums which are breaking new ground, in an effort to prove that the museum is not necessarily an obsolete, élitist institution and that it has an essential part to play in the world of today and tomorrow. A wide range of experiment and innovation is in progress, to discover the best ways of making contact with the public, of using museum collections to the maximum advantage, of recruiting and training suitable staff, and of making sure that the budget is managed, not merely spent. ...[1]

In the 1990s a new note of urgency was sounded as the very institution of the museum began to come under serious criticism:

> Over the last two decades the art historical community, and museum professionals in particular, have been forced to come to terms with the fact that the hermetic, object-reverencing institutions which they once innocently thought to represent both a bastion of education for the public good, and a retreat for the soul, are now ever more widely being criticized as ideologically driven simulacral experiences, institutions manifesting in their many narratives the hegemony of élite bourgeois culture in the West. ... To be effective as institutions caught in the web of our own history, we will not only have to incorporate programmatic initiatives that represent value alternatives, we will not be able to avoid readdressing our relationship to our own history.[2]

Today, the principle – and practice – of change has emerged not as an 'added value' but as the very lifeblood of the museum. The quintessential nineteenth-century institution, which sailed into the twentieth century relatively unscathed, may, on the brink of the twenty-first century, be facing its most serious challenge yet. For the very ingredients that set museums apart from other public service organizations – their tangibility and permanence, their multifaceted and even contradictory functions and goals, their diverse relationships with various external constituencies[3] – now make for a complex web of attitudes and expectations that no longer guarantee the institutional stability that was the hallmark of the past. For this reason we wished to explore the notion of 'change' itself, to shed light on major shifts in thinking and practice in the way that museums meet their obligations to society and make use of their resources. Our guiding spirit on these questions was Marta de la Torre, Director of the Agora programme of the Getty Conservation Institute in Los Angeles and past chairperson of INTERCOM, the ICOM International Committee for Management. Her initiative and breadth of vision were invaluable.

M.L.

Notes

1. Kenneth Hudson, *Museums for the 1980s – A Survey of World Trends*, Paris, UNESCO, 1977.

2. Michael Conforti, 'Museums Past and Museums Present: Some Thoughts on Institutional Survival', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 1995, pp. 339–355.

3. Nobuko Kawashima, *Museum Management in a Time of Change*, Centre for the Study of Cultural Policy, School of Theatre Studies, University of Warwick, 1997 (Working Paper, 3).

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Museums and change: some thoughts on creativity, destruction and self-organization

Robert R. Janes

The Glenbow Museum, Art Gallery, Library and Archives in Calgary, Alberta, has, over the years, become one of Canada's top cultural institutions with an international reputation for exhibitions, programmes and publications. Robert R. Janes, its President and Chief Executive Officer since 1989, is known as a leading voice in the changes taking place in Canada's cultural institutions. His most recent book, Museums and the Paradox of Change, *is a candid approach to controversial changes in a major cultural organization and speaks to the vital need for a shift in thinking as museums enter the twenty-first century. It received the Outstanding Achievement Award for Publication from the Canadian Museums Association and the Award of Merit from the Alberta Museums Association, and led to numerous speaking invitations, including a keynote address at the Smithsonian Institution on the occasion of its 150th anniversary. In this article he sets out some basic premises for change in today's museum context.*

When I arrived as the new President of the Glenbow Museum, Art Gallery, Library and Archives in 1989, it was clear that major changes were in the offing. Although Glenbow is remarkably self-sufficient for a Canadian museum, about 25 per cent of our annual operating budget comes from the provincial government of Alberta. An agreement to provide this funding had come to an end coinciding with my arrival, so we decided to develop a corporate and strategic plan in 1990 as the basis for securing multi-year funding from the province. Our corporate and strategic plan was a first for Glenbow, in that it enabled all staff to become involved. This plan was also a first for Canadian museums, in incorporating explicit performance measures and standards, as well as a set of values and principles outlining how we would treat each other as individuals and as staff.

Unfortunately, the province rejected both our plan and our funding request, which forced Glenbow's staff to confront the future with a vengeance, in the face of declining government support. Five-year financial projections indicated a huge deficit and eventual bankruptcy for Glenbow by 1998. A 20 per cent reduction in operating expenses was required in 1993, followed by another provincial cut of 25 per cent in 1995. With this kind of massive budgetary reduction, it is impossible simply to tinker with the organization chart. In short, we were confronted with the responsibility and opportunity to renew Glenbow by increasing our capacity for change.

The six strategies

This realization spawned another staff and board exercise, based on the assumption that people will become committed to that which they help create. There is no doubt that openness to good ideas is the best assurance of organizational vigour. This work resulted in six strategies which continue to guide Glenbow's efforts at change. These strategies are designed to improve our overall effectiveness, increase income and decrease expenditure, and include the following.

Developing non-commercial partnerships with other non-profit organizations. For example, our Library and Archives have developed an electronic database in partnership with twenty-four archives in the province. This has greatly enhanced public access to our collections, in a cost-effective manner.

A new form of organization. Organizational structure must embrace change, not just accommodate it. This requires unprecedented organizational flexibility and is a far cry from current museum practice based on boundaries and control, but reflects the paradox that 'the more freedom in self-organization, the more order'.[1] We condensed our hierarchical structure of twenty-two functional departments into five multidisciplinary work units, and one of these units, the Library/Archives, now works as a self-managed team. We are becoming increasingly comfortable with the idea of organizational asymmetry at Glenbow. An organization will include a variety of coherent groups within it, each of which is a unique entity with different requirements for learning and growing; it seems sensible to recognize this.

Public service. The main purpose of this strategy is to develop new and creative ways of serving the public, and this has become our most challenging task. All museums must simply become more market-sensitive. We struggle daily with

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Photo by courtesy of the author

Glenbow's Museum School: a fifth-grade student from Marion Carson school sharing her impressions of a West African exhibit.

the task of producing new and creative exhibitions, programmes and services, and we now have staff dedicated to audience research and evaluation. They have recently convened a public advisory group consisting of people who do not visit or use Glenbow so that we can discover why they are not coming.

Streamlining business processes. The purpose here is to examine continually how we can simplify and improve our work in order to reduce operating costs, bureaucracy and the weight of tradition, without decreasing revenue.

Deaccessioning, or the removal of objects from our collections. We designed and implemented a multi-year deaccessioning plan in order to sell millions of dollars of high-value objects which were irrelevant to our mandate, in order to create a restricted trust fund that generates income which is used exclusively for the care of our core collections.

Commercial activities. The focus of this strategy is to generate additional revenue, and we developed a business unit called Glenbow Enterprises to promote this work. As an example, we have recently built a corporate museum for Gulf Canada Resources Ltd in Calgary.

None of these strategies is sufficient by itself, however. Their strength lies in their interaction, and in the balance they bring to our work.

Current realities

Many museum workers have the persistent feeling that, no matter what they do to ensure the survival, growth and prosperity of their organizations, it is never enough. Part of the answer to this lies in a number of issues and complexities, call them current realities, which envelop both our working and private lives. By either unwittingly or intentionally ignoring these things, we are at a disadvantage in fulfilling both our individual and organizational aspirations. It is worth while to explore some of these current realities, which if understood and embraced, might contribute to sustained organizational renewal, and also help to strengthen both individual responsibility and creativity.

The following description of the current realities of contemporary museum work is based on two assumptions: first, museum workers want some degree of self-actualization in their work, that is, they want jobs with some scope for achievement, autonomy, responsibility and personal control, as well as work that enhances personal identity; second, museums, both as organizations and as social institutions, are perhaps the most potentially free and creative work environments in the world. In contrast to the private sector, they do not have daily production quotas; in contrast to the public sector, they are not forced to administer unpopular government policies. In short, the museum is a truly privileged work environment, the most obvious drawback being the generally lower salaries. How many people in the late twentieth century are able to work in organizations whose purpose is their meaning? All museum workers do.

The organization as metaphor

Admittedly, museum work is not only complex, but our organizations are also extremely ambiguous and paradoxical. The real challenge is to learn to deal with this complexity and this cannot be done by employing a single frame of reference. Instead, metaphors may be used, which really means attempting to understand one element of experience in terms of another. By using metaphors our view of reality is enriched, with the possibility that the more unexamined aspects of life and work will reveal themselves.

Organizational life is a case in point. Museums can be many different things at one and the same time. They are:

- *Machines* – meaning that people and jobs fit together in some fixed design, based on functional rationality (think of bureaucracies).

- *Political systems* – a metaphor that sees loose networks of people with different interests, who gather together for the sake of self-interest, be it money, career or influence. In fact, many of us are often critical of our organizations as being too political, assuming only a negative connotation of politics, ridden by manipulating and self-seeking. This is a limited view, however, because politics are often the means by which things get done, through argument, consensus and commitment. There are creative aspects of internal politics, as well.

- *Brains* – although there are none in my experience which can truly claim this status. We have a long way to go before museums are as flexible, resilient and inventive as the functioning of the human brain.

The 'brain' metaphor is really about organizations learning how to learn. Essential to this is double-loop thinking, which requires each of us to question and challenge all our basic museum norms, policies and procedures. Museum people have not been very good at double-loop thinking, in part because of their love of sacred cows, and the museum profession has many of them. Some of the more venerated sacred cows include an often hysterical prohibition against deaccessioning collections, or a belief that programmes and services with broad public appeal mean compromising our professionalism.

This is 'either/or' thinking, and will only be overcome when we are more open and reflective, and accept that error and uncertainty in our work are inevitable. Without encouraging the exploration of different viewpoints, we are condemned to our own internal perspective. It is wise to consider what Peter Drucker, one of today's most widely read and influential thinkers on modern organizations and their management, has to say about this, which is that 'all great change in business has come from outside the firm, not from inside'.[2]

The past is not the future

Moving from the organization as metaphor to the topic of change, one must also consider what change means in the museum business. There are two key points that need to be made about change and museums.

First, the future is not knowable, despite the billion-dollar industry that says otherwise. This is because the links between cause and effect in organizations can be complex, distant in time and space, and

Photo by courtesy of the author

Teacher Amalia Samois and her fifth-grade class look at a fur trader's exhibit as part of Glenbow's Museum School.

very difficult to detect. The technical term for this dynamic is non-linear feedback, and it means that the links between cause and effect are lost in the detail of what actually happens in between. No individual can foresee the future of any organization or control its journey to that future.[3]

So, if museum workers cannot know where the museum is going because the future is unknowable, then they should not all believe in the same things. They should question everything, and generate new perspectives through discussion and debate. Peter Drucker calls this practice abandonment. He suggests that, every three years, organizations should challenge everything they think and do so they will remain alert and adaptable, and not be overtaken by events. In this way, they will create, invent and discover their destination as they go, which is the true hallmark of an innovative organization.[4]

Instead, there is a tendency to build on our strengths and try to adapt to the existing environment, becoming better and better at what we are already doing well. We insist on repeating past and present behaviour, and thereby make incremental changes only.

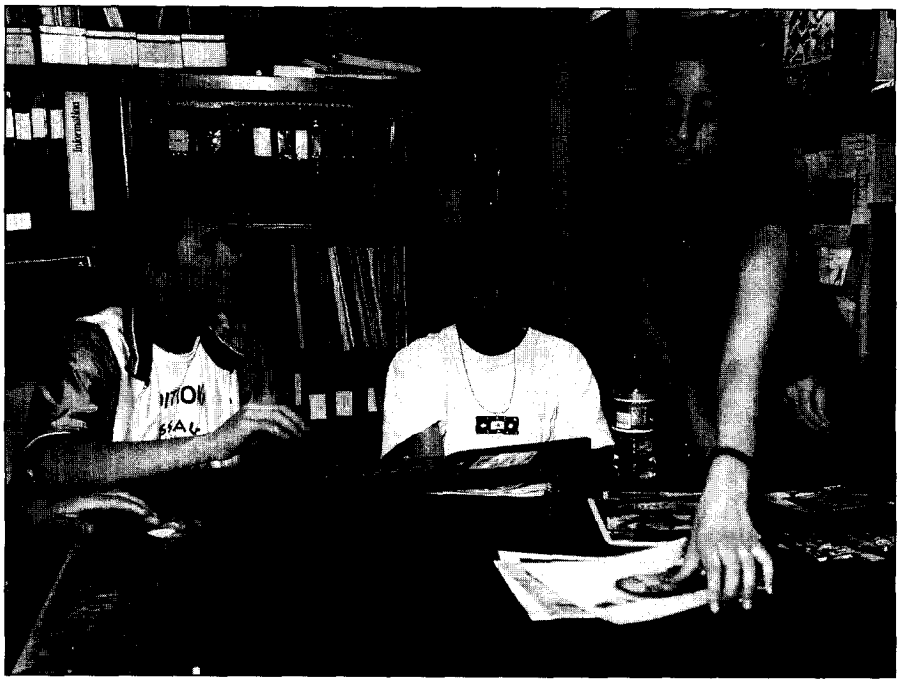
Glenbow's Museum School is a case in point for the need to rethink how we work. Traditionally, schoolchildren visited Glenbow once a year on a field trip, for one or two hours. Although we still offer this service, one innovative staff member introduced a new strategy. We now have thirty classes of children who spend a minimum of five days per class at Glenbow. These classes, their teachers and parent volunteers work with up to thirty-five Glenbow staff each week, based on a custom-designed curriculum that integrates the unique resources of Glenbow with the needs of the classroom teacher. This innovative approach to experiential learning has had a profound impact on students, teachers and parents alike, and has resulted in a multi-year corporate sponsorship. Like successful organizations in the private sector, we have found innovative uses for our unique resources, and in the process have created a demand for them which we have found a way to meet. No one asked us to develop a museum school.

My second point on museums and change is to recognize that we are now dealing with what is called open-ended change. This means that we do not know with any clarity what caused the change or what all the consequences will be. Old ways of doing things do not necessarily work, and ambiguity and confusion abound. There is no doubt that many museums are experiencing open-ended change. Nobody knows exactly what to do, so we must experiment.

Self-organization and shared responsibility

It is fashionable to talk of change, but we must move beyond the talk and seriously consider how we can best equip ourselves and our museums to deal with change constructively. One of the most promising

Photo by courtesy of the author



Students from the Plains Indians Cultural Survival School work with Glenbow on an exhibit called 'Powwow: Through the Eyes of Native Youth' that went on display in 1998.

developments in this regard is the idea of self-organization. This is a group phenomenon and it occurs spontaneously when members of a group produce coherent behaviour, in the absence of formal hierarchy within the group, or authority imposed from outside it. People empower themselves, rather than being empowered by top management.

What are the advantages of self-organization for museum work? Since no single individual can govern the organization's journey to the future, we must recognize that what happens to our museums is created by, and emerges from, the self-organizing interactions among its people. Despite all the conventional wisdom about management and control, top managers cannot regulate this, even if they can powerfully influence it.

Instability and unpredictability, which occur in natural systems, also play a vital role in continuing creativity, and in doing things differently. One of the more extreme examples of intentionally provoking instability comes from the Honda Motor Company, where confrontation among employees is encouraged, in order to break old patterns and foster creativity. Kawashima, the former president, has been quoted as saying, 'I decided to step down as president because the employees began agreeing with me 70 per cent of the time.'

Honda notwithstanding, it is not sensible for all museum chief executive officers to resign collectively. There are other alternatives for intentionally provoking instability and self-organization, however, as follows:

- Leaders should not impose solutions. Rather, solutions and strategies for change must be allowed to emerge from all parts of the organization, based on local initiative. For leaders, this means listening and understanding, but not abdicating authority to set the final course.

- This requires that the museum know itself, and management must continuously promote this conversation. Who are we, and who do we want to be?

- Messiness must be tolerated throughout our museums, as the search for solutions is far from tidy. This kind of freedom creates a lot of diversity and disorder, so be prepared.

- Take action, for talking and planning cannot go on for ever. Experimentation is also critically important and it must be encouraged and supported. We have enshrined the need for experimentation at Glenbow as part of our operating philosophy.

Photo by courtesy of the author

Enjoying Glenbow's Reminiscence Kit outreach programme: the kits were created with health-care workers to stimulate memories, discussion and interaction among older adults.

- Prepare for the long term. Dealing with museum traditions, open-ended change and self-organization is very challenging and requires enormous self-awareness, commitment and time. One organizational specialist writes that meaningful change is a three-to-ten-year process![5]

The market-place as cautionary tale

Any discussion of change in museums must consider the broader context within which we work in North America, specifically the market-place economy. One of the prevailing truths about the market-place is: 'In so far as there is a dominant belief in our society today, it is a belief in the magic of the market-place. The doctrine of laissez-faire capitalism holds that the common good is best served by the uninhibited pursuit of self-interest.'[6]

This observation comes as no surprise to the reader. What is surprising, though, is an emerging challenge to this market-place belief. What are some of the iconoclasts saying? For George Soros, perhaps the world's greatest financier, communism is no longer the threat to our open and democratic society – capitalism is, with its excessive individualism, competition and lack of co-operation. Or consider Charles Handy, who writes that 'the current system of capitalism is not going to be sustained. It is assumed that the company is owned by shareholders and it can be sold. But increasingly, the company is people's knowledge. People are going to resent being owned by other people. They will leave.'[7]

These are vitally important messages for museums, and they affirm what we already know, which is that money is a crude measure of success. More importantly, what we are now seeing is a challenge to those who claim that the market-place is in possession of the ultimate truth. Museums know deeply that nobody has a monopoly of the truth, simply because all competent museums recognize and celebrate the diversity of thought and action. It is here that we encounter the profound potential of museums as truly public institutions, and museums must continue to expand upon this responsibility of celebrating diversity.

This is even more important if we agree with the observation that the market-place and its activities actually deplete trust. It is the so-called third sector that contains the organizations upon which the market-place depends, and these organizations are neither government nor business. All the organizations in the third sector, including museums, are building and enriching the social capital upon which the market-place is based. Neo-conservatives appear to believe that markets create communities, when, in fact, the opposite is the case. Communities create the trust for the market-place to unfold.

This challenge to the reigning market-place ideology helps us to better understand some of the complexities of museum work, for museums are actually diversified portfolios. Many aspects of our work are subject to market forces, such as

shops and restaurants, while other aspects (such as long-term collections care) have nothing to do with profit-making business, and probably never will.

What must be avoided altogether is the simplistic assumption that either business or the non-profit sector holds the exclusive keys to the future. We must recognize the best of both of these value systems, and use them both, in an effort to achieve balanced sustainability for our museums.

In the final analysis: 'The crucial dimensions of scarcity in human life are not economic, but existential. They are related to our needs for leisure and contemplation, peace of mind, love, community, and self-realization.'[8]

The key to managing twenty-first-century organizations will be maintaining an intelligent balance between theory and practice. Theory, to be valuable, must be practicable in the world of work, and the world of work must be informed by thought. My only hope is that this vital balance becomes the norm among all museum staff. Management, however, is only one ingredient in moving our organizations forward. All museum staff can do much to address contemporary issues and opportunities, and here are some possibilities to consider:

- Participate, both internally and externally. As one writer observed, 'If you wait around to be told what to do, you'll be waiting a long time.'[9]

- Weaken the control hierarchies in your museums, by engaging in self-organization.

- Beware of people who make of change a cause of failure.

It is also important to check continually the vital signs of your museum. The critical vital signs are:

Power. Do staff believe that they have the power to make things happen?

Identity. Do staff identify narrowly with their profession or department, or do they identify with the museum as a whole?

Conflict. Are problems shoved under the rug, or do staff confront and resolve them (listening is critically important to this, and it is useful to remember that we have two ears and one mouth)?

Learning. Simply put, how does your museum deal with new ideas? Are they ignored or nurtured?

Collectively, these four vital signs tell a lot about the overall health and adaptability of any museum. If any of these vital signs are allowed to deteriorate too much, they can be highly destructive.

In this era of management hype and flavour-of-the-month techniques, one thing cannot be overstated. That is, outside experts do not necessarily know the answers that an organization needs to solve its problems or improve itself. In fact, an organization's members are often the real experts on the organization, and on what is needed to improve it, the only difficulty being that much of this knowledge is tacit, or remains untested.

Significant change within museums requires a form of dying, and it is foolish to expect that the search for new solutions will not anger, frustrate and disappoint people. This is especially true when the changes go far beyond cosmetic tinkering. At Glenbow, we have found that the key

to pushing, without the organization pushing back, is balanced inquiry and action, because the indiscriminate use of trendy solutions is as destructive as a stubborn reverence for tradition. Because organizational change is chaotic, and often mysterious, we have no choice but to try to be as intelligent and caring as possible.[10] ■

Acknowledgements. This article is a revised version of a keynote address to the annual meeting of the Museum Association of Arizona, 29 April to 2 May 1998 in Flagstaff, Arizona. I wish to thank Denise Savage-Hughes for her editorial assistance and Evy Werner for typing the various drafts. Glenbow's Board of Governors has consistently supported my efforts to record and share Glenbow's efforts at organizational change. I thank them for this, as well as their collective commitment to learning. I also acknowledge Richard Forbis, Doug Leonard, Abby Day, Ron Marsh, Melanie Kjorlien and Barry Agnew for their valuable comments on an earlier draft. Because this article builds upon my recent book, *Museums and the Paradox of Change*, I must also thank all the individuals who contributed to that work, most notably Glenbow staff. They have shaped my thinking and enriched my experience in ways too numerous to mention.

