Museum International

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Artist's museums

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Front cover
Interior of the Dalí Museum in Figueras, Spain.
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Back cover
Interior of the Marianne North Gallery.
Reproduced with the authorization of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

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STOLEN

Oil painting on canvas entitled Portrait of Peter I *by Johan Heinrich Wedekind (1700), stolen from a museum in Tallinn, Estonia, in September 1992. Head-and-shoulders portrait of a man with a moustache wearing a wig and armour, with a blue sash across the chest over the right shoulder and an ermine over the left shoulder. The painting was restored in 1983/84. (Reference 2-2/741/ART93/487E Interpol Tallinn)*

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

Editorial

Although the artist's museum has existed for more than 150 years, it has largely eluded museological study. Inspired by Renaissance ideas about the 'artist', it came to life in the Romantic era and took root as the notion of the museum itself flourished and spread. It pays homage to the famous and the little-known, the expatriate and the native son or daughter, commemorating individual artists through their birthplaces, homes, collections, monuments and, of course, their works. Begun as a largely European phenomenon, the artist's museum is now to be found on every continent; it may be small and remote, attracting a public of connoisseurs, or, like Amsterdam's Van Gogh museum and the Musée Picasso in Paris, it may be a major artistic venue, counting more than half a million visitors each year. Yet despite its infinite variety, it nevertheless presupposes a certain number of constants which are found to a greater or lesser degree and which, taken together, help to define it: it features a group of works by a single artist, generally excludes the works of others, and is little concerned with growth and change. Bound by no imposed canon, it is free to make its own rules so as to create an impalpable link with the life and personality of the creator whose *œuvre* it consecrates.

In his recent publication entitled *World Directory of Artist's Museums*, Dr Selby Whittingham lists some 614 artist's museums in 39 countries. The phenomenon thus appeared well worth exploring and we turned to Dr Whittingham for advice and guidance. His assistance was invaluable in sifting through the great diversity of approaches inherent in the very concept of the artist's museum so as to present a rich and varied sampler. If any conclusion on the subject is possible it is this: the artist's museum may be many things to many people but it is, above all, a celebration, a context and a challenge.

On another note, November 1996 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the International Council of Museums – ICOM. It might be said that UNESCO and ICOM grew up together, for the meeting at the Louvre Museum which saw the birth of ICOM was held just prior to the first General Conference of UNESCO which enshrined the principles of mutual assistance and co-operation that have been the hallmark of the UNESCO–ICOM relationship. If UNESCO has made a major contribution to planning, improving and safeguarding numerous museums throughout the world, to waging the battle against illicit traffic in cultural property, to upgrading skills and establishing professional networks, it is because ICOM has been a vital, integral partner in these efforts. So . . . Happy Golden Anniversary, ICOM!

M.L.

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The poetry of the museum

Selby Whittingham

The artist's museum, by isolating the work of a single creator, may provide the background and the context so often absent in larger, more comprehensive museums and, according to Selby Whittingham, may even create a 'mystical union' with the artist that 'touches on the essence of art'. The author is editor of J. M. W. Turner, R.A., *a journal devoted to Turner's international place in the arts, to John Ruskin, and to the support of the Committee for the Instatement of Turner's Gallery. He has also compiled the* World Directory of Artist's Museums.

The idea of the artist's museum was created when the Casa Buonarroti in Florence was decorated in the years 1612–38 with scenes of the life of Michelangelo. It was taken a step further by the building of the Thorvaldsens Museum in Copenhagen in 1839–48. The first was a commemoration of the artist in his family's home by his great-nephew; the second was a national receptacle for the works of a sculptor brought from his studio abroad to his native country.

The diversity of the genre is demonstrated further by the examples discussed in the following articles. This proceeded both from differences of circumstances and from the individuality of the artists – Marianne North, Mihály Zichy, Frida Kahlo and Mané-Katz. In addition, the leading concerns of each – art, botany, civil rights, etc. – necessarily produce different emphases.

This challenges the conventional idea of an art gallery whereby artists are grouped in schools in which one artist begat another like the descendants of Noah or the Kings of Judah in the Old Testament. Such genealogy, however, is not what usually interests the general visitor most. Nor is it an accurate picture of the genesis of the modern artist, who takes his inspiration from a multitude of sources of all periods.

It is sometimes objected that the artist's museum takes the artist out of his context (that being provided by his immediate forebears and by his contemporaries). But that is not true, not merely because the linear account of artistic development has become inadequate, but also because many artist's museums include or show works by other related artists. And there is more to an artist's context than the work of contemporaries, who may have very different visions. In fact, the conventional art gallery is notorious for taking art out of context – away from the places which inspired it or for which it was created – and putting it in a neutral space.

The isolation, total or quasi, of artists in their own museums makes it possible to give a fuller account of their life and background than would be the case in a general museum. And it allows, if it does not always achieve, an artistic context that is relevant and not just contemporary. A problem for cultural historians has been that figures like William Blake and Jane Austen seem at first sight to be out of step with their age. Further examination may uncover affinities with part of it, but that entails a selective presentation of the age which the general museum does not provide, its comprehensiveness obscuring rather than illuminating the connections.

More still can be done by the artist's studio or house by providing a mystical union with the creator who inhabited it. This touches on the essence of art. In the past, people would talk of the poetry of art or architecture. One such was Sir John Soane, who in his museum demonstrated that there can also be a poetry of the museum.