Notes

1. Erich Jantsch, *The Self-Organizing Universe*, Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1980.

2. Quoted in Robert Lenzner and Stephen S. Johnson, 'Seeing Things as They Really Are', *Forbes*, 10 March 1997, pp. 122–8.

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4. Peter F. Drucker, *Managing in a Time of Great Change*, New York, Truman Talley Books/Plume, 1995.

5. Margaret Wheatley, 'Goodbye, Command and Control', *Leader to Leader*, No. 5, Summer 1997, pp. 21–8.

6. George Soros, 'The Capitalist Threat', *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 279, No. 2, February 1997, pp. 45–58.

7. Charles Handy, 'The Search for Meaning', *Leader to Leader*, op. cit., pp. 14–20.

8. Thomas E. Weisskopf, as quoted in Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point*, New York, Bantam Books, 1982.

9. Charles Handy, *The Age of Unreason*, Boston, Harvard Business School Press, 1989.

10. Space does not permit publication of the detailed bibliography provided by the author, which may be obtained from *Museum International* on request. – Ed.

A new way of looking at old things

Susan Pearce

According to Susan Pearce, the museum as a social construct, a purveyor of ideologically charged notions of knowledge and historical truth, must evolve into a 'reflexive, exploratory' cultural space where 'existing collections speak in new voices'. And to her this implies a major shift in management practices and attitudes. After working on the curatorial staff in the Antiquities Department at National Museums on Merseyside and Exeter City Museum, she joined the Department of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester in 1984, becoming Professor of Museum Studies in 1990 and Dean of Arts in 1996. She served as President of the Museums Association 1992–94, and has written and edited numerous books including Museums, Objects and Collections *(1992),* On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition *(1995) and* Collecting in Contemporary Practice *(1998).*

Museums, like all institutions, are historically specific. They developed originally within a particular set of circumstances that determined what their 'founding stories' should be, and henceforward they carry with them the characteristics of the time and place of their birth, however much they may respond to changed circumstances. The paradox at the heart of museum operation as we move into the new millennium is how to reconcile conflicting demands so that inherited cherished qualities are not destroyed, but new challenges are met. We must, then, explore the nature of the 'founding story' and its outcomes, appraise contemporary views and needs, and attempt to broker mutually satisfactory approaches for the future.

Founding stories

The ideas that went into the creation of the museum ideal were long in the making and run back into prehistory, but the museum as a recognizable institution developed in the decades either side of 1700 as a part of what is usually called the modernist period, that is, the phase in European history which began around 1450 and ended about 1950. This period had a particular mind-set which issued in a range of notions crucial to our understanding of why the museum tradition is as it is.

Modernity was concerned with the development of big, explanatory narratives, which were viewed as having universal significance and relevance. At bottom, these rested upon the belief – and it *was* a belief – that human beings are capable of seeing and understanding objective reality, which was 'out there', and could be demonstrated as true by the presentation of convincing evidence. This created the discourse of scientific knowledge arrived at by the operation of human reason upon the observed phenomena of the natural world. So we come to the taxonomic classification of animals and plants attached to the name of the Swede Carl von Linné (Linnaeus) whose system is still used, or Darwin's vision of natural selection and evolution from simple forms to complex ones. It created the notion that time operates in a straight line, from earlier to later, and that unique events are linked together in time as the sequence of cause and effect which came to be called history. This contrasted starkly with most traditions in which time is seen as a cycle and consequently continuously repeats itself as conjunctions recur and people are newly born. Moral qualities shown by great men (and the odd woman) in the historical past could be shown through the objects that belonged to them and the works of art that commemorated them. This was easy to hitch to ideas both of nationalism and 'progress', the preferred European way of describing political and imperial expansion into the world beyond Europe, where museums themselves were, of course, to spread together with all the other institutions of colonialism.

The modern world has also been a world of things, of objects and material goods. The economic discourse, which matched the scientific, ethical and historical ones, was the interrelated system of production, consumption, credit and interest, usually called capitalism, and implicit in this is an ever-increasing demand for more goods, which continually feeds upon itself. The modern world came to define itself, both communally and individually, largely in terms of ownership of goods, which correspondingly came to be its most characteristic

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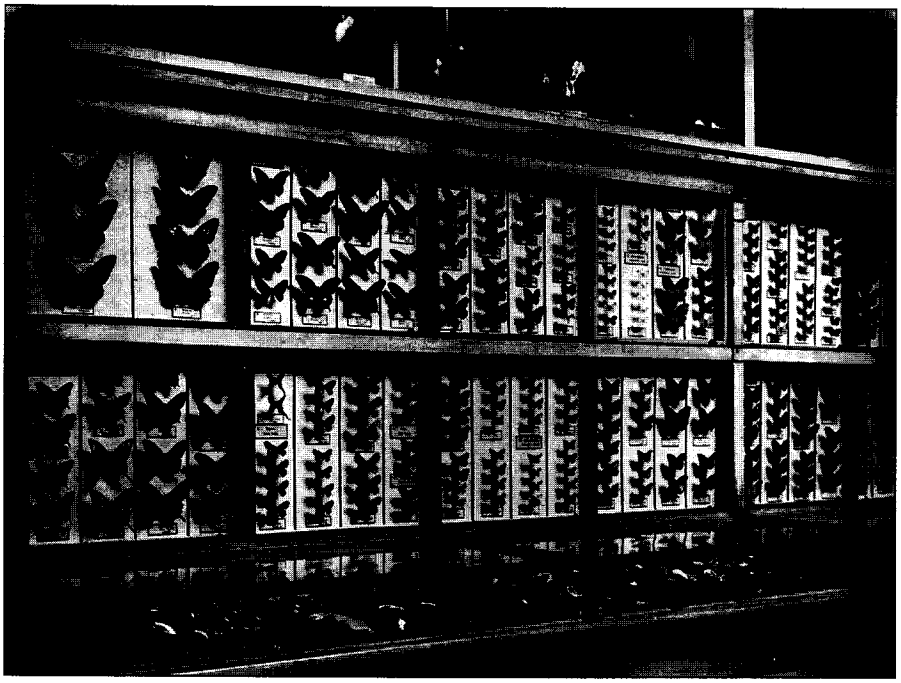
expression. Our complex relationship with objects – as producers, owners and collectors – is itself a characteristic modern narrative, and so, in its way, is our effort to understand material culture and our interest in it.

All this had two essential components. The idea that an understanding of reality lies in the ability to divide and classify, to compare and contrast, and to create classificatory structures into which all individual examples fit was fundamental. Equally fundamental was the role of actual physical objects, material that is essential as evidence for the conceptual assertions which drew their validity from their ability to describe the 'real world'. And this is why museums were an inalienable part of the bundle of modernist notions. Museums are, uniquely, the institutions in which physical objects are held, the actual evidence, the 'time data' as we would say, upon which, in the last analysis, the modernist material narratives depended for their verification.

This brings us to exhibitions. Although museum exhibition has its own internal history, it is itself an element of the modern ways of thought of which museums are an example. Exhibition, the belief that knowledge can be laid out as a demonstration in temporal, three-dimensional space and that this is morally desirable and promotes the development of fresh knowledge, is itself a narrative of the modern world. It is an overarching image which transcends the individual topics upon which any particular exhibition might concentrate. Exhibition is a characteristic construction of the age, like the printed book, the framed picture, the secular musical or theatrical performance. It is the opus that demonstrates the work of collection and curation; it creates the lattice of reference and interrelationship, which requires controlled space for its exposition.



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The 'organized space and serried show-cases' of the gallery, typical of the nineteenth-century museum, are shown in this illustration of the zoological gallery in the Museum of Natural History, Paris, in 1880.

It is doubtful whether the taxonomic affinities of animal and plant species, or the stratigraphic connections of geological beds and the fossils within them, could be made intelligible, could really be said to exist at all as a meaningful concept, without the organized space and serried show-cases that demonstrate the related specimens and make knowledge actual. The same is true of chronological sequences of historical material or typological sequences of artefacts. This kind of knowledge and its demonstration in exhibition are one and the same, for it takes for granted the notion of public exposition as an element in the idea of progress, but like the other constructs of the age, it can be fully understood only by those who have been trained to do so, who understand the convention and feel at home in the performance.

The role of the museum in the modernist scheme of things and its nature as guardian of evidence and exhibitor of materially embodied knowledge leads inevitably to problems of management. It is because of their traditional role in the scheme of things that museums across the world have the responsibility for very large physical collections, which in turn require curating, storing, conserving, documenting, interpreting, selecting for show and display, all of which are costly responsibilities that may seem exclusive, unnecessary or irrelevant to those who are now being asked to pay for them. This brings us to the new narratives which now command attention.

New narratives

From about 1960, museums, like other institutions, have had to come to terms with the new mentality, which it is useful to call post-modern. This turns its back on the modes of modernity and its certainties to declare that there is no reason why the meanings that have traditionally been attached to things should continue to be attached to them; meaning is what anybody cares to make it. Signifiers, objects and exhibitions, among others, can trigger off a large range of meanings in the minds and feelings of those who experience them, and since the inherited signification of the past – roughly, the consensus of meaning resulting from history – has been demoted, there is no way of judging validity between these variously experienced meanings.

Museums are, as we have seen, part of the old social code of knowledge and understanding. It follows that we should treat them as ideology rather than as 'knowledge', and look to discover the social mechanisms they are intended to mask. This is not difficult. Museums are, quite specifically, charged by society with the job of keeping things for the benefit of future generations, though some may view the word 'benefit' as ironic. This long-term transmission in itself – and the great bulk of museum collections have been in place for some considerable time – contributes its own kind of legitimacy, human nature being what it is. Museums are an important part of the way society makes its history.

Legitimization of the 'code' is further advanced by the way in which museums, like the education system, turn culture into institution (that great Victorian word) and so regulate access to the ownership of knowledge and prescribe ways in which it may be achieved. This is seen to run across the museum operation, from the opening of reserve collections only to those with correct credentials, to the display of objects behind glass where they must not be touched. It is also a fundamental part of how curators and all museum workers operate and of the social role they serve. We should not forget that the process of producing meaning through the creation of collections, publications and installations is not impersonal, but rests in the hearts and minds of flesh-and-blood museum staff, who carry out the 'work' of the museum in acordance with their professional mentality.

So, implicit in all this are three perceived evils. First of all, the corpus of knowledge that the curator guards does not have any objective existence, but is merely a construction produced by dominant social groups in an effort to show that their interests are 'natural' and 'correct'. Second, it is necessary to conceal this truth by palming off curatorial knowledge as legitimate and authoritative. This is done partly by superficial but effective

tricks which relate to the sombre splendour of the surroundings and the length of time that it has all been here and partly by mystifying the source of knowledge, by failing to admit that knowledge is a social construct, offering it rather as 'natural' or 'divine', as something that is discovered rather than produced. Since knowledge is social, and society is sustained by the authority that knowledge carries, the argument has a dishonest circularity, which is, however, only made apparent to those permitted to join the curatorial charmed circle, and who have therefore a vested interest in its operation. Finally, if knowledge is held to be 'good' and 'natural', it follows that deviation from it is unnatural and punishable. Correspondingly, all conflicting interests – whether of class, colour, sexuality, religion, gender, ethnicity or whatever – must be diminished, unregistered, ignored or suppressed.

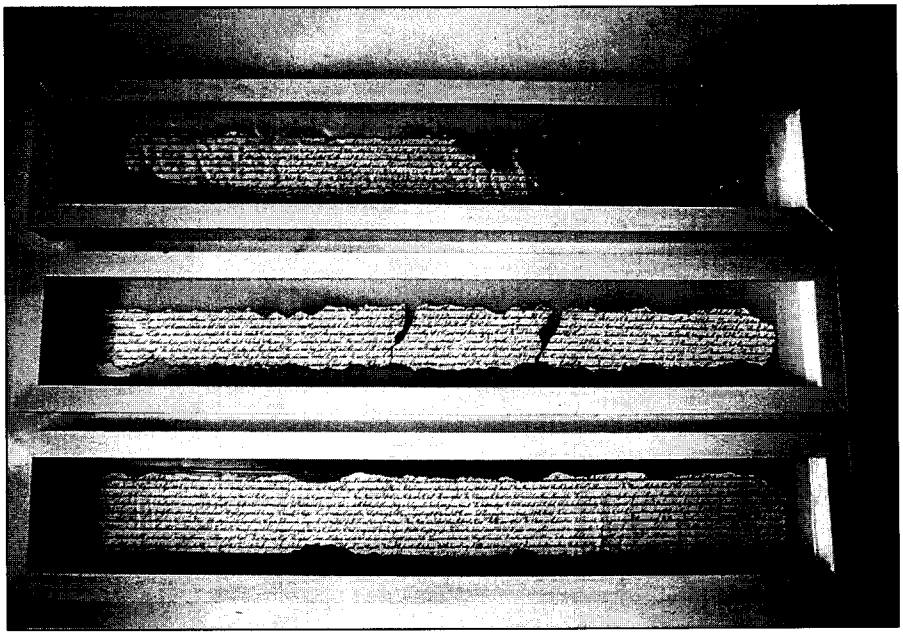

Photo by courtesy of the author

'Collected Traces': exhibition conceived and mounted by Sarah Nicholson.

Storytellers

How, then, do museums acquire not a new legitimacy, because this clearly begs too many questions, but a new role as the site for cultural realization which squares their heritage with new needs and persuades those with financial power that paying for this is a good thing? An approach that stands some chance of success (and that is particularly close to my own heart) is to revisit the inherited collections, but on their underside rather than their upper surface, the surface that has always been presented, in both curatorial work and exhibition, as the true reflection of reason, history and knowledge. The inherited weight of collected material has traditionally been presented as valuable because it sustains modernist values, but it also possesses, hidden within itself, different, post-modern secrets.

Collections were made by people, and people are always unique individuals operating within particular contexts and using whatever they find around them to help them make sense of their world. Collectors have always devised strategies in which their collections help them to define their gender, establish their place in time and space, reconcile their need for creative place by allowing decisions about interrelationships, and gain scope for dreams of completion and perfection. Collecting is a way of organizing the surrounding material world and transforming it, briefly, into sense.

Viewed in this way, a nineteenth-century collection of New Guinea butterflies, let us say, is not just an exercise in the taxonomic classification of lepidoptera, or a celebration of the beauty and diversity of the natural world, though it is both these things. It is also, and just as importantly, part of the life-story of the collector who was driven by various emotional impulses to go to the difficult

terrain of New Guinea and gather the specimens. As he did this, and by doing it, he made statements about what men are like, what nineteenth-century Europeans thought they ought to be like, what our proper relationship with the natural world should be, and what the nature of historically important acts may be. In other words, the items collected helped to constitute the very qualities that he felt his collecting practices represented.

The ways in which attitudes are constructed by selective action are caught in museum holdings, and so, therefore, are the ways in which these attitudes can be counter-constituted, challenged and reacted against. We can only understand what is happening to us if we understand where we are coming from, and this the new-style reflexive museum displays offer. An important element here is the reception of ironic or subversive comment from those who are not part of the institution. Yinka Shonibare, a Nigerian living in the United Kingdom, mounted an exhibition in 1998 entitled *Portable Personal Histories in Museums* at venues in the English Midlands, organized by the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham. This shows a series of display cases filled with collections that take their authority and their unity from the fact that they are the material constituents of important moments in individual lives: photographs, cups and saucers, plastic toys. In his own case, Shonibare adopts a fantasy personality as 'Mary Beth Regan', a black cowgirl who is the current Miss Rodeo Colorado. Sarah Nicholson's exhibition *Collected Traces* (1997) has been shown at a number of venues in Liverpool. She uses concepts of the human body and of the historical invisibility of the concerns of women – material as all others – to show how collected traces of material activity such as writing may pose questions of accessibility and ambiguity.

Reflexive, exploratory display in which older material is re-estimated from a post-modern perception of museum practice is extremely demanding. Staff attitudes and management style have to change. Certainties have to be abandoned and cherished disciplinary identifications must be re-thought. New skills – biographical, evaluative, social – are needed. Curators have to join together to explore overall narratives within the museum as a whole, rather than concentrate upon the differences within traditional scholastic practice. Teams need to be arranged otherwise, with different leadership, in order to produce the exhibitions and community outreach schemes which the new mind-set requires. There are major implications for resource allocation and for how success is judged.

With this goes the need for clear understanding that museums are not privileged places in which transparent stories are told about the nature of things, but are themselves part of social practice in a social world. They produce rather than 'discover' knowledge, and the outcome is what we see as exhibitions, labels, storage and acquisition policies, publicity material and so on. It follows that openness of activity is crucial and, in real life, this leads to initiatives like open storage, object-handling sessions, self-study rooms and resource centres.

Here enters the contemporary museum's need to look for partnerships with both government agencies (of all kinds) and private organizations. Such corporations have often shown themselves unwilling to support what is seen as the traditional apparatus of museumhood and curatorship precisely because these run the risk of being perceived as self-serving, of simply contemplating their own polished certainties, which are expensive and

Photo by courtesy of the author

'Portable Personal Histories in the Museum': show-case demonstrating the lifestyle of Cathy Leigh.

irrelevant. But agencies may show themselves willing to support the investigative, evaluating approaches that have been sketched in here, together with the revision of management techniques that they imply, and to recognize the potential power of the new way of looking at old things. This way is not cheaper, and does not require wholesale abandonment of costly but necessary techniques such as conservation and documentation; it does make existing collections speak in new voices to tell different stories about themselves and the world – our present world, which they helped to make and can help to change. ■

The V&A: a look back at change

Robin Cole-Hamilton

London's Victoria and Albert Museum is widely considered to be the world's finest museum of the decorative arts. Founded in 1852, the V&A, as it is popularly known, is home to 145 galleries and some 4 million objects, ranging from Constable paintings to oriental ceramics, the finest collection of Italian Renaissance sculpture outside Italy as well as the most impressive collection of Indian art and artefacts outside the subcontinent. With a total of approximately 800 full-time staff and many part-time staff and volunteers, it is indeed a venerable institution. When a far-reaching management overhaul was initiated in 1989, the repercussions made headlines throughout the international museum community. Robin Cole-Hamilton explains what exactly took place and what may be gleaned from the experience. Since 1991, he has been Head of Public Services at the V&A where his responsibilities include education, exhibitions, design, marketing and visitor services. His career in museums goes back to 1973 when he joined the Royal Scottish Museum as a designer. He was Head of Design at the National Gallery in London between 1978 and 1984 before leaving to pursue a marketing career in industry.

I introduced myself to my neighbour at a dinner not long ago. 'Ah,' he said, 'the V&A. You've been going through some turbulent times there recently haven't you?' I asked what turbulence he had in mind, as, on balance, the last few months, and indeed years, at the V&A have been stretching and exciting, but hardly a period of great upheaval. And it turned out that the 'turbulent times' were in fact now some ten years old, and his perceptions of the V&A were still vividly coloured by the public and media response to the organizational changes the museum made in 1989.

The conversation turned to why this should be. We talked about whether museums, with their particular relationship and responsibilities, perhaps a heightened sensitivity, towards the past, are organizations in which change to the established order of things is inevitably more difficult. Whether there were public expectations that museums should, more than most, represent an enduring set of values, and that therefore any change requires greater overt justification and explanation. Or whether they simply tended to be staffed by dyed-in-the-wool reactionaries who would fight tooth and nail to avoid disruption to the pattern of their lives.

As this was anything but a scientific analysis, it is not the intention to carry these speculations forward here. Neither is it to debate the changes made by the V&A in 1989, not least because at the time I was employed elsewhere and saw them from the point of view of a member of the public. What is offered, with the comforting benefit of ten years' hindsight, are a few of the many conclusions that might be drawn from the V&A's experience of change.

Since 1989, many museums around the world have confronted the need to change, in some cases radically and painfully. At that time, although the V&A was well known for its complex internal politics (the diaries of its director until 1987, Sir Roy Strong, supply some detail), it seemed to most people inconceivable that such a well-established national museum should require radical organizational surgery. Nevertheless, the new director Elizabeth Esteve-Coll, only a year in office, put in place two significant and far-reaching elements of change. The first was to separate organizationally the two curatorial functions of collections management and research: the intention here was to enable each to be done well without intrusion from the other. The second was to reconfigure the senior management structure of the museum, creating an executive board that included the heads of all the major management functions; the aim here was to reflect the professional complexity of running a multimillion-pound organization with many newly acquired responsibilities (upkeep of its buildings, for example). The result was a considerable shift in power and responsibility from where it had traditionally sat, with the Heads of Collections, and a number of these chose to leave as a result.

These changes were followed by a storm of protest and criticism from which the V&A has sometimes struggled to recover. Questions were even asked in Parliament. The charge was that scholarship and scholars were being downgraded, indeed elbowed out, by administrators and marketing people. The headlines, and what became by default the view of many of the general public, was that the museum was throwing away its most precious intellectual assets, and that the 'populist' barbarians were at the gate. Not only was such a synopsis inaccurate, and often gratuitously offensive, but the true

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complexities of the V&A's situation were not articulated and discussed. Any possible case for change was not put across.