Retrieving the magic of art

In Soane's day museums were usually directed by artists, not as today by historians. The conflict between their two approaches was illustrated by Ian Jenkins in his account of the sculpture galleries at the British Museum.[1] Predictably, he, as a curator, took the side of the historians, though he had to admit that their aim of showing the connecting chain of art down the ages has been unrealizable. Too many art museums give the impression of being run by cataloguers who have got above themselves and lost sight of the magic of art. Rose Macaulay, in her book *Pleasure of Ruins*, referred to 'the familiar tragedy of

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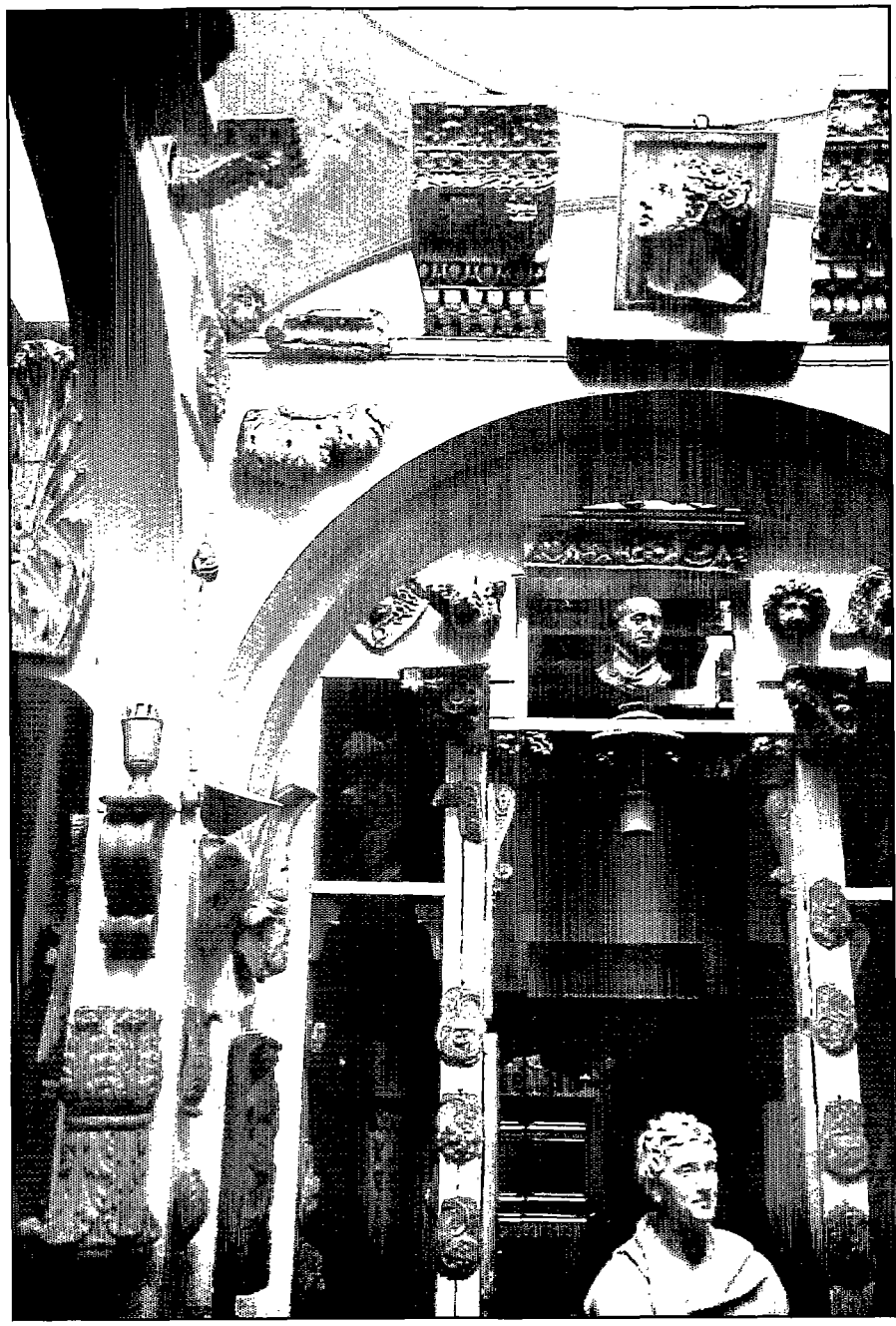


© M. Moldoveanu

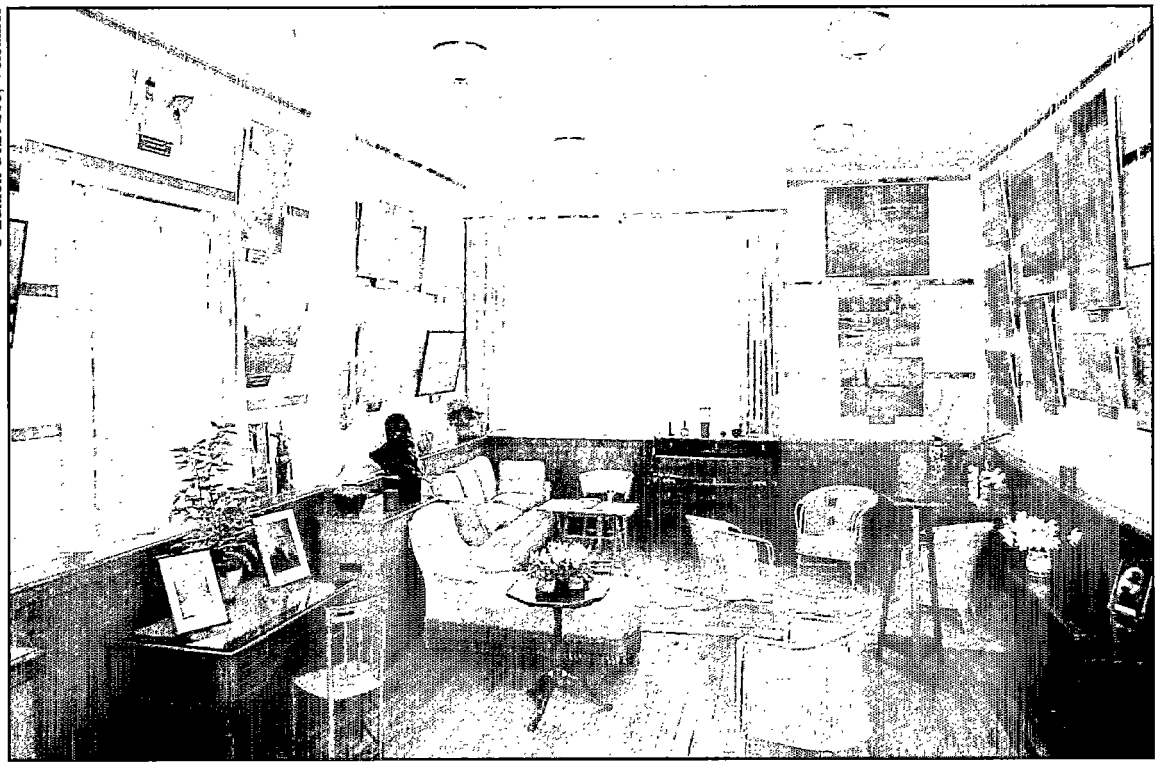
Interior of Sir John Soane's Museum, London, which 'demonstrated that there can also be a poetry of the museum'.

archaeology – the sacrifice of beauty to knowledge', and a besetting danger for art is of being translated into another language, that of words and information. Even – one might say, not least – in the Middle Ages art was primarily something more than a means of instruction.

Apart from possibly providing the inspiration of the place – and this may include the surrounding landscape – the artist's museum, if it unites a considerable body of the artist's work, performs a service beyond that of facilitating academic research into his *œuvre*. In 1869 Henry James, visiting Venice for the first time, remarked that 'the first thing that strikes you . . . is that you have not half so much been seeing paintings as *painters*. The accumulated mass of works by a few men drives each man home to your senses with extraordinary force'.[2]

This is why temporary one-man exhibitions are so popular. They not merely bring together works by the same artist, illustrating their connections, but they also provide a distillation of the aesthetic idea that the artist conveys which is made more potent because it is not diluted by the ideas of other artists. In 1843 John Ruskin said that the power of J. M. W. Turner 'cannot . . . be fully understood until the current of the years has swept away the minor lights which stand around it, and left it burning alone'.[3] It is a common principle to weed out copies and inferior works from exhibitions, in part because they may drag down the better works. Of course, historians will consider everything potentially relevant, but they too in the end will be selective.

Where there is a great permanent concentration of one artist's works, the temptation exists to remove some in the belief that this may be done without loss and maybe with profit. That has been resisted by the Mané-Katz Museum on pragmatic grounds. But others have succumbed to it, as the cases of J. M. W. Turner and Salvador Dalí have shown. The division of Turner's bequest and the removal of some of Dalí's main works from his museum at Figueras to Barcelona and Madrid have aroused strong protests, albeit so far in vain. This is part of the wider conflict that always exists where the spheres of smaller specialist museums and larger general ones overlap. But perhaps the time when museums aim to be comprehensive is passing. The Louvre has set limits to the fields that it covers and in practice other museums are often more specialized than appears at first sight. In Frankfurt-am-Main the principle of specialist museums entirely replacing a single general one has been adopted. Certainly, if



'Many have thought that Claude Monet's house at Giverny has suffered from restoration and also from the substitution of copies for the original paintings.' The sitting-room/studio at the Monet Museum, Giverny.

one large institution uses its muscle to take the pick of everything, regardless of what donors or the public wish, that is demoralizing for the smaller specialist museums.

In the case of artist's museums the argument has been used that they are moribund and unpopular and so there is reason for undermining or not supporting them. This creates a vicious circle whereby such museums are allotted fewer resources, in money and works, and so become less attractive, and that in turn acts as a reason for doing still less for them. Nevertheless, Dalí's museum at Figueras has attracted more visitors than has the Prado at Madrid. If relative size is taken into account, quite a few other artist's museums have attracted more public support than have some general art galleries.

A struggle for recognition

Over the last decade they have been getting more publicity and perhaps recognition. In 1987 the Musée d'Orsay held an exhibition that took the Musée Gustave Moreau as an example of the genre. Three years later the first of a series of Scandinavian conferences on 'Konstnärsmuseer' was held in Sweden, and some taking a world view were held the same year in Paris and in 1995 in Bologna. This has led to proposals for an association of such museums and to the publication of a worldwide list of them, though so many new ones are being created all the time that any such list would need frequent updating.[4]

Yet the less prominent museums have continued to struggle. Many are funded by slender and dwindling private sources. Their power to attract visitors and generate income may be limited. If such a museum is in a centre of culture and commemorates an artist of lesser renown, like the museums to Roy Adzak and Henri Bouchard in Paris, it has to compete against numerous other larger museums. Or if it is in a remote corner of the country, it has to establish itself as an attraction which, in the terms of the Michelin guides, at least '*mérite un dêtour*', if not '*vaut le voyage*'. But very often guides and directories omit all mention of them.

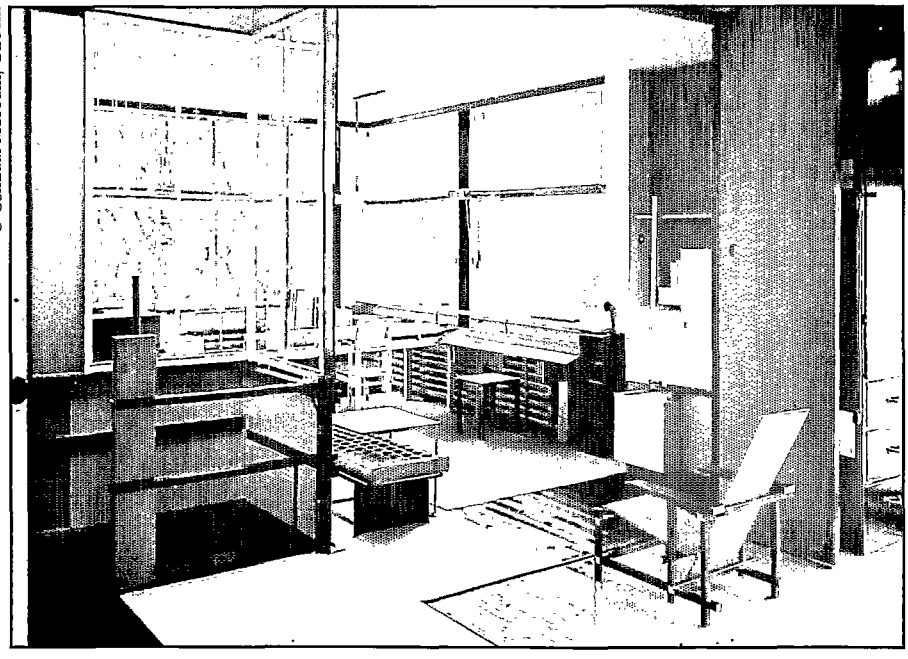
In 1995 the Graham Sutherland Gallery at Pictoo Castle in South Wales, established by the artist in the countryside which had