Think in terms of headlines

This must surely be one first conclusion from the V&A's experience: that significant change in public institutions is often reduced to headlines and soundbites, and mastery of these can decide how successfully change can be brought about. This is not a hymn to spin-doctoring, but simply a recognition that those planning to make changes seem too rarely to value encapsulating the case for change in one or two short, memorable sentences, and then using them effectively from the start. One can propose a number of reasons why this should be so: a reluctance to appear critical of what has gone before and of the people who were responsible, a sense that keeping proposed change under wraps is the best option, or the lack of balance in selecting just one or two messages from what is invariably a larger picture, for example. However, it is in the interests of those set against change to make the issue public. They will be ready and able to argue from the specific to the general, to be partial, to personalize, to introduce emotion and to be high-profile, and these characteristics are, everywhere, the fabric of a powerful news story. If no other strong and simple message is being conveyed to justify change, the story against it will carry the day.

This is not simply a pre-emptive issue; until a simple, clear and convincing statement of what is proposed and why it is good for the museum and its constituencies can be articulated, change has simply not been fully thought through. There is no substitute for clarity of purpose, thought and language in the management of change.

Manage the process from beginning to end

It is tempting to look at change as a moment, an instant before which everything is as it was, and after which everything is as it should be – and of course will stay that way. Any change initiative is in fact a process, often of considerable duration. It has a 'before', a 'during' and an 'after', each one of which has its own issues, language and cast of important characters. As a process it requires active planning, management and communication from beginning to end, without which it will certainly unravel itself or be unravelled by others.

Plainly each stage must be well considered and well handled, but from the V&A's experience it can be seen that the one most easily overlooked and therefore in need of emphasis is 'after'. A large amount of today's consumer advertising is not about persuading people to buy, but instead reassuring those that have already bought that they have indeed made the right choice. As with consumer products, so with change: even the smoothest transition to a new state will leave people uncertain whether they have done the right thing. It is only in the 'after' phase that change can be experienced as reality; before it was all just talk and theory. There will be questions, discomfort, doubts, unfamiliarity and mistakes, all tending to reinforce a lack of confidence in the new and a yearning for the old. It is important that management and communication during this phase reiterate the purpose, shape and benefits of the change, reassure those whom it has affected, and convey the clear message that going back is not an option.

A detail of the museum's famous ceramic staircase.

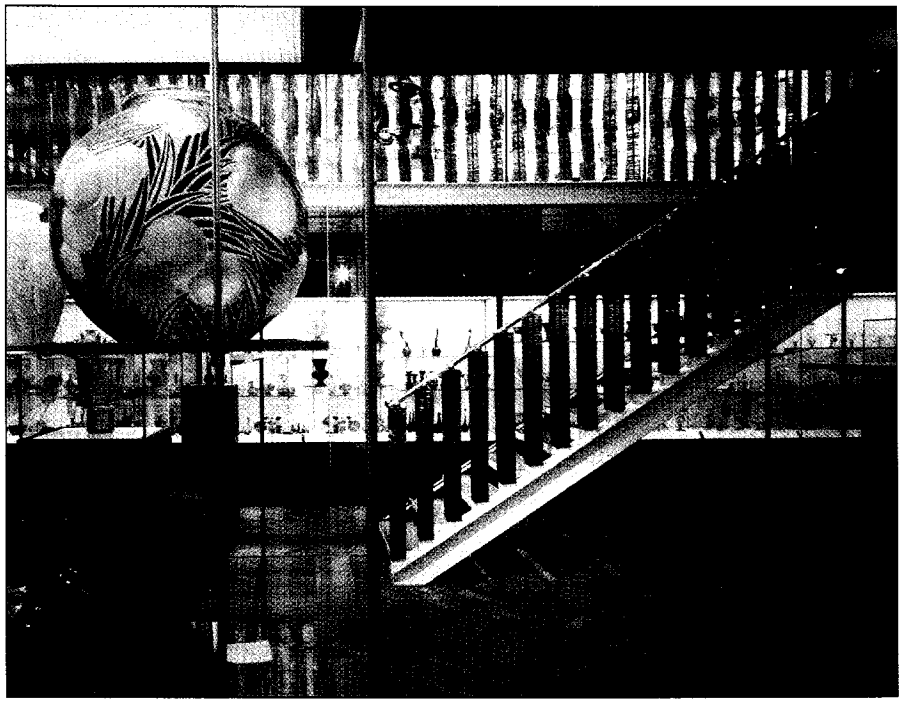
This ongoing reinforcement of the rationale for change is especially needed where staff are concerned. They are after all in the worst position: most probably feeling that change has been imposed upon them by senior management, uncertain, if not downright unconvinced, about what it will mean to them and what they do, yet looked upon by the outside world as sharing any corporate responsibility – and blame. Their readiness to keep faith with change simply cannot be taken for granted, and inasmuch as they are powerful ambassadors for the museum and its policies, their understanding of and confidence in change is an asset well worth nurturing.

Plan in terms of people

It would seem hardly to need stating, but change as an organizational challenge is wholly about people. Buildings, systems, technologies or structures can all be changed without great difficulty; the changes only become management issues when they move from the abstract and inanimate to the real and populated. Therefore it pays to conceptualize the change process from the start as a dialogue between people, and to evaluate its potential impact not only by the degree of change envisaged, but also by the numbers of people involved. In these circumstances the primary skill involved is not the invention of the new business model but instead the ability to manage the dialogue, and to negotiate (because this is, however forceful, negotiation) the idea and the practical aspects of the new state into people's minds and daily lives. People skills, in fact. It remains surprising, therefore, that so much management attention is still given to deciding 'right' solutions on paper, when the rightness of any solution depends on the extent, ease and speed with which it will be adopted by people within and outside the organization. Surprising, too, that once the

decision to change is taken, the job of selling change within the organization is still so readily and swiftly delegated to others by senior managers.

People skills carry a much higher premium in museums than in most other types of business because of the quality of intelligence that can be found at every level of the organization, and the conviction most people have of the value of their contribution. Museum people – administrators as much as curators, it should be stressed – tend to have a highly developed rationale for their choice of a career and the organization they work for. The result is an intense, thoughtful loyalty and sense of worth which works powerfully in the interests of the museum in most cases, but which in times of change demands that an equally well-constructed logic exist for the proposals if they are to carry people with them.

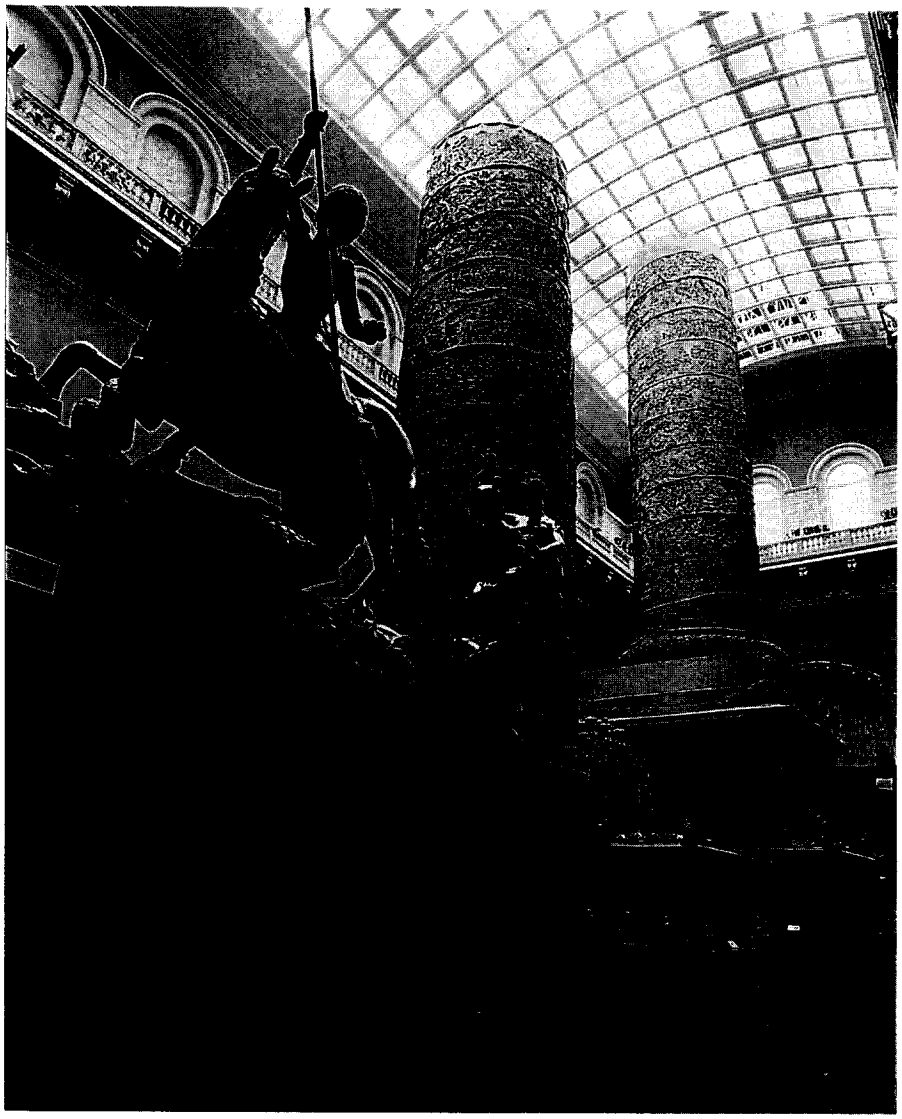


View of the mezzanine balustrade in the Glass Gallery, specially commissioned from glass artist Danny Lane.

Pick the moment

Timeliness may seem rather a luxurious concept in the context of change. After all, a change programme implies that there is an imperative to take action, and that the later action is left, the longer the current undesirable state will remain. All this may indeed be true, but timeliness is nevertheless a concept based on mature thinking and a recognition that preparation is best done before the event rather than after it while the bullets are flying. There is no sense in waiting if waiting brings no benefits, but there is every sense in looking for the moment that will make change most effective. Timing may allow opponents to be won round, or at least see some of them concerned with other business. It may allow an illustration of the reasons for change to be made more dramatically. It may avoid pitfalls; even if it cannot deliver a best moment, attention to timing can usually avoid the worst.

A frequent and noticeable feature of change is the machismo that can so easily overtake those driving it. This can manifest itself in a variety of ways: refusal to examine proposals for flaws and weaknesses ('my mind is made up'), refusal to accept that the concerns of others are worth consideration ('sad little reactionaries who can't see the big picture'), reluctance to look at any timing other than the soonest possible ('if it's worth doing, it's worth doing now'), and sometimes an unseemly relish for confrontation. Change certainly requires the positive and necessary qualities of decisiveness, vision, determination and stamina in managers, but the line between these and arrogance, overreaching ambition, lack of reason and stubbornness is thin indeed, both in reality and perception.



Gallery of plaster casts in the V&A.

This is not to suggest the extent to which this condition existed during the V&A's process of change, but to point out that it patently gives rise to negative results. First, any communication becomes a one-way process rather than the iterative dialogue it should aspire to be. Second, it seems to induce an exactly corresponding attitude of confrontation in other people, accentuating the notion that any change process will produce sides in opposition, far from any win-win ideal. Third, in its emphasis on 'get it done' over 'get it right', it acts against a well-considered solution. And last, by labelling change as being imposed by one person or a small cabal, the organization as a whole cannot own the process, learn from it and apply that learning to going forward.

That said, all the consultation in the world will not bring some people round if the end result is not what they envisaged, and change cannot depend on an atmosphere of total consensus. There can, after all, be a powerful, unthinking arrogance based on the established patterns and hierarchies of the status quo, and it may indeed be this that is bringing about the need for change in the first place. An important skill in consultation is knowing where to stop.

In summarizing the V&A's experience of what it went through in 1989 one could restate the truism that the best change applied badly can be worth less than the smallest change applied well. What matters is not only what will change but also how it will be achieved. The changes happened at a time when change itself was an unfamiliar concept in museums, and the penalties of doing something first undoubtedly included the absence of established best practice and of a climate in which organizational change could be seen as anything other than exceptional, unnecessary and most probably ill-conceived. Communication both inside and outside the museum could certainly have been better, and Elizabeth Esteve-Coll could and should have been left less individually exposed, by the public expression of support by others (and that support certainly existed) for what she was setting out to do. The readiness of senior colleagues in other museums to make critical public comment on the basis of little or no detailed knowledge was surprising then, and

continues to disappoint when it happens today. Undoubtedly, the trauma of the process made further change within the V&A harder to achieve.

Nevertheless, in the years since 1989, the V&A has changed even more. It has had to become more efficient, to take on even more professional responsibilities, to become more project-focused, to bring its collections management up to the highest international standards, to exploit the potential of information technology, to deliver increased programmes of education, exhibitions and public services, all while increasing its scholarly output and becoming less dependent on a shrinking government grant. It has set in train two major projects: a complete transformation of its British Galleries and a new contemporary wing, the Spiral. Little of the substantial progress the museum can lay claim to in these areas over the last ten years would have been possible had it not gone through the changes of 1989. And, while recognizing any flaws in execution, one might end by acknowledging that change of any significance is likely to depend on one person having the courage, vision and determination not to take the comfortable option of letting things go on the way they were. ■

Corporate sponsorship: a sea change for French museums

Georgina Oliver

Long known for its unstinting government support to cultural life and institutions, France has now embarked on a vigorous and dynamic approach to private-sector partnerships, a new direction that spells major changes in the way museums see their role and functions. A member of the committee of the Anglo-American Press Association of Paris, Georgina Oliver is a prominent arts and style columnist. Over the years, her signature has appeared in major international magazines such as Time *and* American Vogue *as well as in specialist art publications. In London, during the early 1970s, she was already actively involved in building bridges between the visual arts and the private sector, on the board of 'Industrial Sponsors', an independent association that organized exhibitions in corporate venues.*

Back in the 1950s, French railway carriages were notoriously uncomfortable. Now, the high-speed TGV (*train à grande vitesse*) is the envy of the world. Such seems to be *la méthode française* in many fields: start off at a snail's pace, watch other countries innovate and make mistakes, then catch up *à très grande vitesse*.

A curatorial domain in which France appeared slow before unexpectedly aiming for the top of the class is the ability to set up partnerships with private enterprise. On the one hand, France's prestigious state-run and -financed museums used to be loath to accept outside resources. On the other hand, corporate bodies willing to engage in cultural patronage have so far been offered little or no fiscal incentives to do so.

Yet, by all accounts, a sea change is in the air. One of several recent French museum coups, the opening of the Sackler Wing of Oriental Antiquities at the Louvre is a striking illustration of the sponsorship drive considered to be part-and-parcel of cultural management at the approach of the third millennium.

Typical of France's present go-getting generation of museum administrators and curators, Daniel Marchesseau seeks partnership solutions for all the major exhibitions he organizes. Chief curator of heritage at the Paris Museum of Modern Art, he explains that his country's largely government-subsidized arts institutions can no longer give modern museum-goers 'the kind of comforts they have come to expect' without extra funding from the private sector. Improved museographic standards have created a thirst for properly put-across information, which means that financial backing and contributions in kind, such as transport and insurance, are required at once on the heritage front and for temporary projects.

Marchesseau confirms that there is an upswing in museum partnerships, but also stresses that the 'roaring eighties' are over. At first a handful of potential sponsors were on hand for a handful of blockbuster events. Now, the competition is stiffer: justifiably, some companies prefer to support humanitarian causes as well as cultural events and while the number of sponsors has increased, so has the proportion of museums applying to them for funding.

The *partenariat* generation

In France, 'Mr Corporate Sponsorship' is Jacques Rigaud, President of ADMICAL (the Association for the Development of Industrial and Commercial Sponsorship), a highly motivated arts-into-industry association started in 1979, which publishes an invaluable directory listing its sponsor members and specifying the different categories of cultural projects that they are committed to. The author of a number of seminal publications focusing on the 'exceptional' rapport of French culture with state institutions and resources, this former UNESCO official is now President of the leading independent radio station RTL. He recalls an era when the French arts establishment was wary, not to say indifferent to big business. In those days, only certain American companies implanted in France had a 'contract' to sponsor culture.

Initially encouraged by a younger generation of arts buffs keen to implement the philosophy he first expressed in a book entitled *La Culture pour vivre, Libre culture* (Gallimard), Rigaud continues to emphasize that private sponsorship is by no means intended to be a form of charity;

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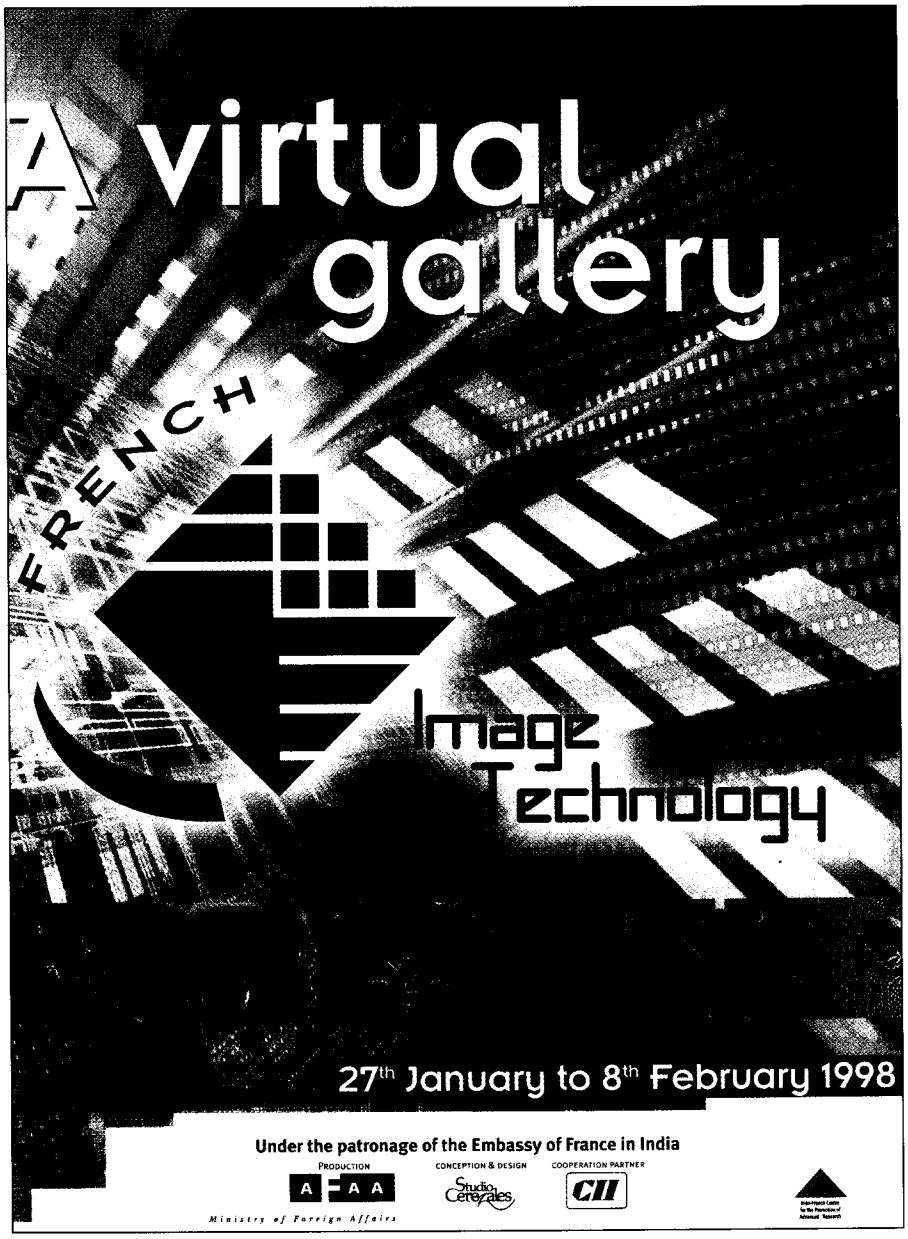


Photo by courtesy of the author

Catalogue of the exhibition 'French Image Technology: A Virtual Gallery' held in New Delhi in 1998.

'everybody has to gain from it' is his motto. ADMICAL's objective is to give French museums an extra zest of curatorial flexibility, while providing companies with an efficient if indirect communication tool.

Jacques Rigaud points out that the personnel of a company that sponsors the arts ends up identifying with its management's cultural options and that the artists whose projects are privately financed develop a stronger bond with the civic world around them. Aware of mutual misconceptions, he agrees that industrial sponsorship was in danger of becoming a fad during the 1980s. As he sees it, some curators assumed the sky was the limit. In contrast to the complexities of institutional decision-making, corporate bodies appeared to be empowered to write cheques that made everything possible.

Across the Atlantic as well as in other European countries, French culture is generally perceived as an affair of state. However, a convergence of ideas has gained ground. While the French museum élite has become more open to the cross-fertilization between the visual arts and corporate identity extolled by American publicists, other governments have started to envisage the utility of having a fully fledged Ministry of Culture *à la française*, turning to local authorities and the private sector where appropriate.