inspired many of his landscapes, was closed on the grounds that it failed to meet the target of 20,000 visitors a year set for it by the National Museum of Wales, of which it had become a branch. Considering its size and its remoteness and the shortness of its season, most observers would agree that that was too demanding a figure. In addition, Sutherland was not Welsh (a surprising number of such museums are to expatriates or peripatetics) and so could not draw on local pride. Yet he himself gave eloquent reasons why his work might gain in being situated in such a place as opposed to, say, the Tate Gallery in London.[5] Quite possibly the gallery will re-open on a new site in the same area, but it will not have the benefit, as the old one did, of the guiding hand of the now-dead painter.

Some museums are intentionally made remote in the belief that the visitor will thereby appreciate them more after expending some effort in reaching them. This was the idea of Marianne North, though hers is part of the larger cultural complex of Kew Gardens, and also of the creators of Toulouse-Lautrec's museum at Albi. As Henry Moore said, with regard to the Casa Buonarroti, large numbers of visitors are not everything. And in fact they may be the problem where very small museums are concerned.

Imke Valentien discusses some of the difficulties inherent in adapting a house to become a museum and the danger that in the process the advantages of the first will be lost. Many have thought that Claude Monet's house at Giverny has suffered from restoration and also from the substitution of copies for the original paintings. A similar substitution in the case of James Ensor's house at Ostend has helped destroy the magical effect that it had on visitors in the artist's lifetime.

The artist's house may form a subdivision of the personality museum, but it differs from the houses of writers, musicians and statesmen in one vital respect. It celebrates a person – or maybe a couple or family – whose achievement consists of objects, not



'There are the examples created by collectors who are passionately committed to one particular artist.' Interior of the Rietveld-Schröder House, Utrecht, created by the architect/interior designer Gerrit Rietveld for Truus Schröder-Schräder, 1924.

intangibles such as words, sounds and actions. So it needs to show these objects and not just those of biographical significance. How to accommodate art works, building (perhaps designed by the artist) and public clearly presents a challenge.

Meanwhile, the artist's museum which is purpose-built has the task of providing an ambience unique to the artist through its site, design or concept. That is easier if the artist is alive to direct the enterprise, as Dalí demonstrated by creating his museum at Figueras on idiosyncratic lines deliberately at variance with the usual museum objectives.

Although these are the two leading types – the home and the purpose-built museum – they are not the only ones. There are the examples created by collectors who are passionately committed to one particular artist. There are chapels and other buildings in which the subject of the works originally counted for more than the personality of the artist entirely or largely responsible for them and which have become museums in name or substance, among which the Marianne North Gallery may be numbered.

Lessons for improvement could be learned from considering all together and seeing how difficulties may be overcome and what the potentialities are for development, where that is desirable. Yet it would be a pity if this led to too much imitation, as it is the uniqueness as well as the excellence of each which must be prized.

Kenneth Hudson has suggested that the future of museums may lie in such small specialized ones. There is, of course, scope for organizing these on different principles, for instance, on the taste of the collector rather than the idea of the artist. In commending the collection of Samuel Rogers, Mrs Jameson praised the way it avoided the 'chilling and pedantic' formal system of museums. 'It is the highest criterion of an exact, as well as an elevated taste in art, to select a small collection of pictures of various date, style, and feeling; to hang them in the same room; and so to hang them, that neither the eye shall be offended by inharmonious propinquity, nor the mind disturbed by unfit associations.'[6]

The manner of displaying art is an art in itself and not a science. It is one that needs to be more assiduously cultivated. Like all connoisseurship, it can only be learnt by studying examples, not by starting from preconceptions and theory. The appreciation of artist's museums is made harder by the fact that they are so scattered, but it is one that would be rewarding to pursue. ■

Notes

1. Ian Jenkins, *Archaeologists and Aesthetes in the Sculpture Gallery of the British Museum 1800–1939*, London, British Museum, 1992.

2. I. L. Skrupskelis et al. (eds.), *The Correspondence of William James, I, William and Henry 1861–1884*, Charlottesville, Va., 1992.

3. John Ruskin, 'Art Criticism', *Artist and Amateur's Magazine*, January 1844.

4. Selby Whittingham, *World Directory of Artist's Museums*, Paris, Institut de Recherche sur le Musée Monographique, 1995.

5. Rosalind Thuillier, *Graham Sutherland Inspirations*, Guildford, Lutterworth Press, 1982.

6. A. Jameson, *Companion to the Most Celebrated Private Galleries of Art in London*, London, 1844.

A quest for identity: the Mané-Katz Museum

Noa Tarshish

How does a museum make sure that the collection of an artist's work does not become a static monument? This was the question posed by the Mané-Katz Museum in Haifa (Israel) as it set out some twenty years ago on an ambitious programme to contribute to the country's artistic culture. Using the legacy of Mané-Katz as a springboard for exploring the larger artistic milieu in which he lived and worked, the museum has aroused the public's interest and curiosity and ensured a constant stream of visitors. The author is director of the museum.

In 1958, at a time when municipalities in Israel were courting artists and writers to take up residence in their cities with the aim of enriching local cultural life, the City of Haifa approached the well-known French-Jewish painter Mané-Katz in Paris, offering him a house on Mount Carmel with an excellent view of the city and the bay. The terms of the contract between the artist and the Haifa municipal government stipulated that Mané-Katz would receive the house in exchange for bequeathing his property to the city, which committed itself in return to maintain the building and its grounds as a museum that would bear his name after his death. Four years later, in 1962, following a period in which the artist had divided his time between his studio-house in Paris and the work of refitting his new home on Mount Carmel, Mané-Katz suddenly died. Therefore, unlike the artist's home in Paris, his Haifa residence bore no personal imprint of its owner. Mané-Katz had had no hand in its design, nor did he leave behind any instructions, either practical or aesthetic, that might have served as a guide to those who would eventually have the responsibility of maintaining the house as a museum. Had the artist accepted the municipality of Ramat Gan's offer of a windmill for his studio-home, the case of Mané-Katz's studio-house in Israel – and later of the museum that bore his name – might have been different; for the artist had planned to cover the building in Ramat Gan with wall-paintings of his own. And although a few of Mané-Katz's relations were settled in Israel at the time and continue to live here, none of them has ever become involved in the painter's estate nor demonstrated any interest in his career as an artist.

Mané-Katz's house on Mount Carmel began to function officially as a museum in 1977, under the direction of a non-profit-making society established by the Haifa municipality. The museum's finances are chiefly provided from a budgetary allowance set aside for the purpose by the municipal government. The society is responsible for the day-to-day running of the museum, and for the conservation and cataloguing of the Mané-Katz estate; it also attends to all matters that concern the artist's copyrights, as well as to the enlargement and improvement of exhibition spaces and the enhancement of the collection.

The following principles of museum policy needed to be determined at the outset. Should items in the collection be sold in order to finance improvement of facilities and the quality of the collection? Need all new acquisitions consist only of the artist's own work? How were the artist's copyrights to be protected? And, having now become the exclusive property of the museum, in what ways could the copyrights be used to the museum's best advantage? What measures needed to be taken in order to prevent the sale of forgeries of the artist's work? Was the museum solely to exhibit the artist's works and items from his private collection, or should the functions of the museum extend to holding periodic loan exhibitions as well?

These, then, were the problems that had to be dealt with in the initial phases of the work of establishing the museum. Although the museum possessed one advantage in this regard which is rarely enjoyed by institutions of a similar kind: any decisions made in these matters did not require approval from the artist or his family, nor was the museum bound by contractual agreements with the artist or the place where he had lived and worked.

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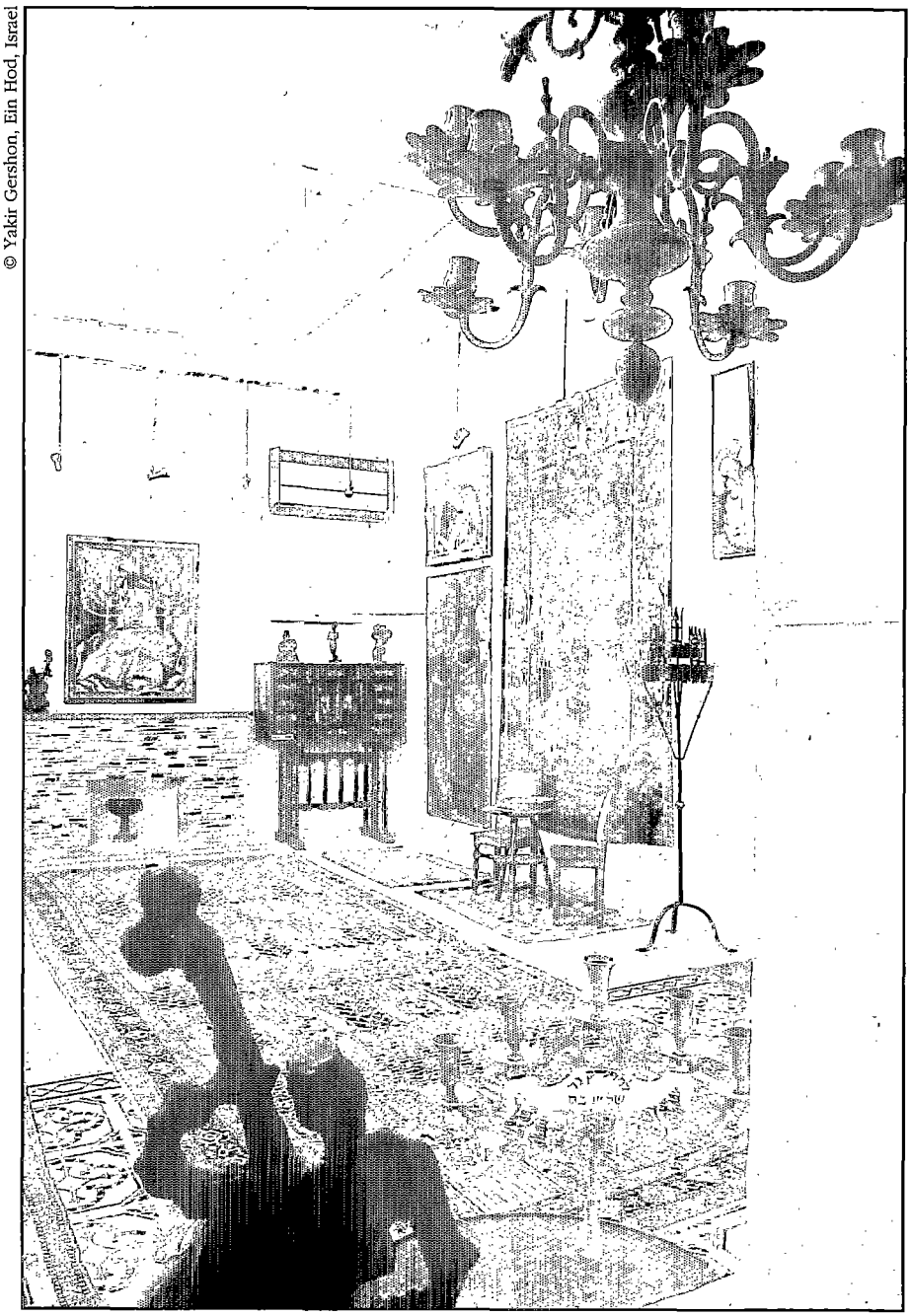


View from the balcony to the main hall.