'I owe Jacques Rigaud everything,' says Christophe Monin, a business-school graduate who was ADMICAL's delegate general before taking charge of the 'light but driven' communication and fund-raising structure set up ten years ago to centralize partnership negotiations at the Louvre. Without a doubt, we are talking about privileged working conditions. The Grand Louvre's flamboyant, red-scarfed president-director Pierre Rosenberg is personally implicated in his museum's quest for patrons and the Louvre is in itself a venerable visiting card, yet Monin's strategy is refreshingly empirical.

State-of-the-art museum databases soon to be installed with the help of outside funding and know-how rank high on his agenda and he is clearly keen to mention the signature of a 25-million-franc contract with the Japanese television network Nippon Television (NTV), which will allow the Louvre to inaugurate a specially redesigned two-room *Mona Lisa* space by the year 2000 or 2001. None the less, Christophe Monin also finds it rewarding to secure relatively small sums for the acquisition of vital items for which curators hesitate to request public money.

An LVMH-backed educational project at the Georges de la Tour exhibition at the Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais.

A prospective perspective

Both the Direction des Musées de France and the Réunion des Musées Nationaux (RMN) have become more prospective in their approach to corporate sponsorship as well as in their contacts with local authorities. Sybille Heftler's floor in the RMN offices, on the Rue Etienne-Marcel at the heart of Paris's rag trade and fashion quarter, is a hive of activity 'with meetings all the time'. In many ways, Heftler operates like a meteorologist, gauging the temperature of the market to see which companies are likely to be interested in such and such exhibition or restoration project. Herself an ex-journalist with *Le Point*, she combs financial periodicals such as *Les Echos* and *La Tribune* to check out potential sponsors' marketing needs.

In practice, some boards of directors are easier to convince than others; the image of certain major enterprises on ADMICAL's list of benefactors has become indissociable from their contribution to the arts. Among these, LVMH (Moët Hennessy – Louis Vuitton), the luxury-goods empire headed by Bernard Arnault, has been promoting cultural projects for about seven years. One of Arnault's closest advisers, Jean-Paul Claverie wants LVMH's communication and sponsorship operation to 'match the excellence' of the products manufactured by the companies belonging to the group, 'some of which have been in existence for more than 250 years'.

Promoting the arts is a pursuit regarding which LVMH does not communicate figures, but Claverie indicates that it is one of France's most regular sponsors of cultural projects and humanitarian causes. Concerned with the transmission of enduring values, such as *art de vivre* and craftsmanship, to a rising generation of future customers, the group's education-oriented patronage strategy targets schools as well as young artists who have shown particular promise in a given discipline.

LVMH backed the Nicolas Poussin and Paul Cézanne retrospectives at the Grand Palais, before enabling the RMN to mount the *Picasso et le Portrait* tribute previously seen in New York. However, Jean-Paul Claverie is anxious to underline the all-or-nothing quality of his arts-sponsorship strategy. Also presented at the Grand Palais, the Georges de La Tour exhibition did not 'just get a cheque'. As always, theme competitions were launched for schoolchildren and travelling scholarships were awarded to art students.

While companies like LVMH prefer to keep their permanent *partenariat* staff streamlined, calling upon expert advice from the best specialists for individual cultural or humanitarian projects, other organizations establish their own museum-like foundations. EDF, France's electricity board, has created the

Fondation Electricité de France, which operates in three main directions: heritage, contemporary art and nature. In the spotlight, partly thanks to its Espace Electra exhibition space in the 7th arrondissement of Paris, this forward-looking foundation supports mainstream artists, museums and educational schemes in France and abroad, also providing cultural events with electricity-linked services.

Some sponsors start off with discreet subscriptions covering the costs of specific restoration needs or acquisitions, then decide to make a bigger splash with contributions that obtain huge media coverage. Although Yves Saint Laurent Couture continues to finance arts projects as well as humanitarian, scientific and social proposals, which are not obvious immediate-return investments, of late, the company has lent its stamp to a multiplicity of highly visible events, including the World Cup's 300 fashion-model closure ceremony and the installation of a gold and silver-alloy 'Pyramidion' on top of the obelisk in the Place de la Concorde.

Thinking international

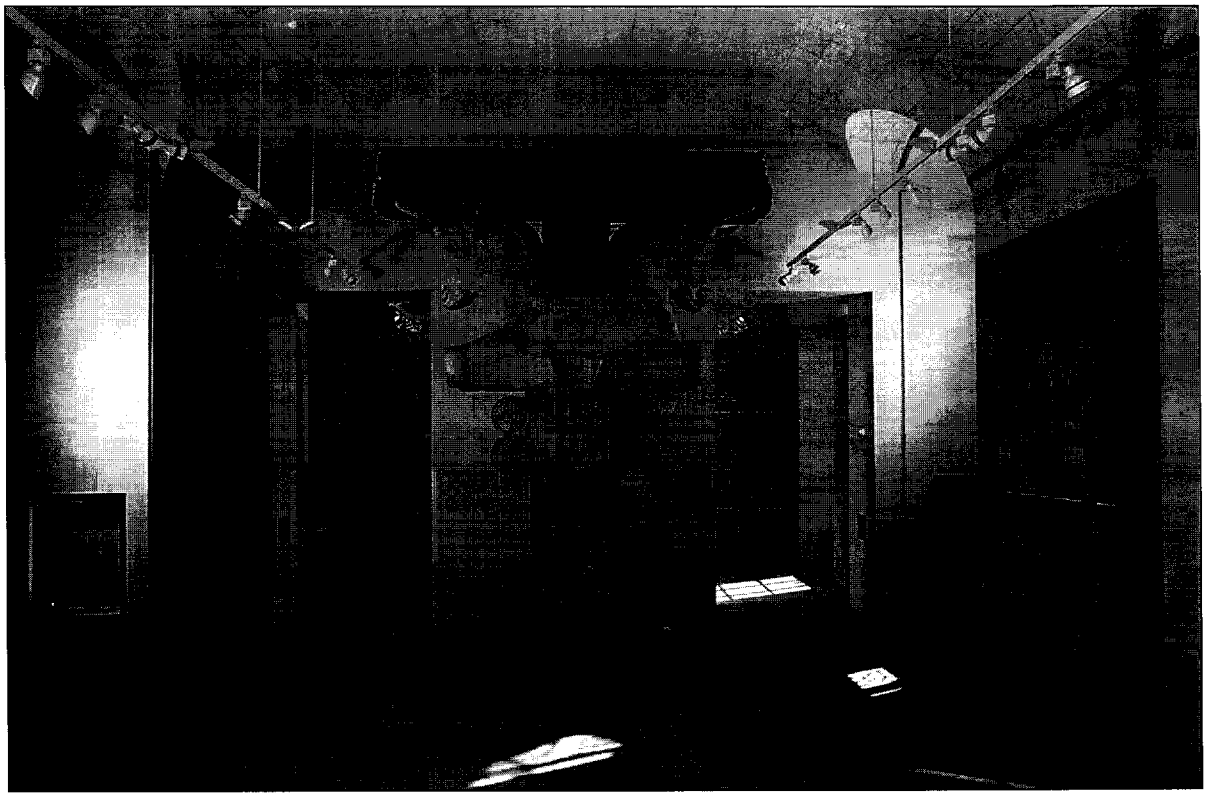
In complete contradiction with France's reputation for reticence towards corporate sponsorship of the arts, the AFAA (Association Française d'Action Artistique) relies on a dynamic outgoing partnership policy to achieve its principal goals: the promotion of French culture abroad and the elaboration of international exchanges in this context. Linked with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government bodies, this pioneering association celebrated its seventieth anniversary in 1992, but is no dinosaur when it comes to exploiting experienced diplomatic networks and on-the-spot business contacts to promote French artists in a global economy.

The AFAA's statutes have always given it complete latitude to solicit private funding, and now it uses that know-how to develop a constantly renewed fund-raising strategy. Today, some thirty top-flight French and European companies belong to the AFAA's Club Entreprises, a sponsorship-spurred committee whose accomplishments are impressively diverse.

During a seminar entitled 'Quelles Stratégies pour Conquérir les Nouveaux Marchés Artistiques Internationaux?' (What Strategies to Conquer New International Artistic Markets?) the association's visual-arts adviser Marie-Paule Serre observed that many contemporary French artists such as Christian Boltanski have made their mark overseas through AFAA-initiated exhibitions, before achieving recognition in their own country. In 1986, the AFAA was proud to announce that Daniel Buren's display at the Venice Biennale (curated by the Paris Museum of Modern Art Director Suzanne Pagé) had won the 'International Golden Lion for the Best Pavilion'. Likewise, several galleries with stands at the 1998 Basle and Chicago art fairs benefited from AFAA backing.

However, the AFAA's beat is neither restricted to avant-garde concepts nor limited to heavy-duty historical overviews. Several projects highlight its capacity to adapt to diametrically opposite yet by no means incompatible *fin de siècle* consumer requirements: a yearning to touch base with ancient civilizations combined with an equally strong interest in advanced image technology.

Zoë Logak, a new-generation sponsorship executive at the helm of the Club Entreprises, refers to *La gloire d'Alexandrie*, an



The Iranian Gallery in the Sackler Wing of Oriental Antiquities at the Louvre.

ultra-ambitious AFAA/Paris Musées co-production mounted at the Petit Palais, whose sponsors included Elf Aquitaine, the Electricité de France foundation, GAM (Global Asset Management), CEBTP (Centre Expérimental de Recherches et d'Etudes du Bâtiment et des Travaux Publics) and the BNP (Banque Nationale de Paris), then draws attention to a multi-sponsored multimedia exhibition held in New Delhi in January/February 1998 entitled *French Image Technology: A Virtual Gallery*.

Faced with the challenge of continuing to make an impact on the international museum scene during its temporary closure for repairs till the year 2000, the Georges Pompidou Centre has at once boosted its fund-raising policy and organized a whole series of multicultural, multidisciplinary, extra-mural events in Paris, in the regions and abroad.

One of the most talked-about recent arts sponsorship success stories, the Man Ray show held at the Grand Palais with the backing of the Calvin Klein fashion house, bore the Pompidou Centre signature outside the museum.

Presided over by Jean-Pierre Marcie-Rivière, a former jet-setting banker who is as *au fait* with contemporary art as he is at ease with high-powered business contacts, the Association des Amis du Centre Georges Pompidou has created an International Club which invites art-lovers, private collectors and corporate executives, as well as Friends' associations representing museums from other countries, to join its ranks.

It is not just an impression. Such gestures are symptomatic of France's increasingly unambiguous attitude to sponsorship. In all kinds of ways, in a multiplicity of territories, be it via decentralized arts and government institutions or through its determination to export *la culture française*, a new wave of complex-free museum decision-makers is all set to manage change, with the help of private enterprise. ■

A delicate balance: museums and the market-place

Victoria D. Alexander

'Museums must succumb to the inevitable, in moving towards a more businesslike model for their operations and revenue, without losing sight of conservation and connoisseurship.' So concludes Victoria D. Alexander after examining the effects of private and corporate philanthropy on museums and their implications for museum management and objectives, which must reconcile the demands of an increasingly exacting public with the constraints of steadily shrinking government funding. The author is the Foundation Fund Lecturer of Sociology at the University of Surrey in the United Kingdom. She is the author of Museums and Money: The Impact of Funding on Exhibitions, Scholarship and Management *(Indiana University Press).*

As we approach the millennium, museums across the globe are taking stock and looking toward the future. Museum managers face challenges in a variety of areas, not the least of which is securing a stable funding base. As governments curtail spending on cultural activities, museums increasingly look to other avenues, especially donations from the private sector.

Much can be learned from the experience of American art museums in soliciting corporate and individual resources. Currently financed by a mix of government, corporate, foundation, and individual grants, American museums have a funding history quite different from that of most European museums in that they have traditionally been philanthropic endeavours supported by élite individuals, sometimes aided by the local municipal government. Not until the mid-1960s did the Federal Government start to fund museums in a meaningful way. State governments also began to participate, mostly in the late 1960s, and largely in response to moneys available from the Federal Government to encourage state involvement in the arts. Most government funds, whether at the state or federal level, are given through an 'arms length' system (an independent intermediary agency is allocated funds directly from the government budget and then passes these on to the arts organizations), and are usually not available for operating expenses. Most of the support comes in the form of grants for specific projects. Charitable foundations became important for museums from the 1950s and corporations began to fund them in meaningful numbers in the late 1960s. Although individual contributors remained important, museums came to rely on a broad range of financial aid and as a result they have had a few decades of experience in cobbling together support from a variety of sources.

What are the effects of this funding situation on museums in the United States? I looked at this question in a detailed study in which I examined annual reports of thirty art museums, interviewed a number of staff (curators, directors, and educators), and statistically analysed over 4,000 exhibitions. I would like to describe some of my findings, especially the impact of this experience on exhibitions and on the museum as a whole. I will then draw attention to the situation in the United Kingdom, which is a good example of a country moving from a largely government-based funding system to one that is more market based.

How do sponsors affect exhibitions? The answer is, more indirectly than directly. Although funding itself often makes an exhibition possible, which would not have been so otherwise – clearly a direct effect – backers rarely meddle with the contents or format. Critics assert that business firms distort exhibitions by requiring museums to include pieces of questionable merit or to exclude works that might be controversial or place the sponsor in a bad light. Interestingly, I found no examples of this type of intervention in exhibitions by corporate funders. Indeed, the only interventions I was able to learn about were cases where a museum's board members had pressed for an exhibition of objects they owned! Museum personnel work rather hard to find funding for exhibitions that they themselves wish to mount. The exhibition plan usually comes first and the resources second. Indeed, curators and directors are careful to avoid grants that might come with strings attached.

This does not mean that financial aid comes free, so to speak. Indeed, I found that funders had a profound impact on exhibitions, stemming from the simple ▸

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The charming collection box at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, consists of wooden figures in front of a bowl of coins who salute each donation. Entitled 'The Anthropologists' Fund Raising Ritual', they were carved by Tim Hunkin to represent significant individuals in the history of the museum.

fact that they pay for what they like and decline to support what they do not like. Institutional contributors, new to the museum world in the 1950s and 1960s, have preferences distinct from those of the previously dominant individual funders. For instance, both government and corporate sponsors prefer exhibitions that draw large audiences, although for different reasons: government wishes to bring a social good to the many (and reach taxpayers and voters), while business firms hope to increase the advertising potential of the philanthropic dollar. Put together, this means that popular exhibitions are easier to finance and their number thus increases as a proportion of the total. Blockbuster shows, displays of Impressionist art, travelling exhibitions and those based on a theme (e.g. the window in art), to mention several popular types, become more common.

Government funders, especially those giving grants through a peer-review system (as is the case for the National Endowment for the Arts), also favour exhibitions with art-historical merit, a goal shared by museum curators but not for the main part by corporate backers. It is therefore not surprising that government agencies support a significant number of scholarly exhibitions. Corporations do not actively shun such shows, but it is clear from the statistics that they do not seek them out.

During most of the late 1960s up to the early 1980s, the amount of money available to art museums in the United States rose dramatically and with it the number of exhibitions. And although popular shows were the principal beneficiaries, a fact commented upon by many observers, scholarly exhibitions also increased. (The 'losing' types of exhibition were those focusing on local artists, the community or children.) But the urgent question these days is: 'What happens when the funding pie shrinks?' This is a matter I shall return to.

Another more subtle and troublesome way in which funding might affect exhibitions is that museum people must keep potential sponsors in mind from the earliest stages of the planning process. As a consequence, it is possible that museums constrain themselves in order to win support. As Philippe de Montebello, Director of the Metropolitan Museum, has stated: corporate funding is 'an inherent, insidious, hidden form of censorship ... but corporations aren't censoring us – we're censoring ourselves'. Let me be clear, however. Most curators and directors say that, to the best of their ability, they do what they want and refuse to bend to the wills of funders. I found that American curators were proud of their exhibitions and the most successful museum managers were ingeniously creative in matching exhibitions to backers, thereby reaching their own goals.

A change of mission

The growth of popular exhibitions underscores an important change in the mission of art museums during the last few decades. In the United States, they have moved from an élitist conception of their duties toward a more populist view due to a number of different factors. First, the general ethos of the late 1960s led to attacks on many types of institution thought to be too exclusive. Second, as museums became more reliant on external resources, they needed to attend to their sponsors' interests, notably the desire to attract a broader audience. Third, as American museums successfully courted a variety of funding sources, they began to hire new kinds of staff – fundraisers, accountants, and others with specialities outside of art history. These people changed the balance of power, bringing in a more businesslike approach to running museums.

One perennial difficulty is finding adequate funding for operating budgets. Capital expenditure and special projects lend prestige to donors, paying the guards' salaries and fixing leaky roofs do not. American museums generate income from the commercial potential of their collections and buildings. They have opened restaurants, cafés, and bookshops, and offer programmes, lectures, special events, fund-raising activities, and even art classes and packaged art tours abroad. More recently, museums have moved beyond mere postcards, posters, T-shirts, and books to such endeavours as selling by mail order, setting up satellite shops in distant cities, and licensing designs and images for upscale clothing, jewellery, wallpaper, and fabrics. These ventures can be quite lucrative. The Metropolitan Museum, perhaps the world's most successful in commercial terms, earned nearly $9 million through its auxiliary activities in 1997. Commercial ventures are also enjoyed by museum visitors who appreciate being able to stop for a snack, take home a souvenir and borrow a touch of class for decorating their bodies and homes.

© The National Gallery, London

The refurbished Sainsbury Wing shop at the National Gallery, London.

Needless to say, these changes in mission have exacerbated tensions in museums – notably between the business and the curatorial sides. Has the shift in mission hurt scholarship and conservation? I don't believe it has. The actual number of these activities has most certainly increased in American museums since the 1950s, and curators have indeed been able to use sponsors' money in very clever, creative ways to see works conserved, researched and published, display cases built, and galleries refurbished.

Nevertheless, as a proportion of the total number of activities found in museums, conservation and scholarship take a

smaller part than before. This is a key source of conflict. Curators have, in fact, lost power and autonomy and this is very difficult for them, as it would be for any professional in similar circumstances. Pointing to the sums of money spent to set up and run the commercial services and to the projects cancelled for lack of funds, they argue that art history and preservation are suffering. The issues are far from straightforward and rest on fundamental questions. What exactly should a museum do? How can museums meet rising public expectations? Should they try to earn money when external funds are in short supply? If external money is considered 'tainted', should museums scale back their activities rather than accept such money? And who determines what kinds of money are 'tainted'? These issues are hotly debated and compromise is often difficult.

The story of American art museums in the last few decades can be briefly summarized: less élitism, more populism; more attention to development, fund-raising and revenue generation; more vibrant exhibitions and programmes; more scholarship and conservation (but not as a proportion of the whole range of museum activities); and more internal conflict. This tale will sound familiar to managers in all types of American museums, not just art museums. And increasingly, this story will become familiar to museums worldwide, as the more market-driven approach to museum management – sometimes called the American model – spreads across the globe.

The 'American model' in the United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, policy changes by the Thatcher government thrust British museums into a more market-driven system. Though they have met this challenge with some success, museums struggle to find funding. They must rely on a wide variety of sources, from project grants and private sponsors to admission fees, collection boxes, shops, and cafés. But they face a number of problems in winning this support.

Many grants by national or local government for projects must be matched by external partners. But there are too many museums (not to mention other cultural, educational, and charitable organizations) seeking out too few potential sponsors. The same large corporations, known to be active in cultural philanthropy, are approached by numerous worthy organizations. Some of these corporations are based outside the United Kingdom, so museums from several countries compete for their largesse. It is clear that matching grants work best when a pool of partners exists, but in the United Kingdom the pool is only half full. One innovative scheme seems to help with matching grants: a museum's auxiliary activities are incorporated into a separate organization which can then provide funds as an external partner.

The American experience shows that tax policies make a difference in giving: donations to museums fall when tax laws become less favourable. The British tax policies for corporate donations help fund-raising, as they permit corporations to deduct gifts to museums under advertising expenses, however they are not as conducive to individual donations as those of the United States. Furthermore, the philanthropic tradition in the United States is well established for the arts. This is rarely the case in the United Kingdom, especially for small contributions; consequently, British individuals are much less

likely to sponsor their national or local museums.

Museums in the United Kingdom face an additional difficulty that those in the United States do not. For the most part, American museums charge admission fees and Americans, in general, expect to pay them. These fees can be steep, for instance $10 per adult for the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. American museums have also been more active in selling annual memberships to individuals and families which entitle them to avoid the admission charge. Together, memberships and admissions can generate a sizeable income, often up to 10 per cent of the annual budget. Moreover, many American museums are able to rely on income from their endowments, a source that does not exist to any significant degree in the United Kingdom.

Charging for admission or establishing 'voluntary contributions' collected at the door (by an employee who is trained to stare gorgon-like when wallets do not open) is a contentious issue in the United Kingdom. Most British citizens feel that as taxpayers they have already given to their local and national museums and that an admission fee is asking them to pay twice. In lieu of the charges, however, many museums have set up collection boxes to tap the visitor's generosity. The trick is to educate the public as to the high costs of running museums and the great importance of contributing a few pounds. Many British museums have succeeded with a strategy of charging for entrance to special exhibitions which are separated from the permanent collections. (Likewise, American museums often charge a distinct admission fee for their most popular special shows.)

In the United Kingdom, museums can apply for lottery money (on a matching basis), which can be used for capital expenditures only. This is a useful source of funding that is not available in the United States. However, such recourse brings its own complications. More than one museum has been known to be building on a new site while vital repairs at the home site must be neglected for lack of funds. Ironically, lottery money was limited to capital expenses in an attempt to ensure that the government would not divert budget money away from museums on the excuse that operating funds could be found in lottery profits. But the government has slashed the culture budget anyway.

To the casual observer, in sum, British museums these days look very much like their American counterparts. By necessity, they are involved in numerous fund-raising and commercial ventures, and have stepped up activities, such as special exhibitions, to attract audiences. As in the United States, the larger, better established museums have been more successful in generating income. But British museums exist in an environment that is, in many respects, less conducive to a market model than in the United States. And even American museums do not find it easy to break even.

Management challenges

It is a shame that governments must cut subsidies to museums, for a nation's heritage is its treasure. Although museums would do well to band together to lobby their governments to continue funding, such cuts are nevertheless inevitable to some extent. Current political climates as well as demands from more needy sectors, such as education and health care, will make it difficult to resist the move toward

The Gallery 8 Terrace Restaurant at the Walker Art Center overlooks the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden.

less government support. It is imperative that museums be creative about financing and do it in a way that maintains their core functions – scholarship, conservation, curatorship and education. The challenge to management is to keep in view the importance of the traditional roles of museums while at the same time taking on newer ones such as attracting audiences and selling products.

I believe that developing commercial activities, along with project funding, is imperative for museum survival in the next century. Nevertheless, the danger exists that if museums are squeezed too tightly, all the revenue-generating effort of their best people will not suffice to preserve core functions. The threat lies in not having enough money. Commercial activities are not the problem, but because they are especially needed when more traditional sources of funding are insufficient, they may symbolize it.

Some critics have argued that museums have come to resemble shopping malls, but this comparison is neither accurate nor helpful. Museum managers must, against the protest of critics and purists, avail themselves of a wide variety of fund-raising and revenue-enhancing efforts. But museums must also preserve culture and heritage and cannot be diverted too much in the direction of entertainment. At the same time as they learn to use sophisticated financial tools, managers must resist the efforts of government bureaucrats and the economically mindful who wish to measure museums with financial yardsticks and quantify the arts in terms of their value to consumers. The arts, heritage and knowledge must be valued as ends in themselves, not as numbers on an accountant's computer. Museums must succumb to the inevitable, in moving towards a more businesslike model for their operations and revenue, without losing sight of conservation and connoisseurship. Keeping this difficult balance, even more than securing funding itself, will be the real challenge for museum managers in the next millennium. ■

Hungarian museums in transition

István Gedai

The epoch-making changes that shook the former communist countries of central and eastern Europe have had profound repercussions on all aspects of cultural life and notably on museums. Accustomed to stable budgets and unqualified government support, they must now seek new means of survival in a society that is still in a state of flux. István Gedai, Director of the Hungarian National Museum, describes their problems and sheds light on some of the deep-rooted questions posed by major social transformation.

All institutions must respond to social transformation, especially when it is brought about by the simultaneous transformation of political and economic structures. Such far-reaching changes took place in Hungary in 1990, as well as in other central European countries that had been under communist rule. Internally, this meant the restoration of multiparty parliamentary democracy, and in foreign affairs, the collapse of the Warsaw Treaty concerning relations with the Soviet Union and the Mutual Economic Co-operation Agreement. This political upheaval was followed slowly – sometimes with serious problems – by economic and social changes, and the creation of the so-called market economy and the introduction of private ownership, all of which resulted in the modification of many social institutions (public health, education, culture).

Two primary factors contribute to involuntary change in the life of an institution: one is its history, which may also be called tradition; the other is the new set of requirements resulting from a major shift in direction. The method and forms of structure and function change, partly because of natural development but also to a certain extent because of the deep social transformation now taking place in these countries. Yet the basic tasks of the institution we know as the museum (be it historical, art, or natural history) remain the same: acquisitions, registration, conservation, restoration, exhibition and the scientific publication of information on collections.

Hungarian museums began in 1802 with the founding of the Hungarian National Museum. Its first collection contained a library, documents, maps, weapons and coins. It expanded quickly, augmenting both the number and type of collections. This resulted in a change of structure as well, and two basic trends emerged with regard to those museums under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and Education (which often changed its name). One trend was to separate collections according to type (art, ethnography, applied arts, natural history) and to transform them into independent museums. Another trend took the opposite position, that is to say, independent museums came together under the direction of a united museum structure. In addition to national museums belonging to the Ministry of Culture, Hungary boasted a number of local museums as well as several other specialized national museums dating back to the nineteenth century. Control and operating costs were ensured by specific ministries. Of course, many new collections came into being which belonged to other institutions, schools and private persons. Among them were remarkable ecclesiastical holdings, some of which developed into important museums.

The situation of the recent past had been determined by two laws relating to museums which were passed in 1943 and 1963, and which vested authority for control and budget in the Ministry of Culture and Education. Various ministries also had special national museum responsibilities and all the historical churches had museum collections. A county museum system was created under the direction of the museum of each county capital. Budapest, as the capital of the country, had its own museum system. Operating expenses were ensured by the responsible authorities – the ministries, churches and county councils.

The political and economic changes of 1989/90 did not alter this basic structure, which was further codified by the new law of 1997. National museums belonging ▸

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to the Ministry of Culture and Education retained their basic form. Most of the ministries that had maintained museums have continued to do so, but others have restructured their museums into foundations. The system of county museums survived because the self-governing law made it possible for independent local museums to exist.

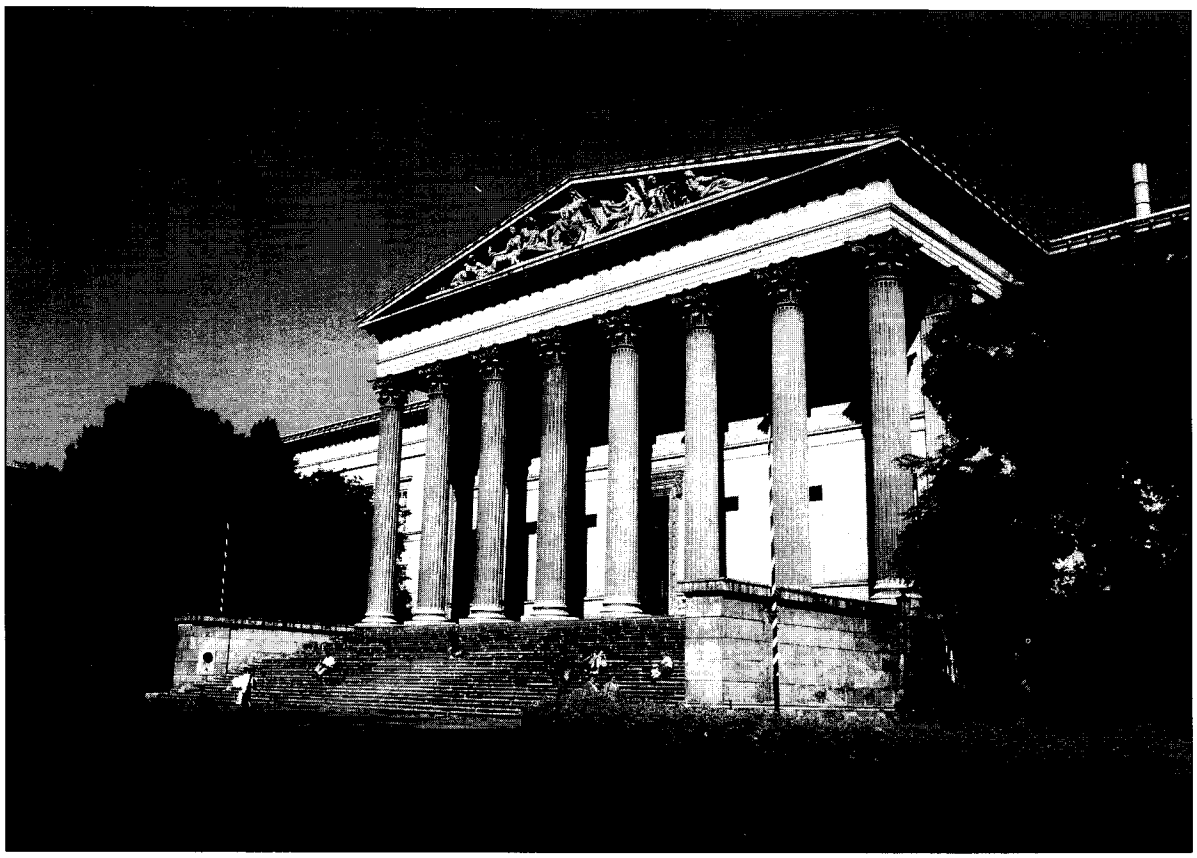
Although the structure of the system remained much the same, the pattern of financing underwent remarkable change. Previously, the responsible authorities provided all operating and other programme costs. Now these authorities – deferring to the market economy – try to carry out a so-called 'programme financing practice', which means that they cover the expenses of building maintenance and staff salaries, leaving only 3–4 per cent of the annual budget to be used for basic museum tasks, such as acquisition, excavation, scientific documentation and organizing exhibitions.

Museums now have the possibility to apply to various foundations for financial support to realize these tasks, the most important of which is the National Cultural Fund established especially for this purpose. In addition, museums are encouraged to find other types of financial resources and sponsors. Nevertheless, it must be said that all the funds created to this end plus other cultural support from the private sector cannot replace state financing in Hungary and other formerly communist countries, and it is an open question whether they ever could. Those who make the decisions cannot always see clearly all the tasks that need financial support, neither can they judge the different levels of importance of the various programmes.

This statement also applies to those foundations governed by advisory boards, since it may be questioned whether the members of these boards make their decisions based solely on professional criteria. The patronage of the private sector is even more incalculable and changeable. Apart from some special cases, the refusal to back cultural programmes is a general attitude, despite the fact that they may provide publicity for the sponsor. As a result of recent privatization efforts, most of the prosperous Hungarian companies and banks belong to foreign interests and their support for national culture may not be expected. A number of concrete examples demonstrate this. The Hungarian private sector could eventually become a strong financial pillar after two or three successful generations have emerged.

As mentioned above, financial problems led to the transformation of some museum collections into a foundation-type structure, often by the previous responsible authority which wanted to be rid of regular maintenance obligations. This approach can never ensure the work of the museums since these structures were created in response to economic pressure and not by the express wish of an existing foundation. In those countries where a system of endowed museums is a tradition (for example in the United States), museums are established with an appropriate fund. In Hungary, this practice has neither tradition nor past, and it seems not to have much of a future.

The work of museums is part of a society's culture. Educating people is also the aim of society. It follows that the efforts of the institutions and museums that ensure this cultural improvement for the people reflect the wishes of society as a whole and as such their maintenance should be the duty of the state. That is why government financial support cannot be replaced



© Csaba Gedai

The Hungarian National Museum.

by other means, and why the state must bear the cost of these basic functions. Museums cannot be dependent on the changeable behaviour of the private sector, which most of the time wants to specify the purpose of its financial backing. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that some functions and tasks could not appeal to the private sector, which could find it in its own interest to provide the necessary sponsorship. But it is not possible to build the institutional structure and realize the most important museum functions on this basis.

A transitional period always has its disadvantages. The old system is no longer in place and the new system is not yet functioning. All the structures of the countries that were under communist rule are going through a metamorphosis and the cultural field is no exception. Although it is important to change some elements of the previous system, the past is still determinant. And this does not mean just the last few decades, but those earlier centuries, which cannot be swept away in spite of the new challenges. The new political, economic and social structures – including culture – are undergoing transformation and it is only in the course of this change that it may become clear where it is better to create something new and where to keep the old elements in place. ■

Transformation in South Africa: a legacy challenged

Amareswar Galla

Rarely has any country made such radical changes in all aspects of its life as post-apartheid South Africa. The museum and heritage community was seen as a principal actor in bringing about a new democratic society based on a truthful, unflinching examination of the past and a creative, participatory approach to the future. These efforts are described by Dr Amareswar Galla, Director of the Australian Centre for Cultural Diversity Research and Development at the University of Canberra and founder of a national programme for interdisciplinary and holistic studies in heritage management. He has spent a substantial part of the past five years as a specialist adviser and facilitator for new policies, corporate plans and transformation documents in the cultural and heritage sectors of South Africa, including the National Parks system. His work earned him the South African Museums Association inaugural presidential award for outstanding service for transformation planning and training in 1997. He is also a Director of Australia's Board of Special Broadcasting Service, Chairperson of the Asia Pacific Organization of ICOM and Chairperson of ICOM's Cross-cultural Taskforce.

The euphoria over the demise of apartheid and the dawn of a democratic 'rainbow nation' are reaching a new millennial turning point in South Africa. The production of history and heritage interpretation has become 'part of popular constructions and everyday contestations and politics'. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has brought heritage and identity construction alive in a 'civil society bursting with energy about dealing with the past.'[1]

Questions of representation and the dichotomous relationships between apartheid and democratic nation-building and the outcomes of these theoretical constructions are evident in the detailed documentation of the Arts and Culture Task Group that reviewed the legacies of museum and heritage practices. Several problems within the existing museum and heritage structures were identified:

- South African institutions managing heritage have never addressed the processes of consultation and participation.
- Appointment to management bodies, councils and trusts has never been democratic, and has lacked transparency and accountability.
- The principal focus has been on the tangible heritage of European origin with a bias towards middle and upper classes, metropolitan and male interests. Intangible living cultural heritage has been ignored.
- Public education and heritage conservation have had a low priority.
- The general public has rarely had access to heritage resources.
- A range of documentary heritage, material culture, built environment, shipwrecks and so on has been irretrievably lost due to the lack of clear conservation guidelines, absence of public education and the political agenda of apartheid and colonial regimes.
- Pre-colonial heritage has been poorly addressed and rarely included in cultural-heritage curricula.
- Cultural-heritage management has never been integrated into local contexts and planning processes.
- Resource distribution has been uneven and irregular with no policy guidelines.
- Few institutions have preserved the history of the struggles and fight for freedom.

Launching in 1997 South Africa's first major new heritage institution, the Robben Island Museum, President Nelson Mandela, introduced as Prisoner No. 466/64, said that South Africa's museums and monuments had reflected the experiences and political ideals of a minority to the exclusion of others during the colonialist and apartheid eras. With this in mind, a policy framework has been established for the implementation of democratization, representation and accountability in cultural and heritage sectors. The legitimacy of a hegemonic Western discourse and its apartheid manifestations are being challenged. Issues of politics of heritage discourse, the blatant discrimination under apartheid and the myth of professional detachment have been deconstructed and their limitations exposed.

The National Heritage Bill of 1998 will transform the apartheid heritage structures of South Africa, which could also challenge the rest of the world in the way we

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address holistic and inclusive heritage management. South Africa is a country with deep historical, racial, ethnic, class, linguistic, regional, cultural and gender divisions characterized by centuries of colonialism and decades of fascism. The fostering of a shared sense of place, identity, history and heritage among the diversity of groups is essential for sustainable nation-building. The post-apartheid challenge is to create an integrated, holistic and interactive mechanism for transforming heritage management on the democratic pillars of community and nation-building.

The Bill establishes a National Heritage Council to co-ordinate the expression of, and access to, the heritage values and significant heritage resources of all South Africans. It will foster an integrated approach to all the national heritage institutions, including museums, archives, monuments, living heritage, place-names and national symbols. It will also develop national strategies for heritage management connected to economic development, heritage tourism and employment creation. It will develop new relationships with cultural and heritage institutions both within and outside South Africa.

The plethora of national museums and heritage institutions of the colonial and apartheid eras will be subsumed into two new national flagship museums and the restructured museum sector will be brought under a new South African National Museum Service. The Legacy Project established in 1997 will promote a fuller representation of the nation's heritage, through new monuments, heritage sites and institutions, infrastructure and capacity, with a focus on historically disadvantaged areas. Another key initiative is the new National Archival Service which will address the trusteeship of the country's documented intellectual heritage with a focus on broadening responsibilities to the South African history and culture that have been neglected in the past.

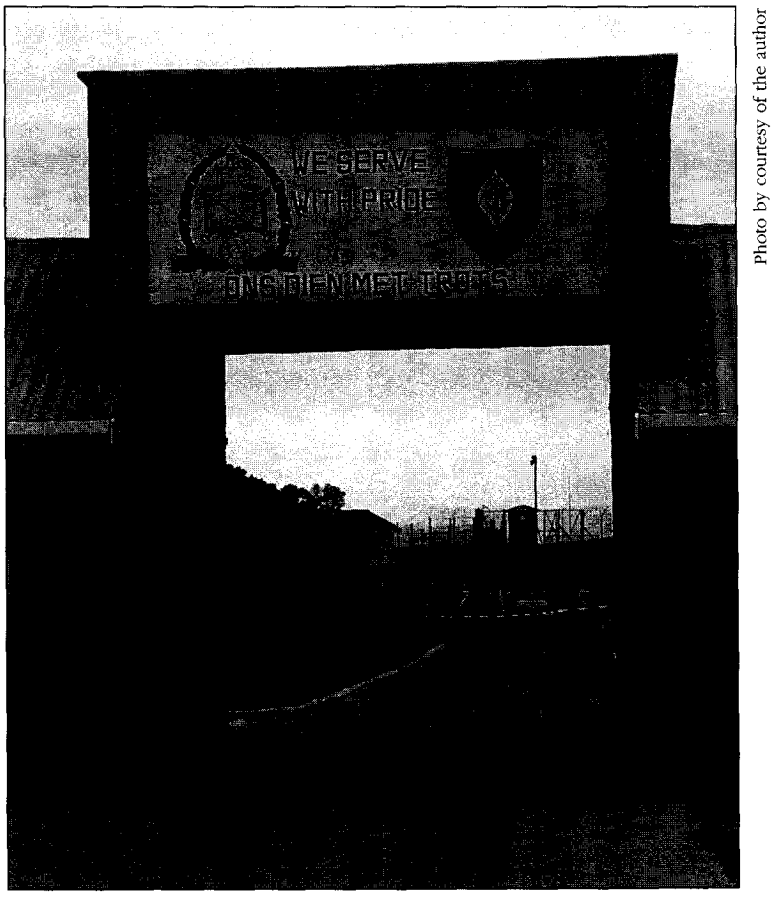


Photo by courtesy of the author

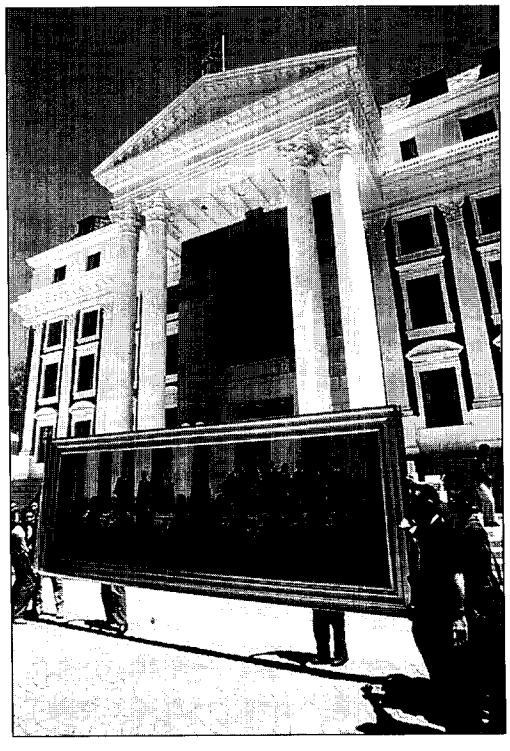
Entrance to the Robben Island Prison where the leaders of resistance and struggle, including President Mandela, were imprisoned. It is now a museum.

Institutions at arm's length from government funding, such as the Mayibuye Centre at the University of Western Cape and District Six Museum in Cape Town, are working on co-operative exhibitions with established museums assisting the 'reconceptualization of the function and nature of museums in South Africa's changing environment.'[2] The former was involved in the removal of apartheid icons and installing the *Art against Apartheid* exhibition at the Parliament House in Cape Town. The site of the bust of H. F.

Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid, wrapped up and waiting to be placed in storage, the picture of P. W. Botha's cabinet being carried from Parliament and into storage and the installation of anti-apartheid artwork on the walls of the Parliament are powerful rituals of transformation. This interpretation of the triumph of people over apartheid in the corridors of executive power is symbolic of transformations across South Africa.

President Mandela at the opening of Robben Island Museum said that it 'is a vital part of South Africa's collective heritage. Siqithini – the Island, a place of pain and banishment for centuries and now of triumph – presents us with the rich challenge of heritage.' It is in the process of becoming one of the most dynamic interpretive centres of the struggle of humanity against oppression.

Photo by courtesy of the Mayibuye Centre



Painting of P. W. Botha's cabinet being removed from the Parliament House.