An exotic building in an impressive landscape

The building is about a century old and is neither historically significant nor especially distinguished architecturally. It is situated on the brow of Mount Carmel and follows the basic plan of Arab domestic architecture of the region: a central hall having approximately 60m² of floor space, and flanked by two rooms, each of which is about 30m² in size. Running perpendicularly to these three rooms is a long, narrow hallway measuring 70m² which originally served as a balcony and looks out onto a breathtaking view of the city and the sea. The balcony was closed in by the artist, and the wall had been provided with very large windows that remain the principal source of natural light for the building as a whole. The house contains a generous supply of openings, doors, and windows enhanced by decorative lattice-work laid out in oriental patterns. Absence of storage space for the collection, offices for personnel and toilet facilities for visitors were only a small part of the host of technical problems that had to be confronted initially; some of these have yet to be solved.

Over the years the building has undergone various renovations and alterations: windows were sealed and openings were enlarged to provide easy movement between rooms; a storage space which was adequate for the collection was built on the rear terrace of the building, and the structure was accommodated as much as possible to the needs of a museum. Electrical wiring and air-conditioning systems could not be set into the thick plaster-and-mud walls; these were therefore fitted externally, somewhat to the detriment of the building's aesthetic appearance.

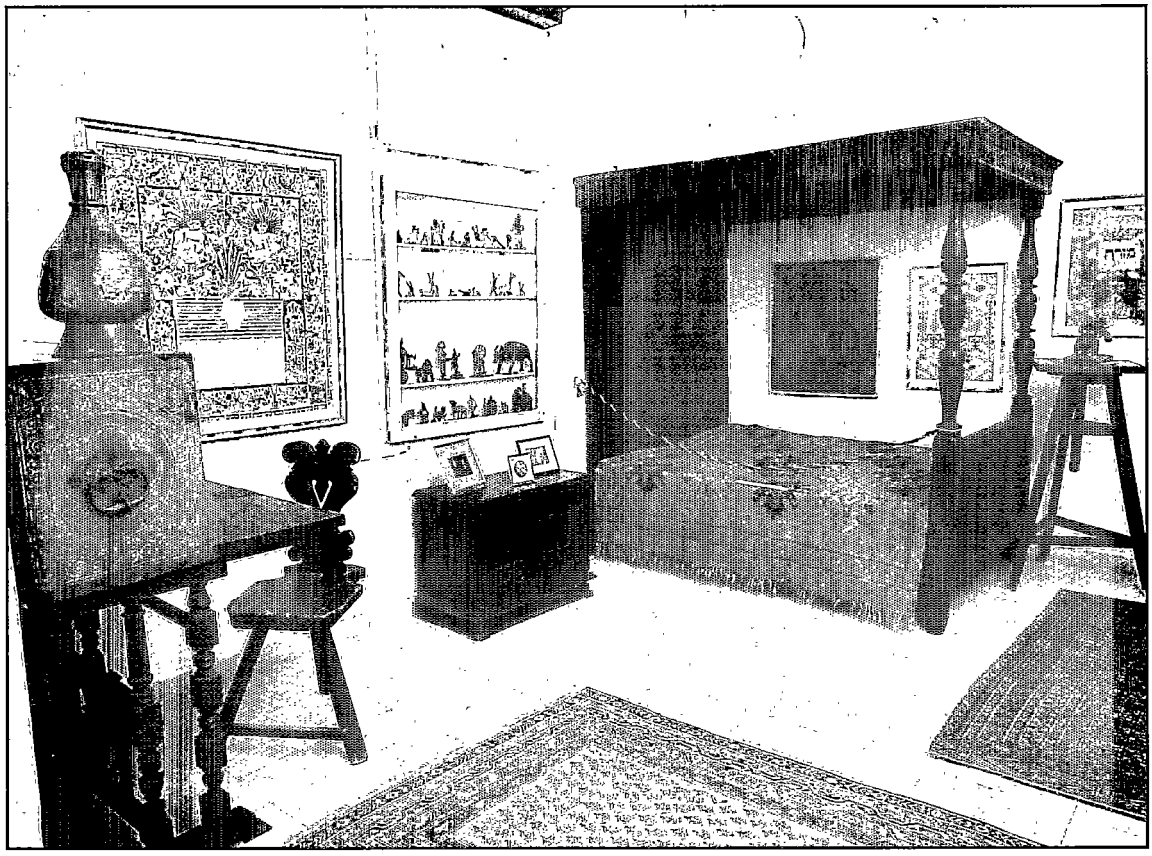
The building's internal structure, consisting of four interior spaces of different sizes and shapes, strongly dictates the manner in which exhibitions are mounted, often requiring innovative solutions and considerable improvisation on the part of the staff. The museum is at a disadvantage in having no exhibition hall in the classic sense, which might be subdivided by screens, but which can also produce an alienating effect of remoteness. On the other hand, the building's exotic appearance and impressive landscape setting, in conjunction with the pleasant if somewhat unusual distribu-

tion of interior spaces, lend the place an air or intimacy which allows visitors to enjoy individual items on display without being overwhelmed by the whole. However, the size and interior subdivisions of the building allow for only one exhibition at a time, and occasionally a small additional display. Visits by classes of schoolchildren also tend to disturb individual visitors, a problem that can be solved only by expanding the present facilities.

An eventful life, an eclectic collection

Mané-Katz was born at Krementchug, Ukraine in 1894 and arrived in Paris in 1913 at the age of 19. There he attended Cormon's studio at the École des Beaux Arts. At the outbreak of the First World War he went back to Russia, returning to settle permanently in Paris in 1921. Beginning in 1923 he participated in the annual salons in Paris and held one-man shows in various galleries of the city almost every year. In 1937 he won a gold medal at the Paris World Fair. At the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, he joined the French army. A year later, following the German occupation, he was discharged from military service and fled to the United States. In New York he took up sculpture in addition to painting. When the war ended in 1945 he went back to Paris, and was one of the first French artists in exile to return. He paid his first visit to Palestine in 1928. Thereafter he visited the country nearly every year. His sense of attachment to Israel after the establishment of the state caused him to want to make his home in the country and bequeath the legacy of his art to its people.