The memories of former prisoners and warders are being recorded. This intangible heritage will be used to interpret the tangible places, landscapes, structures and other material culture. Robben Island and its immediate hinterland also have significant marine environmental resources. The interpretation of this site of struggle will be holistic and driven by an integrated environmental management consciousness that is sweeping across the country. Robben Island is also being considered for inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List along with the St Lucia Wetlands and the Hominid sites of Sterkfontein, Swartkrans, Kromdraai and environs.

A house of memory and a landscape of struggle

Overlooking the landscapes of Robben Island and the Parliament House is the significant landmark of Table Mountain. Tears shed, memories long cherished and a struggle that has triumphed at the foot of the mountain are being interpreted in one of the most powerful scars left by the Group Areas Act. It was the heart of working life in Cape Town with occupations individually listed in 1867 when it was first named as the sixth district of a fast growing metropolis. The thinning out and ultimate demolition began in 1901 with the first removal of Black Africans to Ndabeni. In 1966 it was declared a Whites only area through a declaration which some of the former residents call the 'love letter'. By 1981, the last removals took place. 'The official script had cleared the ground even before the bulldozers appeared. This is the way holocausts are made.'[3]

The development of the District Six Museum as a 'Place of Resistance and

Photo by courtesy of the Mayibuye Centre

'Art against Apartheid' exhibits waiting in the chambers of Parliament.

Triumph Over Apartheid' is curated by the very people that the official scripts failed to rub off the record. The mission of the museum opens with the preamble 'Never Again Must People Be Forcibly Removed'. It aims to ensure that the history and memory of forced removals in South Africa endures and in the process will challenge all forms of social oppression. The museum is conceived as a house of memory and as a landscape of struggle. There is a plea for a 'hot' interpretation, which evokes sincerity and passion.[4] But can the narratives by those who experienced human misery and agony such as holocausts, the atrocities of apartheid or the forced removal of Aboriginal children in Australia be interpreted 'cold'?

At the top part of South Africa, as part of the National Heritage Day celebrations on 24 September 1996, a new interpretation centre and site museum opened to the public at Thulamela at the remote northern end of the Kruger National Park. One of the central elements of transformation of the South African National Parks system is the coming together of people and parks within the new framework of Integrated Environmental Management. It is driven by a people-centred policy called Social Ecology, which has become a critical tool for informing activities of

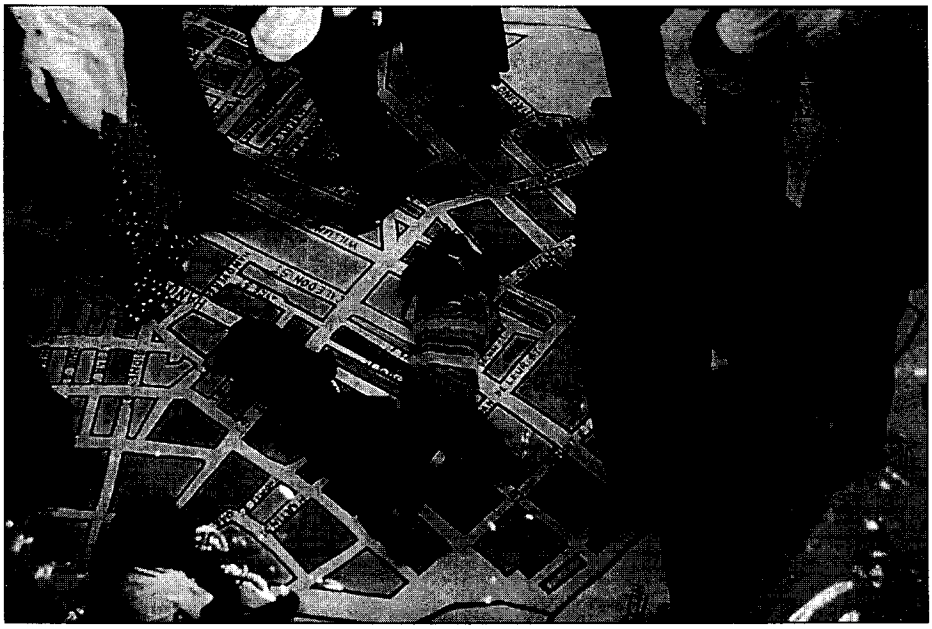


Photo by courtesy of District Six Museum

Children and adults at the opening of the 'Streets Exhibition', which led to the founding of District Six Museum.

locating, assessing, interpreting and managing cultural heritage resources in National Parks.

Heritage management at Thulamela has become a national model for empowering the neighbouring communities who were disadvantaged and often displaced by the creation of parks under colonial and apartheid regimes. The project is inspired by the opportunity to develop a unique environmental interpretation programme within a rich cultural milieu. From an archaeological point of view, it is an exemplary site of the Zimbabwe culture whose principal social dynamic was class distinction and an ideology commonly called sacred leadership. Its design gives deeper insights into the spiritual and political life of the people at Thulamela. The community museological process, including the excavation, scientific analysis and reburial of human remains, symbolizes the right to self-determination by the descendent neighbouring groups.

Closer to the conservative hub of the previous regime, the Tswaing Crater Museum, located in the north-western corner of Gauteng province about 40 km from Pretoria, has become South Africa's highly profiled enviro- or ecomuseum. The focus is a 200,000-year-old meteorite crater and the saline lake that has been a source of salt for thousands of years. It is surrounded by apartheid legacy settlements inhabited by over 2 million people who are some of the poorest and most marginalized in South Africa. The development of the project follows the Integrated Environmental Management framework, which delineates the environment to encompass biophysical, cultural and socio-economic components.

Tswaing, 'a place of salt', offers a unique opportunity to combine aspects of science and technology with community cultural development in a way that clearly supports the aims of the Reconstruction and Development Programme. Heritage management at Tswaing is informed by a holistic approach which includes cultural adaptation, self-empowerment and recognition of community leadership and community control to pursue its sense of place. The Tswaing Community Forum, which drives the project, identified the need for the conservation and utilization of the resources of the area for environmental management, education, training, job creation, research, responsible tourism and recreation. The goal is to enrich the quality of life of people in a healthy environment.

The emerging museological discourse in South Africa is unique in that it is imbued by a way of being that can be sensitive to oppression in all its forms. It is based on the principle that a constructive engagement in heritage management can only take place when the experience of the interpreter and the interpreted is based on a dialectical relationship with beneficial outcomes for both parties, entailing a shift in the conventional mindset of 'participation as consultation' towards one of 'participation as strategic partnership'.[5] Transformation of museums is not about

chameleon-like adaptation to a democratic and multicultural South Africa but an active engagement in shared cultural spaces informed by contested and empowering discourse for all South Africans.

In welcoming the *Art against Apartheid* collection to its final destination at the Parliament House in Cape Town, Nelson Mandela said that the works 'range across the scale of human emotion, from anger to zeal to love and sorrow. Such works demand the viewer's attention, they challenge our beliefs and values, they remind us of past errors but they also speak of hope for the future.' Jacques Derrida, the French philosopher who participated in *Art against Apartheid*, refuses to stop with the project. He says that the 'struggle is without an end' and that the 'exhibition seals a solemn commitment. As the monumental sign of a promise fulfilled, it recalls, shows, foretells all the hope we put in the still open destiny of this "common cause".'

Mandela at the launch of the Robben Island Museum reminded us that 'our cultural institutions cannot stand apart from our constitution and our Bill of Rights'. In the past multiculturalism was used to keep people apart. Now multiculturalism is constitutionally guaranteed and embedded in public policy. In this context, museums in South Africa take on a critical role and the government position is clear in stating that 'museums are key sites for the formation and expression of knowledge and cultural identity. South African museums will be restructured so that they reflect in every way the collective heritage, the new identity, and the ethos of a multicultural, democratic South Africa.'[6] ■

Notes

1. Andre Odendaal, 'Dealing With the Past/ Making Deals with the Past: Public History in South Africa in the 1990s', paper presented to the Conference on the Future of the Past: The Production of History in a Changing South Africa, The Mayibuye Centre, Institute for Historical Research and History Department, University of Western Cape, 10–12 July, 1996.

2. Ibid.

3. Tony Morphet, *Weekly Mail*, 3 February 1995.

4. Roy Ballantyne and David Uzzell, 'Environmental Mediation and Hot Interpretation: A Case Study of District Six, Cape Town', *The Journal of Environmental Education*, Vol. 24, No. 3, pp. 4–7.

5. *Shifting the Paradigm, A Plan to Diversify Heritage Practice in South Africa*, Corporate Plan of the South African Museums Association, facilitated and prepared by A. Galla, 1998.

6. Space does not permit publication of the detailed bibliography provided by the author, which may be obtained from *Museum International* on request. – Ed.

Managing change *or* Navigating through turbulent times

Nancy Hushion

Reactive or proactive? How museums answer this question may well be the key to their survival as the demands of the public and the market-place increasingly impinge on their day-to-day activities and their long-term goals. Nancy Hushion is a well-known independent Canadian museologist in the field of museum planning and management. She is a former member of the ICOM Executive Council and the new Chairperson of the ICOM International Committee for Management (INTERCOM).

Some may argue that the nature of museums and the concept of change are incompatible, inasmuch as museums are the custodians of the collective history of humanity and nature throughout the ages. Conversely, there are others who will state firmly that unless museums can adapt and respond to change, they risk becoming less and less relevant in contemporary society.

The purpose of this article is to address in broad terms if and how museums are coping with the changes that they are undergoing, and whether museums have on staff the skills and experience required to creatively lead their institutions through fairly turbulent times. Each of the two words in the title, 'managing change', has identical weight; they are equal and complementary parts of the equation.

While there is considerable variance from country to country and discipline to discipline, the changes that museums are experiencing are due to both external and internal factors, while managing these changes is completely internal and within the control and responsibility of the museum itself. The goal of managing change in museums is to ensure the positive, proactive environment which is increasingly essential to museums and their future.

As 'change' is a word used to describe many circumstances, for the purposes of this discussion, it is defined as: the act or instance of making or becoming different; and alteration or modification. According to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, managing denotes organizing, regulating; being in charge of (a business, institution, household, team, etc.).

What has changed?

To examine managing change within museums, it is important first to identify what have been the more significant changes they have experienced in the recent past, and perhaps anticipate those that may arise in the future. The number and scale of museums worldwide has almost quadrupled over the past three decades, with several factors driving this growth. The expansion of audiences, coupled with the need for up-to-date conservation technology to preserve centuries-old masterworks and artefacts, has put pressure on inadequate facilities. Initiatives based on national pride have led to the construction or major expansion of national institutions in celebration of centennial or bicentennial milestones – or the redevelopment of major cultural projects such as the Louvre as part of France's *grands travaux* programme. At a different level but equally important, a considerable number of new museums have been developed under local initiatives and are tangible proof of each community's pride in its own heritage.

Significant change in how museums plan and develop their public activities was largely a result of the blockbuster exhibitions in the 1970s. True, there had been many major shows which drew large audiences prior to the 1970s but the blockbusters' emphasis (some may say overemphasis) on marketing and attracting non-museum-goers to an 'event' characterized these high-profile exhibits and brought museums into a new realm. For while most blockbusters have been based on sound research and include significant material, the focus of these events has been to raise substantially the profile of the sponsoring museum and to generate important revenue. In introducing museums into the highly competitive world of entertainment and high-profile sponsorship, blockbusters targeted much greater numbers, including audiences not typically composed of returning

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The growth of virtual museums: the CD-ROM produced by the Musée d'Orsay which takes the viewer on a 'virtual walk' through the museum by showing and commenting on 200 objects.

visitors.[1] This often resulted in a one-time-only revenue stream.

Another widespread phenomenon within museums is an increasing awareness of the audiences' needs and interests. Repeatedly, responses to visitors' surveys have indicated that people are looking for more information – about exhibits, collections and, at a very practical level, where to find what in the museum. In fact, for many, security guards are the only museum staff they ever encounter. Furthermore, visitors want the information in an accessible format and in clear, comprehensible language. Art museums, often cited as the worst offenders, are now incorporating information panels and/or short video discussions with the artist in key exhibitions, often in a discrete area where they can be viewed/read or not, at the visitor's choice.

Coupled with the shift towards communicating better and more frequently is a move away from classical museum 'education' towards learning, in particular self-directed learning by the visitor. Museum education has relied on formal approaches such as lectures, classes and docent-directed tours as tools to disseminate the information that the museum feels visitors need to know about a specific exhibition or collection. Increasingly, museums large and small are recognizing the value of the knowledge and experience that each visitor brings *a priori* to an exhibition. The challenge is to identify how visitor knowledge can be assimilated into the information that the exhibit itself presents. To assist with this challenge, a few museums are using focus groups, drawn from both the general population and from the typical profile of a museum visitor, to test innovative concepts and approaches. The use of

'animateurs', specifically trained and available to answer visitors' queries within the exhibit spaces (some even wearing a T-shirt saying 'Ask Me'), or the new approach to Information Assistants (formerly security guards) at the Glasgow Museums are examples of creative developments in this area.

Since their inception, museums have been recognized as the single, authoritative voice on a given topic within their frame of reference, articulated through extensive research and scholarship, and based on their interpretation of their collections. However, museum visitors can now be counted in the hundreds of millions, and come from many different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The presentation of complex events from a single perspective is increasingly recognized as problematic. At its worst, a unilateral perspective can be incorrect and insensitive, as was the case in the early preparations for the 1992 celebration of Columbus's 'discovery' of America. In many parts of the world, museums and their practices have not been a central part of collective cultural expression, even though the retention of their traditions and heritage is important to all people.

Museums are but one of the tools for the preservation and understanding of cultures, whether of a particular group in society or in a broader context. An excellent example of how various people have recognized and put into place their own distinct needs can be found in ICOM's 'What Museums for Africa?' conference and the subsequent AFRICOM programme.

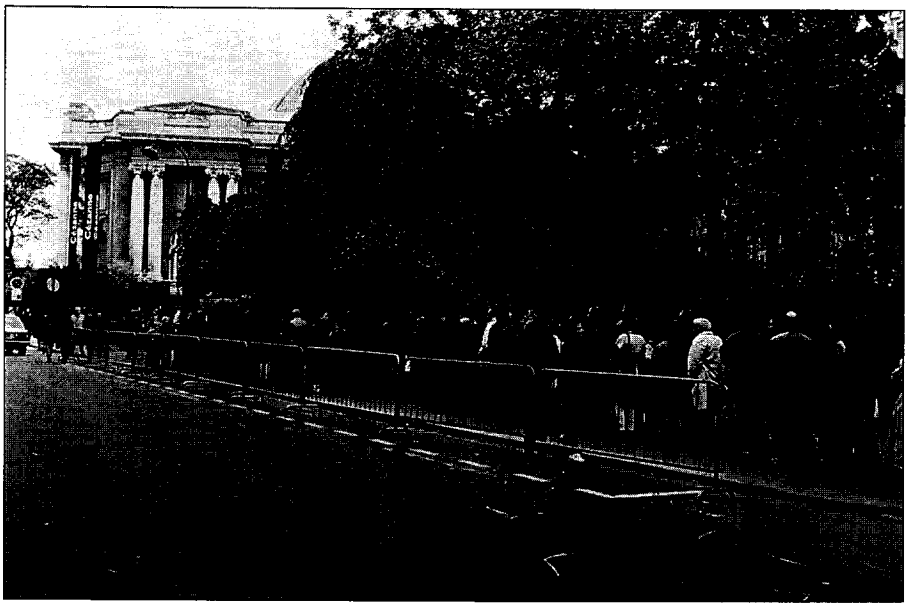
An additional and recent driving-force for change in museums has been 'economic liberalization', a term used to describe a government's gradual transferring of responsibility for the funding of museums from public resources to the private sector. This shift in emphasis has brought about very significant changes in the role and responsibilities of the museum director, from someone whose principal concern is the calibre of the collections and research to a person who must spend considerable time raising private funds to enable the museum's ongoing operations, and courting sponsors for its activities.

For the future, a few of the anticipated changes may include increased competition from the entertainment sector; for example, is Disneyland, Paris, siphoning off some of the audience that might have gone to museums? What about the growth of virtual museums, where people surf the Internet to learn about collections and never set foot in a museum? When added to fluctuations in tourist numbers, a typically strong source of museum visitors, will these two forces result in falling attendance at a time when museums increasingly depend on their admission and museum boutique revenues?

A shifting dynamic

In sum, the key changes to which museums are already responding include extensive growth in their physical plants, rapidly expanding and diverse audiences with divergent needs, a move towards self-directed learning for visitors, competition from other sectors, and an emphasis on marketing and communicating the museum's 'message', often with limited resources.

How are museums managing such profound changes, over many of which they have little or no control? How effectively are they being integrated? Is the museum community primarily a reactive one that



The Cézanne exhibition at the Grand Palais in Paris was an outstanding example of the 'blockbuster' exhibition that 'targeted much greater numbers, including audiences not typically composed of returning visitors'.

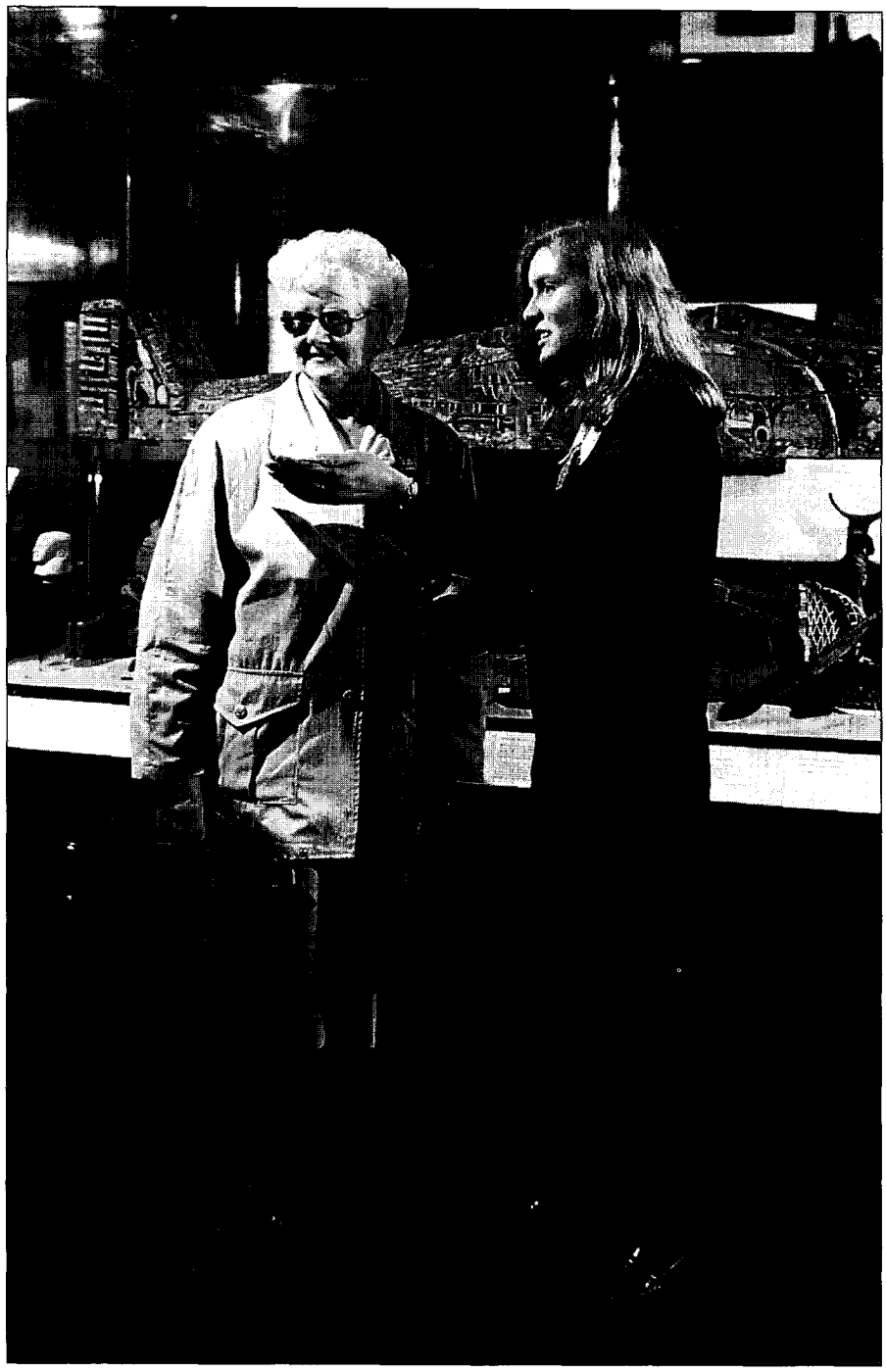
addresses pressures only when and if they occur, or are there museums involved in various degrees of proactive change? Who is doing the managing?

Traditionally, museums have not sought to fill posts by searching for candidates who have identifiable management training and/or skills and experience, despite the complexity of the tasks which they will have to accomplish. Management is comprised of a set of skills which can be learned at anything from a weekend workshop to a postgraduate degree, the most familiar being the M.B.A. However, in most instances, solid academic training in a particular discipline was, and still is, believed to be sufficient to equip people for senior management positions. This is particularly true in the traditional model of the museum where even positions identified as managerial carried a very high level of direct responsibility for content. The classical career path was to move through progressively senior curatorial positions and, if and when interested, eventually become director. Only a very few museums have followed the model of the performing arts with its dual leadership of an administrative director/manager and an artistic director. None the less, the need for expertise and experience in management is increasingly rapidly as the line between museums as custodial institutions and museums as businesses becomes blurred.

At the curatorial level, the training and even more importantly the expectations of curators are that they will have ample opportunity to conduct in-depth research on topics that are of interest to them, with the eventual target of developing an exhibition or other form of public presentation based on this work. It is the curator who initiates, based on his/her understanding of the discipline and attendant opportunities for original scholarship. But now the dynamic has shifted, and may shift even more. Questions heard more often in programming meetings are: What is the public interested in seeing? Can we identify what our net audience gain will be for such an exhibition? Is this a concept that will enable us to seek, and secure, a sponsor? Previously, it was the museum that established the exhibition's premise. Now, particularly in instances when artefacts and the interpretation of cultural heritage are involved, the responsibility for determining form and content must be shared with the originating group or culture. This has been, and will continue to be, very much the experience of curators working with aboriginal peoples the world over.

However, curators are primarily trained in academic research, not public interface. While some curators have the natural skills to successfully navigate such changes, others may not and, furthermore, are not interested in this facet of museum work. The traditional management structure of museums is a strong, vertical hierarchy which was effective when museums were more narrowly defined and their revenues, even if limited, more assured.

The need to accumulate, comprehend and present multiple points of view, as well as manage complex businesses incorporating public/private partnerships, restaurants and boutiques, and the licensing of reproductions, requires experience in consultation with a wide range of people. In addition, the complexity of what the



Information Assistants in the Glasgow Museums do more than give directions to visitors.

museum does means that, wherever possible, authority for decision-making should be devolved to the level responsible for implementing such decisions. Extensive consultation, both internally and externally, and the delegation of responsibility are management skills essential to the management of museums today.

Measurement of successful management, let alone the managing of change, is more difficult within the museum sector because the traditional measures common to the private sector, such as the profit generated, benefit to shareholders and return on investment, can only be applied in abstract ways. Museums typically measure their impact based on number of visitors, column inches in the critical press, increases in donations (of significant material) to the collections. Whether, through its activities, a museum has added substantially to the understanding and awareness of a collective history or art form is next to impossible to measure, either quantitatively or qualitatively.

Yet it is precisely a means of measuring success that boards of directors (trustees, even advisory boards) are looking for. Increasingly pressured by the need to raise ever more funds (often in competition with other not-for-profit institutions such as universities, hospitals and health-care organizations as government funding shrinks due to economic liberalization), board members from the corporate sector have begun to apply some of the practices used in their business environments. This can lead, particularly in cases where senior staff are not perceived as strong managers, to increased involvement by boards in the day-to-day management of the museum. There are many unpublished examples of the complications this can cause.

Effective management of change must not result in the board becoming more involved in the ongoing operations of

the museum, but less. The board's attention must be focused on policy development, long-range planning and fiscal monitoring. In North America, a new model of governance has been developed by John Carver[2] for not-for-profit institutions. A tool for substantial change in and of itself, the model has been adopted by a number of museums in both Canada and the United States. Interestingly, a recent study by the University of Victoria in Canada examining the effectiveness of the Carver and other governance models indicates that about half those adopting the Carver model have felt it to be effective. Participants in the study remarked that the most positive benefit of working through a process of change in governance had been the process itself, which in turn has brought about unanticipated benefits and strengthened the organization.

Good management alone will not produce a good museum, not will it guarantee the effective implementation of change. Ultimately,

> Management is the capacity to handle multiple problems, neutralize various constituencies and, in a college or university [viz. museum], achieve a break-even budget. Leadership, on the other hand, is essentially a moral act, not – as in most management – an essentially protective act. It is the assertion of a vision, not simply the exercise of style; the moral courage to assert a vision of the institution and the intellectual energy . . . to make that vision compelling.'[3]

Museums are about vision, a collective vision. Recognizing the benefits and expanding awareness of how museums are demonstrating leadership, through the creative management of internal and external change, is the challenge for the next period to come. ■

Notes

1. *Mapping the Future: A Study of the Public Perceptions of Art Galleries in Ontario*, Ontario Association of Art Galleries/N.L. Associates, the Angus Reid Group and Heath Associates, 1994.

2. John Carver's ground-breaking policy governance model has influenced the way public and non-profit boards operate around the world. His works include: *Boards that Make a Difference: A New Design for Leadership in Nonprofit and Public Organizations* (Jossey-Bass Nonprofit Sector Series); *Basic Principles of Policy Governance* (Carverguide Series on Effective Board Governance); *Reinventing Your Board: A Step-By-Step Guide to Implementing Policy Governance* (Jossey-Bass Nonprofit Sector Series).

3. Bart Giamatti, former President of Yale University and U.S. Commissioner of Baseball.

Children in African museums: voices of the Commonwealth

Lois Irvine

Making museums 'children-friendly' is the goal of a new movement within the Commonwealth Association of Museums (CAM). Lois Irvine is Secretary General of CAM and is also a museum consultant, working independently after twenty years of experience in one of Canada's major museums, the Glenbow Museum in Calgary. She is Chair of the Canadian Museums Human Resource Planning Committee and has contributed articles to a number of museum journals. She is Past President of the Alberta Museums Association, a former President of CAM, and member of several professional organizations, ICOM, Canadian Museums Association, American Association of Museums, and is active on the ICOM International Committee for Training of Personnel (ICTOP).

The question 'Do we hear the voices of children in our museums?' was posed by Emmanuel N. Arinze[1] in his keynote position paper for the workshop 'Children in African Museums: The Undiscovered Audience', held in Nairobi 10–16 November 1997. This international regional programme was organized by the Commonwealth Association of Museums and hosted by the National Museums of Kenya.

This article will focus on describing the Nairobi workshop and placing it briefly in the context of the work of the Commonwealth Association of Museums, familiarly known as CAM. This project is one of a number of programmes of the association which are meant to encourage museums to give expression to the many cultures and audiences and the many museum workers and museums across the Commonwealth and beyond. The workshop exemplifies two notable concerns of the association: the recognition by museums of the critical need to listen and respond to the diverse voices in their societies with enriching and rewarding programmes and experiences, and the vital necessity of creating opportunities for expressions from all cultures and nations of the Commonwealth, large and small.

The intent of the Nairobi workshop was to emphasize the need to hear the voices of children in creating and implementing museum programmes. They are an 'undiscovered' audience not because special activities for children are lacking but, as Arinze went on to say, because children in most cases are not consulted and 'are expected to "enjoy" the programmes and behave properly' (i.e. quietly) while in the museum. Arinze illustrated his point by raising several more questions, relevant to all museums and to other audiences, but brought into sharper focus in regions and cultures which have a transplanted colonial museum model:

- Do we ever find out from children why they want to visit museums?
- Do we take into consideration the needs and interests of children when planning for them?
- Do we ask children to identify their areas of interest and things they would like to see or do in the museum?
- Do we give children a chance to talk to us and tell us what they think about what we are doing?
- Do we give children a voice in the museum?
- Do we allow children to experience the museum in their own way?
- Do we allow some noise into our museums to bring in that vital human touch which is essential for our type of work?
- Do we sufficiently excite our children to make them want to come close to the museum?
- Do we make our museum floor warm enough for the bare feet of the African child to walk on, happily and confidently and with a smile?

The purpose of the workshop was to raise awareness of children and young people as a special museum audience and to provide an opportunity for reflection, discussion and training on how museum educational programmes are developed for them. Children are a special museum audience and, in the words of South African President Nelson

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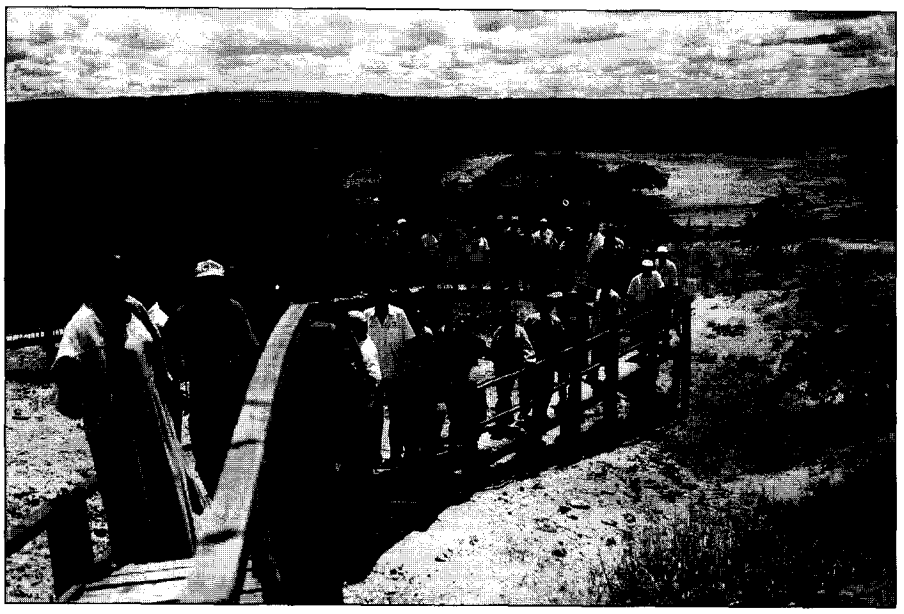
Children talking about the museum to participants in the workshop.

Mandela, they are 'our greatest asset, our children are the rock on which our future will be built'.[2]

The thematic emphasis was on the participation of children in the process of designing programmes and transforming galleries to encourage and excite them to experience the museum in their own way. Museums must become 'children-friendly' both by creating a warm, welcoming and relaxed experience for them and by talking openly with them in order to present programmes that meet their needs and expectations. Because children most often enter the museum through the initiative, energy and interest of teachers, parents and other care-givers, their participation should also be sought. The workshop participants thus emphasized the involvement of the larger community, recognizing the cultural significance of traditional community leaders in the African environment.

Forty-three participants came from fifteen Commonwealth countries (thirteen African nations, Canada, the United Kingdom) and the United States, including museum education officers and several teachers from Kenya. In addition, one day included the participation of children, parents and teachers to discuss their expectations of the museum.

After the opening ceremonies, two keynote addresses by Professor Joseph Mungai, Secretary of the Commission for Higher Education in Kenya, and Emmanuel Arinze treated the value of the educational role of museums in society and the specific issues of children and their relationship with museums in Africa. The format of the workshop was a series of sessions with targeted results. Brief initial presentations by experienced participants raised the questions for each session and were followed by discussion and exploration in the full workshop or breakout groups. To add the catalyst of different perspectives and experience, museum educators from Africa were joined by museum education experts from the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Anacostia Museum in Washington, D.C., and the workshop co-ordinator, a museum generalist from Canada.



A field trip to Olorgesailie, a prehistoric site in the Rift Valley.

The workshop was designed to cover several topics: (a) the existing situation; (b) the determination of needs through analysis and discussion with children, teachers, parents and those working with children; (c) the development of individual and comprehensive programmes for children (including descriptions of a number of excellent examples, verbally and by videos); and (d) a brief look at evaluation and other logistical aspects.

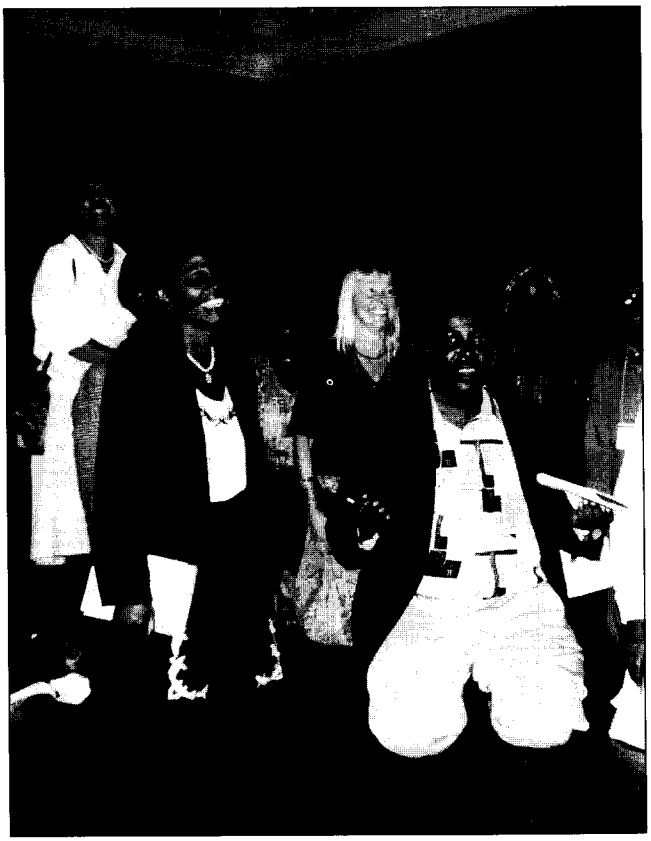
Prior to the workshop, a brief survey had been sent to possible participants in Commonwealth countries of Africa to assess the current status of children's programming. An excellent response was obtained and a wide range of situations was revealed. While children were not usually consulted in most museums, the school was the primary and often sole focus of children's programming, and school groups sometimes formed a majority of the museum's attendance. However, there was frequently no separate budget for children's activities or even activities *per se* and little money to devote to either school or non-school programmes.

'Becoming children'

The highlights of the workshop were the 'children's eye views' of the museum galleries, and the three sessions involving children and parents. These included: (a) the children experiencing the galleries under casual and unobtrusive observation by one or two participants; (b) children talking to participants; and (c) the parents and teachers expressing their wishes and expectations of the museum and how it relates to children.

For the 'children's eye views', the workshop participants enthusiastically threw themselves into 'becoming' children and young people visiting the museum and experiencing all the difficulties of understanding the museum and galleries designed for passive, adult, educated audiences. Labels, lighting, atmosphere, general facilities, topics and treatment, especially lack of interactivity and interpretation for young audiences, came under close and critical scrutiny and set the group to thinking seriously about making museums children-friendly. The findings were supported by the participants' observations of the children in the galleries along with the comments of the children themselves. The children were clearly interested in the Snake Park adjacent to the museum and least interested in the art gallery areas of the museum.

The teachers and parents presented another viewpoint, both perceptive and thoughtful, and clearly based on a broad view of the role of the museum and its relation to children. The need and wish for more lively and interactive exhibits, either tailored for children or in a format and design accessible to them, was ardently expressed, along with the desire for facilities to improve the comfort and easy access of family groups. Discussion also focused on the opportunity for the museum to present living traditions through tableaux, crafts and demonstrations to bring the museum to life and introduce children actively to their culture, interpret it in familiar language and context, and relate it to everyday experience. A plea was also made to reach out to all children, regardless of language, economic background or location, and take the museum to them if they cannot come to the museum.



Participants taking the role of 7–11-year-old children in the galleries of the Nairobi Museum.

While it was clear that this particular group of children and parents and teachers had previous knowledge and appreciation of the museum, the day was enlightening, for it made participants realize both the difficulties and rewards of conversation with the audience. It took some time to overcome the hesitancy of both children and parents to speak freely, a situation likely to be found in other countries as well. Most particularly, it dramatically illustrated the real need to pay much better attention to specific audiences in presenting exhibits and information. It is worth noting that the galleries in Nairobi were not markedly different from museum displays elsewhere. We must ask ourselves whether we do have children-friendly museums and whether we do talk to children and hear their voices in our museums.

The spirit of the workshop was especially fulfilling. There was no lack of different opinions but there was also a readiness to place higher value on learning together and on the opportunity to do so. Participants were stimulated, deeply involved and ready to listen to the voices of their international colleagues, all with much laughter and enjoyment.

An eye on the future

The workshop produced positive results in deciding on principles and guidelines and designing three examples of children's programmes. It also put into place a structure to carry forward the enthusiasm and spirit and continue to improve the interaction and education of children in African museums.

This step led to the formation of the Group for Children in African Museums (GCAM) consisting of the workshop participants, some of whom will act as national co-ordinators, and others who will be recruited in their own countries. This group will continue to strengthen their network to focus on making museums children-friendly, and will share ideas, initiate, link, encourage, support and monitor children's programmes across Africa to meet the needs and aspirations of young Africans.

A strong statement of intent and vision for children in African museums, called the 'Nairobi Declaration on Children in African Museums', was drawn up to guide GCAM and clearly express the philosophical direction of the workshop. A few of the principles are as follows:

- Museums should be children-friendly.
- There should be free entry to museums, monuments and sites for children at all levels.
- Children should be involved in the planning and organization of children's programmes.
- Family and community groups at all relevant levels should participate in museum children's programmes.
- All museum staff, directors included, should be involved and committed to children's programmes.

- Mission statements should be developed for museum education departments, museums as institutions and professional organizations, which include an emphasis on the needs of children.

- Children should be given a voice in the museum.

The Commonwealth Association of Museums will work to carry out this mission through facilitation and dissemination of information on GCAM and in seeking funding for projects from appropriate sources. CAM will take on current responsibilities for the international coordination of GCAM under the President and supported by the Secretary General.

The three programmes designed by the participants can be adapted to their own situation or used as prototypes to develop new ones. They are particularly relevant to the African situation, requiring relatively inexpensive and readily available materials and treating pertinent topics: 'Hidden Talents: A Traditional Crafts Programme', for children and young people from 12 to 18, to teach crafts to young people no longer in school so they can begin to support themselves; 'Musical Instruments' to enhance cultural knowledge and skill in making and playing traditional instruments of diverse ethnic groups; and 'A Visit to the Marine Gallery' to introduce very young children to their natural environment through an engaging, pleasurable and educational museum experience. The topic of raising funds for these programmes was an important one given the scarcity of strong financial resources in most African museums. In future, a manual for children in African museums will be developed from the workshop when the necessary funding can be obtained, and a full workshop report of all results will be made available.

Finally, although the resources and museum capacities are not consistent across all countries, workshop delegates shared some excellent initiatives in children's programming in Africa. The mobile museum in Botswana, community initiatives in South Africa, the collaboration of educational institutions, teachers and museums in Kenya, and some major programmes in Nigeria were among primary examples described. Many other successful ideas were discussed and illustrated with videos, slides and photo displays.

'Children in African Museums' was not only a successful workshop but a rewarding and unforgettable experience listening to the voices of museum colleagues in Africa. It enabled development and implementation of practical workshops, and a broader understanding not only of children's programming needs but also of initiating real contact and conversation with a special museum audience.

The worldwide museum community is relatively small. The common concerns and issues are often very widespread while the conditions in which they exist may be very different. There is ample opportunity to assist each other and to learn lessons from each other because of our different perspectives and regardless of the material resources we have or do not have. 'Children in African Museums' is an example of this opportunity and an expression of CAM's desire to promote the sharing of our diverse experience and our common humanity.[3] ■

Notes

1. Emmanuel N. Arinze was the first Nigerian to be appointed Education Officer in the National Museum system in Nigeria

and has extensive experience in the field up to the present. He subsequently became Director of Museums and Monuments to 1991 and is currently President of CAM.

2. From the message sent to the workshop by President Mandela, one of CAM's two patrons. CAM's other patron is Sir Shridath Ramphal, from Guyana, former Secretary General of the Commonwealth and prominent leader in international and environmental affairs.

3. The Commonwealth Association of Museums wishes to express great appreciation to the following for their generous support of this workshop: the Commonwealth Foundation; the A. G. Leventis Foundation; the Rockefeller Foundation; the National Museums of Kenya (as host and participants); ICCROM-PREMA; the Smithsonian Institution; the British Council; the United Republic of Tanzania, and many other museums and associations which made possible the participation of individual delegates.

The Commonwealth Association of Museums

As with the Nairobi workshop, the Commonwealth Association of Museums endeavours to apply the principles of equity of representation and of expression of voice in its structure and many of its programmes.

CAM holds many of its activities away from major meeting venues in order to become acquainted with the less accessible and more remote nations of the Commonwealth and begin to understand and listen to the needs of developing countries and small nations whose heritage and culture is critical to their very existence in the midst of the threat of overwhelming mass communication and culture.

CAM met in 1995 in Botswana and South Africa to welcome South Africa back to the Commonwealth, to hear about and to experience the African museum environment directly through dialogue with African colleagues and visits to museums. The topic on this occasion was 'Museums and the National Identity' and publication of the proceedings is under way.

Other programmes have included a regional workshop in the Caribbean and a Commonwealth-wide symposium, both on indigenous peoples. In Belize, the 1993 session resulted in principles and steps to improve the relationship between indigenous cultures and museums. In 1994, in Victoria, Canada, the symposium 'Curatorship: Indigenous Perspectives in Post-Colonial Societies' examined many aspects of the relationship of museums and indigenous peoples in an often emotional forum which brought together indigenous and non-indigenous participants from across the Commonwealth.

In one of its most important activities, the distance learning programme in basic museum studies, CAM is currently undertaking a process of revision to update, enhance the global scope of the references and readings, and address current issues. There are many paths to the same destination and CAM can take advantage of the diversity of experience of its members to make this programme both relevant and richly rewarding along the road to museum excellence.