The museum's collection is made up of objects he owned, most of which were shipped from his Paris home to Haifa after his death. Of these, roughly 450 paintings and 50 sculptures are by Mané-Katz, which together represent the largest single concentration of his works found anywhere under one roof. Additionally, his private collection contains a highly varied assortment of about 700 art objects in different media. In some cases it has taken years to trace their provenance, since the collection arrived unaccompanied by an itemized list or any documentation. The aggregate included – in addition to objects of evident museological interest and some of the artist's best works – objects and paintings of inferior quality. Examples of the artist's earliest works that he had painted in Russia were missing. However, early examples of his paintings appear on the art market from time to time and the museum was able to procure one such picture dating from 1916, which is now the earliest piece by the artist in the collection. It has become museum policy not to sell any paintings by the artist that are currently in its possession; this was done to encourage gifts from potential donors who might otherwise fear that their gifts would be disposed of later. The museum has received a number of donations in the past, but our policy is only to accept works that will improve the quality of the collection and make it more complete. Fortunately a good number of Mané-Katz's works have found their way into private collections in the country; these the museum has been able to borrow when required. The research carried out at the museum has led to useful contacts being established both within Israel and abroad. Institutions as well as individuals have made use of our expertise in connection with the painter's works in their own possession. The museum is the only professional body dedicated to the study and conservation of the works of Mané-Katz. In this capacity we have played a useful part in exposing many of the forgeries of the artist's work, thereby keeping them off the market and away from potential buyers.

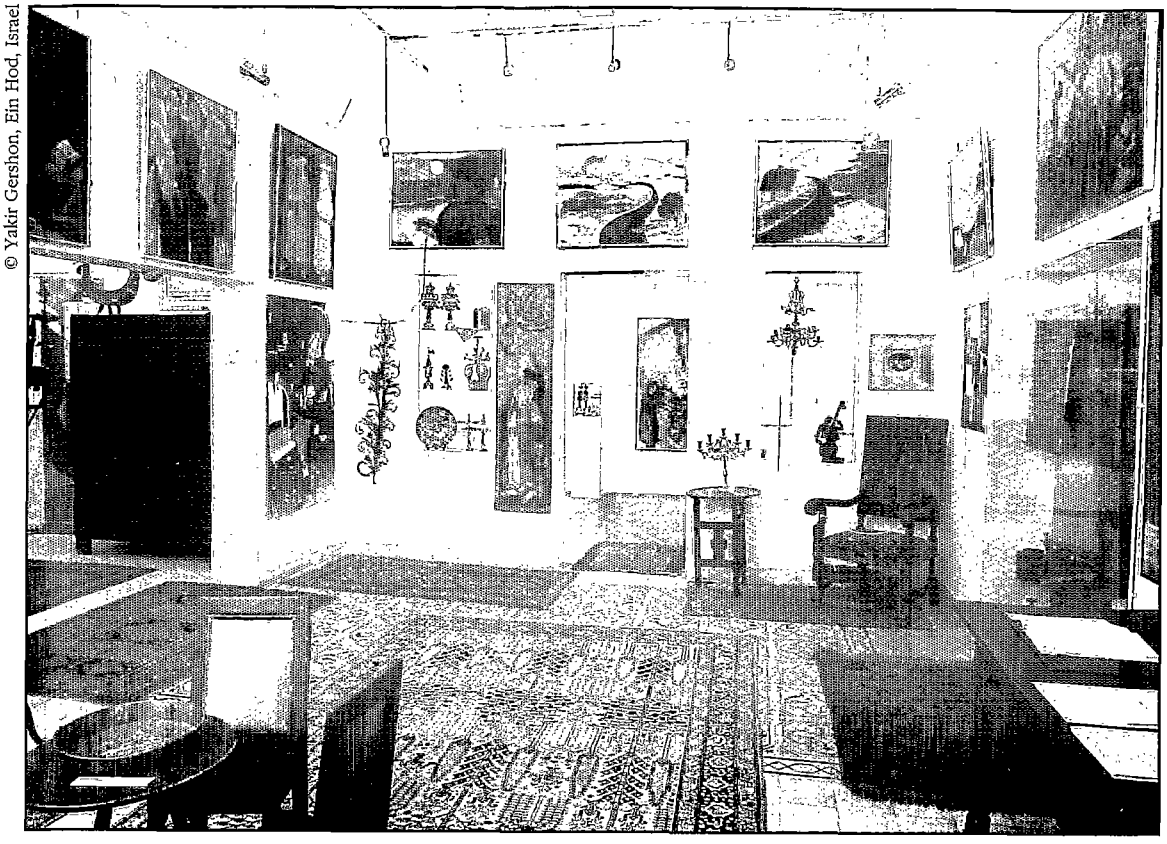


Side bedroom.

Mané-Katz's private collection did not include works of other artists, so we have no direct evidence of his personal taste in painting, and are at a disadvantage in determining the influences on his art. His own collection consists of an eclectic variety of antiques and *objets d'art* that had once filled his entire house in Paris, giving it the appearance of what one French journalist called 'an enchanted castle'. The items include antique furniture, oriental carpets, toy miniature figures from the artist's native Ukraine, Far Eastern bronzes, copper vessels, Gobelin tapestries, and Christian religious objects. This list is not exhaustive. His rich and extensive collection of Judaica contains such items as antique Hanukkah lamps, illuminated marriage-contracts, charms, spice-boxes, Sabbath candelabra, and ornamental textiles such as Ark curtains. It would be difficult to find a unifying principle that guided the artist's acquisitions, unless it is the decorative character of the objects and his love of the material from which they were made (textiles, wood, copper, etc.), and the variety of their colour and texture.

Vitality, interest and curiosity

The current exhibition at the Mané-Katz Museum is called *Portrait of the Artist as a Collector*. About 220 items, representing a sixth of the museum's collection, are now on display in the four exhibition rooms. These make up a varied aesthetic mix of works by the artist and the objects from his private collection. The design and layout of the exhibition is inspired by Mané-Katz's house in Paris, as it is known to us from the artist's albums of photographs. The exhibition offers a summary view of the two decades of activity of this small but unique institution, much of which time has been spent in seeking to establish a distinctive identity for the museum, though its character would seem to have been predetermined by the purpose for which it was initially established: namely, as a museum for the conservation and display of the works of a single artist. Could we have confined ourselves merely to being custodians of an admittedly rich and unique collection? The questions that preoccupied us in dealing with the issue at large was that of the museum's vitality and contribution to the artistic culture of Israel, the arousal of interest and curiosity among the visiting public and the museum's place among other similar institutions. This was weighed against the notion of maintaining the place as a static monument to the work of a single artist requiring no more than one-time visits by the public to fulfil its designated function.