At the crossroads of cultures: the museums of Marseilles

Laurence Alfonsi

With their originality and their diversity, the museums of Marseilles symbolize the plurality that is so characteristic of the city itself. What is more, there are some, in terms of design and development, that are at the forefront of efforts to reinvigorate the cultural life of the city. Laurence Alfonsi, who lives in Marseilles, holds a doctorate in the humanities (Docteur en Lettres et Sciences Humaines) *and is the author of a number of articles that have been published in international journals on such subjects as the sociology of film, the work of François Truffaut, the effects of globalization and the new technologies, and future-oriented studies.*

'It was here, in about 600 B.C., that Greek mariners from Phocaea, a Greek city in Asia Minor, first touched land. They founded Marseilles, whence civilization spread throughout the Western world.' This is Marseilles' 'birth certificate', inscribed on the quay of the Vieux-Port (Old Port), where the city and its legendary urban landscape was first born. A major Mediterranean city since antiquity, the many different faces of Marseilles have been shaped by its twenty-six centuries of history, which have given the city its strong, though sometimes enigmatic and contradictory, personality. An important artistic and historic centre, a 'Euro-Mediterranean capital' and the oldest city in France, it has inspired passions and endless controversy. Stretching for 34 km along the coast, with 800,000 inhabitants and 111 districts, Marseilles covers an area twice that of Paris. Moreover, as a magnet that has attracted wave upon wave of immigrants, Marseilles provides an outstanding example of a city in which different communities live side by side.

A highly colourful city, Marseilles has often been regarded with some derision. However, in facing up to the issues confronting our post-modern societies, the city possesses major assets that could well enable it to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. It is for this reason that Marseilles is now attempting to enhance its image and put behind it the clichés of the past. Its cultural heritage, whose main advantage is that it lies at the crossroads of arts and cultures, is the crucial piece of a jigsaw puzzle that will contribute to its renewal. As essential parts of this heritage, the museums of Marseilles, which possess often little-known treasures, are keen to play a major role in the renaissance of the city as a cultural and tourist centre.

The purpose of this article is not, then, to provide an exhaustive description of the history, work or activities of the museums of Marseilles, but rather to look at them from a sociological and future-oriented standpoint.

A focus on history

There are a number of museums which focus on the Marseilles region and Provence and which, through their varied, but complementary areas of interest, help to retrace the rich history of Marseilles.

The Musée des Docks Romains (Museum of Roman Warehouses), the only site museum in the region, contains the remains, *in situ*, of one of the few examples in the world of a Roman warehouse containing large earthenware storage jars (*dolia*). It also houses archaeological collections that help to give us some idea of commercial life in Marseilles from the sixth century B.C. to the fourth century A.D.

The Musée d'Histoire de Marseille (Museum of the History of Marseilles), inaugurated in 1983, had its origin in the discovery of remains of the port and the ancient walls. It presents the history of the city from antiquity onwards through the Greek and Roman periods, the Middle Ages (the potters' quarter) up to the modern period from the reign of Louis XIV up to the nineteenth century. The foundation of Marseilles and the first centuries of its existence are vividly evoked through the spectacular wreck of a ship dating back to the third century A.D. A new display of artefacts from the most recent excavations, together with the original collection of the coats of arms of the great Marseilles families, traces the history of Marseilles up to the nineteenth century. Operating in conjunction with the museum

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Shoe painted by Andy Warhol, tempera on wood, from the 'Andy Warhol and Fashion' exhibit held in 1998 at the Musée de la Mode.

are a research library and a very active audiovisual unit, which are both open to the public. With its 88,900 visitors, the Musée d'Histoire de Marseille was the most visited museum in the city in 1997.

The Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires du Terroir Marseillais (Museum of Folk Arts and Traditions of the Marseilles Region), founded in 1928 at Château-Gombert by the *félibre*[1] Julien Pignol, shows the way people lived in the Marseilles area from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century by means of a lively and attractive display of its exhibits. Furniture, costumes and objects of various kinds provide a picture of traditional life in Provence, while collections of religious art and Nativity cribs with their clay figurines evoke local festivals and customs. A library and a collection of archives on traditions and local history complete the museum.

A similar function is performed by the Musée du Vieux Marseille (Museum of Old Marseilles), which is housed in the Maison Diamantée, a unique example of architecture of the end of the sixteenth century in the Old City. Arranged in the form of sixteen different itineraries, the museum depicts daily life in Marseilles in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through its displays of Provençal furniture and costumes, tarot and other playing cards, Nativity scenes and their figurines.

Other museums in Marseilles reflect more specific aspects of the history or traditions of the city. The Musée de la Marine et de l'Economie (Museum of Maritime and Economic Activities) is housed in the Palais de la Bourse (Stock Exchange), an imposing monument to large-scale commerce in Marseilles which was built in 1852. With its collection of prints, paintings and scale models, it retraces the economic history of the city and its port since the sixteenth century. The Galerie des Transports (Transport Museum), which occupies the former East Station, covers the history of public transport in Marseilles from the first horse-drawn omnibus to the present underground system. The Musée du Santon (Museum of Religious Folk Art) displays the history, techniques and various styles of the traditional Christmas Nativity cribs with their figurines. Finally, the Musée Provençal du Cinéma (Provençal Film Museum), established at the end of the 1970s, is well known for its exhibitions and its publications. It has an abundant collection of film material other than films themselves: cameras, books, records, posters, scale models of sets, costume designs, actual sets and costumes, autographs, photographs, magazines, etc. It also has a library for the use of researchers.

A cultural mosaic

Marseilles is not just the capital of Provence, however, and in fact a number

Young visitors participating in an activity organized during the exhibit 'Sans Réserves' at the city museum especially designed for children.

of its museums contain examples of French art and cultures from all over the world. The diversity and richness of their collections reflect the city's international status and the many different cultural influences that have shaped its history.

Several Marseilles museums possess European collections, including the Musée des Beaux-Arts (Fine Arts Museum), which since 1869 has been housed in the left wing of the Palais Longchamp, a magnificent example of Second Empire architecture. The foremost museum in Marseilles and one of the oldest in France, its collections, spread over two storeys, contain important works of the French, Italian and Flemish schools: Perugino, Carracci, Rubens, Vouet, David and Courbet, as well as a collection of sculptures. The Provençal school of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries is one of the museum's strong points, with works by Puget, Serre, Mignard, Loubon, Monticelli, Guigou and others. A large collection of drawings has been installed in the basement.

Since the 1960s, the Musée Cantini, located in a private townhouse dating from the end of the seventeenth century, has built up an important collection of works by the Fauves and the Surrealists, and some outstanding works of the post-war period. It is one of the finest French public collections, and includes works by Bacon, Dufy, Ernst, Le Corbusier, Léger, Matisse, Masson, Miró, Picabia, Picasso, Derain, Giacometti, Dubuffet, Tàpies and others. There is also a documentation centre on twentieth-century art open to the public.

The Musée Grobet-Labadié, one of the most attractive museums in Marseilles with its intimate atmosphere of a private nineteenth-century townhouse, houses the collections of two art lovers, the musician Louis Grobet and Marie Louise Labadié, and contains sculptures from the Netherlands, the German school and the Papal territory in Provence in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; paintings and drawings of the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries from the Northern, Italian and French schools; furniture; gold and silver objects; ceramics from the thirteenth to eighteenth centuries; oriental carpets; tapestries from the workshops and factories of Tournai, Brussels, Beauvais, Gobelins and Aubusson; and Baroque and Romantic musical instruments. There is also a large collection of ancient drawings. In 1997, the museum carried out restoration work on its collections, renovated its display areas and devised a new approach to its museological functions.

Opened to the public in May 1995, the Musée de la Faïence (Ceramics Museum), located in the nineteenth-century Château Pastré lying in the Montredon Park between the sea and the hills, contains a collection of over 1,500 pieces of Marseilles, regional, French and European ceramics, from the early Neolithic period up to the present day, including specimens from the workshops of Joseph Clérissy, Joseph Fauchier, Louis Leroy, Gaspard Robert, Veuve Perrin, etc. While the pottery and porcelain produced at Moustiers and the main Provençal centres have pride of place, a chronological display shows successive developments in the art of ceramics up to contemporary concepts of design.

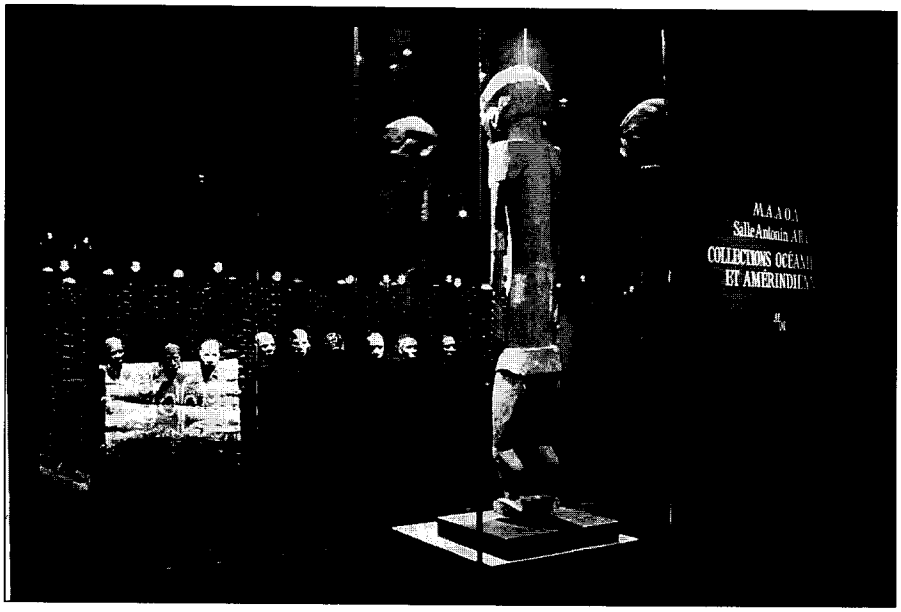
The city of Marseilles also has several museums specializing in the history, arts and traditions of the whole world. In the right wing of the Palais Longchamp, the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle (Natural History Museum) has preserved much of its original museographical approach and decor, while drawing on state-of-the-art knowledge. The museum includes a room devoted to the zoology of the world and provides a survey of 400 million years of the history of Provence. In addition to a 'Safari Museum' (zoological settlements of the earth displayed in accordance with the principles of zoogeography), it has permanent exhibitions on the palaeographic and palaeontological evolution of the region from the Primary to the Quaternary, aquariums, the present fauna and flora and fossils of the region arranged in accordance with the museographical principles of the nineteenth century, the evolution of humankind in the world over the last 5 million years, and vestiges of human settlements and their expansion in Provence. A scientific library for children and adults is open to the public.

Marseilles' links with the Orient, together with the personal contribution of Dr Clot Bey, account for the exceptional richness of the Egyptian collection in the Musée d'Archéologie Méditerranéenne (Museum of Mediterranean Archaeology), which offers a vast panorama of Egyptian art from the beginnings of the Ancient Empire to the Coptic period, the exhibits being displayed in such a way as to emphasize their monumentality. The pivotal element of the protohistorical collections are the remains of Roquepertuse, a major centre of Celto-Ligurian civilization, with a unique collection in southern Gaul of sculpted and painted objects from the third century B.C. The section devoted to classical antiquity reflects the main currents of the ancient history of the regions bordering on the Mediterranean: the Near East, Cyprus, Greece, Magna Graecia and Etruria. The range of its collections makes this one of the most important museums in France.

The Musée d'Arts Africains, Océaniens et Amérindiens (Museum of African, Oceanic and Amerindian Arts) contains an exceptional collection of objects from three continents, based on the objects donated by Pierre Guerre (African art, sculptures and masks) and Professor Henri Gastaut (Oceanic and American art, a rare series of remodelled skulls), together with a bequest of 2,500 items that the film director François Reichenbach collected in the course of his travels in Mexico. The museum also has a multimedia centre, with over 2,000 works from three continents and audiovisual material from the major film libraries of the world.

The size and variety of contemporary art collections, which include some items of major importance, have led to the establishment of the Musée d'Art Contemporain (Museum of Contemporary Art) covering an area of some 4,000 m^2, housing both the permanent collections and temporary exhibitions, and providing ample space for exhibitions of the works of the Nouveaux Réalistes, Supports-Surface, Arte Povera and 'individual mythologies' movements, as well as the works of major figures in contemporary art.

The Musée de la Moto (Motorcycle Museum) has been installed in a former flour mill, a fine example of late-nineteenth-century industrial architecture. It traces the development of mechanics and style from 1898 to the present day. Its permanent collections include a 1935 workshop, the Nougier collection, and examples of motorcycles from all over the



The Oceanic collection at the Museum of African, Oceanic and Amerindian Arts.

world from the beginning of the century up to the present day.

New museums and concepts

The 1980s and 1990s have seen a significant increase in the number and size of collections in Marseilles and the establishment of several new museums in the city. This policy of creating new museums has gone hand in hand with the development of new approaches in several of these museums. These exciting new developments have also been accompanied by a dramatic growth in publishing activity, with the publication of major works that have greatly added to the reputation of the Marseilles museums.

The Préau des Accoules, established in 1991, is specifically for children. Located in the School of Sainte-Croix, founded by the Jesuits in the seventeenth century – an unexpected gem of classical architecture in the heart of the city – the Préau des Accoules hosts interactive exhibitions specially designed for young people and is the city's own children's museum. Its very varied programme of events and activities is intended more particularly to help children discover the rich heritage of the museums of Marseilles.

The Musée de la Mode (Fashion Museum), which was established in 1989 and incorporated into the Espace Mode Méditerranée (Mediterranean Fashion Centre) in 1993, ranks third among French fashion museums, after the Louvre and Galliéra in Paris. Its collection, which is constantly being added to, consists of over 6,000 costumes and accessories representing fashion from the 1930s to the present day and is regularly shown to the public. All the leading fashion designers of both *haute couture* and ready-to-wear clothing have their place in the collections (the most comprehensive collection being that of Gabrielle Chanel). In addition, the whole range of contemporary fashion is covered in the major exhibitions which the museum organizes either on the work of individual designers, on particular themes or in the form of photographic exhibitions. The museum also has a specialized documentation centre on fashion and dress (including a video library with a unique collection of video cassettes on fashion shows).

The Musée des Arts Décoratifs (Museum of Decorative Arts), which is in the process of being established, will be housed in the Château Borély, or the Château de Bonneveine, an elegant mansion currently undergoing restoration, which was built at the end of the eighteenth century for a family of merchants, the Borélys. The renovations are intended to restore the interior decoration and re-create the atmosphere of what was once a family residence, whose furniture and paintings, ceramics and *objets d'art*, together with drawings

A view of one of the galleries of the Mediterranean Fashion Centre which houses the Musée de la Mode.

from the Feuillet de Borsat collection, will provide the new setting for the Museum of Decorative Arts.

The vitality of the Marseilles museums has also triggered new projects. In some cases they concern improvements to existing museums, so as to get off to a new start, examples being the installation of a miniature track with model trams in the Galerie des Transports, and the opening of a tea-room and a shop on the fourth floor of the Musée de la Faïence. Elsewhere, entirely new museums are being created, with such projects as the restoration of Pagnol's *Bastide Neuve* and the installation of a museum area in the basement to be devoted to the work of Provençal writers and film-makers; and the establishment of a museum on the site of Euro-méditerranée, which could be a marine, science or oceanographic museum.

With their 300,000 visitors in 1997, the museums of Marseilles are evidence of the city's formidable capacity to look towards the future. Without claiming to provide an exhaustive treatment of the subject, I should like to conclude this article by examining some of the innovative concepts brought into play by the Marseilles museums, which show how energetically they are responding to the sociocultural challenges of the twenty-first century.

Already affected by the slump of the 1990s, museums are now confronted by the social, cultural and economic changes of the end of the twentieth century. One of the major issues of the next century will be to strike a balance between specific local cultural features and globalization. By preserving the arts of the past, museums preserve, first and foremost, the history of a culture and of a nation. In fact, the arts are not just 'reflections of history', they *are* history. What is more, as expressions of our past and our cultures, museums have their place in 'history seen as an explanation of social evolution.'[2] The way museums are designed and organized and the way they evolve form part of larger movements within our societies. This means that current museological practice inevitably has to reckon with the broader and today highly sensitive issue of cultural diversity in the face of rapid socio-economic change. Museums assert the claim to cultural pluralism, which may be threatened by various factors such as globalization and its potentially standardizing effect.

A good example is the Musée d'Arts Africains, Océaniens et Amérindiens (MAAOA) opened to the public in March 1992, whose aim is to display objects that more often than not come from cultures that have disappeared or are dying out. Through its links with the major national research establishments, MAAOA keeps abreast of all the current cultural and artistic trends and hence reflects the radical change in museum practice today, with museology and research working hand in hand, as opposed to the traditional kind of museum which dissociated scientific research from conservation. MAAOA is therefore less of an archaeological museum than one with an anthropological and aesthetic function, its main purpose being to make visitors aware of what the disappearance of the traditions and symbolic worlds of the past may entail.

The Musée de la Mode has also broken new ground by opting for a resolutely modern approach to the presentation of costumes and fashion. It has mounted exhibitions of various kinds, be they on the work of a single designer (Chanel, Yves Saint Laurent, Paco Rabanne), photography (Peter Lindbergh) or a particular theme ('Christian Lacroix and the Theatre', 'Man as Object', 'Fashion and the Body', 'Mannequins' and, in 1998, 'Mondrian, Fashion and Design' and then 'Andy Warhol and Fashion'). By looking at fashion from all angles, the museum has succeeded in conveying a sense of its richness and variety and highlighting its complexity through an approach involving different disciplines: technology, aesthetics, art, anthropology, economics and sociology. Clothes are a mirror-image of the state of a society at a particular time and need to be observed and exhibited as if seen through the eyes of an archaeologist or ethnologist. Thus, as part of a series of exhibitions presenting a comprehensive overview of 'Unknown Wardrobes of Well-known People', from a sociological standpoint the Musée de la Mode initiated in 1997 a new concept of exhibitions with an anthropological slant designed by Paul Mathieu and Michael Ray.

Alongside its activities as a museum, the Musée de la Mode also helps to promote the work of the regional designers as part of its work with the Espace Mode Méditerranée, which as of 1998 is being managed by the Groupement d'Intérêt Public Culturel (GIPC), a public association to promote cultural interests with the participation of private or public partners. Examples such as this show that, in addition to keeping the memory of the past and of the heritage alive, museums are playing an increasingly pivotal economic role and as such are a crucial asset to cities and regions as both a tourist attraction and an economic stimulus.

In its own particular field as a children's museum, the Préau des Accoules has also adopted a totally original approach. Rather than a museum in the strict sense of the term, it is more of a pathway to an initial contact with works of art. Above all it is a place of experimentation characterized by interactivity combining passive display and active involvement and focusing on a specific target group. Even apart from these avant-garde features, the museum's very situation is something of a challenge in itself, since it is located in the Panier, a 'problem' working-class area inhabited by a mixture of people of very different backgrounds.

This concept of interactivity and the museum visit as a progressive experience is also to be found in other museums in Marseilles. Visitors to the Musée de la Faïence, for instance, can explore its rich collections at will, guided only by their

inclinations and familiarity with the subject. The museum offers various activities relating to the art of pottery and ceramics so that visitors can follow up their initial contact with the collections by taking part in programmes of events on specific subjects.

In 1997, the Musée des Beaux-Arts, too, introduced a new approach to its collections involving the concepts of transdisciplinarity and interactivity. Its programme of events caters to a range of interests, with thematic visits looking at the collections from a socio-historical, iconographic or even iconological angle. The museum also runs a workshop for adults to introduce them to the various aspects of museum work such as conservation and the display and presentation of works of art; it offers an analytical approach to the museum's collection through art history and socio-political history, and includes a series of practical and creative sessions entitled 'Your Exhibition, Your Museum' to illustrate the many concepts encountered.

Making due allowance for their institutional limitations, museums must more than ever before be a show-case of cultural diversity, while at the same time arousing a sense of historical awareness. Against this background of changes in museological practice, Marseilles undeniably has much to offer in terms of multiculturalism. Thus, unlike many other cities, Marseilles does not possess one single large museum, but a mosaic of museums scattered throughout the city. This particular pattern is but a reflection of the effervescence, not to say the exuberant disorder, that is characteristic of the city itself. The liveliness of the museums of Marseilles is largely the result of this complementary diversity.

Nowadays the main issue is not so much cultural homogeneity: the emphasis is on specific cultural identities. It is here that the major challenges of the twenty-first century lie, for the question is not so much how to stop the trend towards uniformity, but rather how to combat the tendency of individuals to take refuge in their own complacent sense of identity. Clearly, museums have a major role to play in meeting this challenge. The museums of Marseilles are particularly well placed to do this, sharing fully as they do in the new vitality of a city that has succeeded in forging a strong identity for itself from its very social diversity. ■

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Notes

1. A member of the Félibrige, a nineteenth-century Provençal literary movement.

2. Marc Ferro, *Cinéma et Histoire*, p. 11, Paris, Gallimard, 1993.

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