General view from the entrance to the main hall.

Mané-Katz was an important figure among the group of Jewish artists active in the School of Paris. He is known primarily to collectors of Jewish art and among scholars with a special interest in the art of the period and the milieu in which Mané-Katz worked. He was not however a figure of heroic significance to art and culture, and he is therefore unlikely to arouse universal curiosity. The easiest and financially least demanding path for us to have followed would have been to confine ourselves to exhibiting the museum's collection in the best way we could. And there are certainly those who would argue that this indeed was the only proper function of a museum bearing the artist's name. However, our experience of the present exhibition is that it has attracted public notice by very reason of the museum's activities in recent years, in which time the museum has hosted loan exhibitions relating the artist's period, his style, and his private collection, as well as collaborating with other museums of artist's houses. We have been principally concerned in this with Jewish artists of the Paris School among whom Mané-Katz lived and worked. This field has so far remained unexplored by other museums in Israel. The first of the series of recent loan exhibitions was held in 1990 and was entitled *Reuven Rubin at the Mané-Katz Museum: Mané-Katz at Rubin's House.* This was an exchange exhibition arranged between the collections of the homes of two artists and proved to be highly successful. The collaboration and support we have received from the Israel Museum in Jerusalem has resulted in some of our most successful exhibitions: one of these being an exhibition of the drawings of Marc Chagall; another of the works of the Israeli painter Anna Ticho. The Israel Museum is the country's leading institution in the field, and there can be no doubt that the collaboration has cleared the way to more ambitious undertakings. Special catalogues were prepared for some of these exhibitions, and the decision to publish a catalogue was in each case determined by the importance of the exhibition and its documentary value. The optimal condition for mounting the current exhibition would have been for items from the museum's own collection to be shown in conjunction with a loan exhibit. The Haifa municipality and the non-profit-making body responsible for the management of the museum are currently working on plans for expanding facilities so as to make it possible for the museum to hold exhibitions while simultaneously pursuing a variety of public educational programmes. ■

'See the ocean in a drop': the Mihály Zichy Memorial Museum

István Csicsery-Rónay

The history of the Hungarian artist Mihály Zichy is mirrored in the story of the museum that bears his name – both are reflections of their troubled times and each is a tale of turbulence, hostility, intrigue and the triumph of artistic integrity. The author is Mihály Zichy's great-grandson, who returned to his native Hungary in 1990 after forty years of exile in the United States. He is a prize-winning author and publisher, and also chairman of the Board of the Mihály Zichy Foundation.

Zala is a minuscule village in south-west Hungary, but through its native son, Mihály Zichy, and his memorial museum, it reaches out to places as distant and varied as Georgia and Scotland, Paris and St Petersburg. Mihály Zichy, a painter and the most important nineteenth-century Hungarian master of drawing, was an out-and-out romantic, both as a patriot and a citizen of the world – like that other nineteenth-century Hungarian, Franz Liszt. The two had a high regard for each other. Liszt taught Zichy's daughter, Sonia, at the Academy of Music in Budapest, and Zichy, in gratitude, presented Liszt with an exquisite drawing, *Music Accompanies Us from the Cradle to the Grave.* This in turn inspired Liszt to compose his last orchestral work, to which he gave the same title as Zichy's picture.

There are thousands of Zichy's drawings in Russian museums such as the Hermitage, the Tretyakov Gallery and even art galleries in small provincial towns; many are also found in Tbilisi where he became the national painter of the Georgians, as well as in the castles of the British Royal Family at Windsor, Balmoral and Sandringham. However, the richest collection of his paintings is to be found at Zala.

Despite his position as court painter to four Russian czars (Nicholas I, Alexander II, Alexander III and Nicholas II), Zichy considered Paris the focus of his ambitions. He left the Czar's court, when the persecution of liberals threatened his future, and moved to Paris. And yet, his six years' stay in the French capital ended in disillusionment. The Third Republic proved to be too conservative, even reactionary, from his point of view.

Nevertheless, his masterpiece of painting, *The Triumph of the Demon of Destruction* was created in Paris. He finished it in a few months, intending it for the 1878 International Exhibition. Instead, however, it provoked some of the greatest scandals in Parisian art history, giving a foretaste of that created by the première of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, in 1913.

In the centre of the canvas, a young man is being enticed by a diabolical symbol of evil – an amalgam of Goethe's Mephisto, Madách's Lucifer and Lermontov's Demon – and, for good measure, by a female devil, to desert his wife and infant and go to war. The rest of the painting teems with violent, murderous and warlike – no longer symbolic – scenes depicting contemporary events. On the right, the Pope is sitting in state on top of a mound of human skulls (under his pontificate a Grand Inquisitor had not long before been canonized). In the background, the German Kaiser stands triumphant above his recently defeated enemy, Napoleon III, who is writhing on the ground. In the left corner, the Czar lifts high the Orthodox cross, leading his soldiers against the Turks in a new round of slaughter. The unity of this almost overcrowded vision is, nonetheless, remarkable. The demon, emerging at the top of the quasi-regular triangle of the composition, seems to conduct, even to orchestrate, this infernal vision of violence. The only consoling element in this cruel swirl is the figure of Christ, appearing in the background on the right in radiant light.

Zichy's inspiration was no doubt Delacroix, but he went far beyond the painter of *The Battle of the Barricades* in his visionary fever and overpowering passion. This work has a Baroque pathos and its Baroque effects of light and shade are reminiscent of Caravaggio, while the deep yellow and red hues are characteristic of Turner. Gautier – by then dead – had stressed the affinity between Goya and Zichy (in both ideas and execution), in connection with Zichy's earlier paintings.

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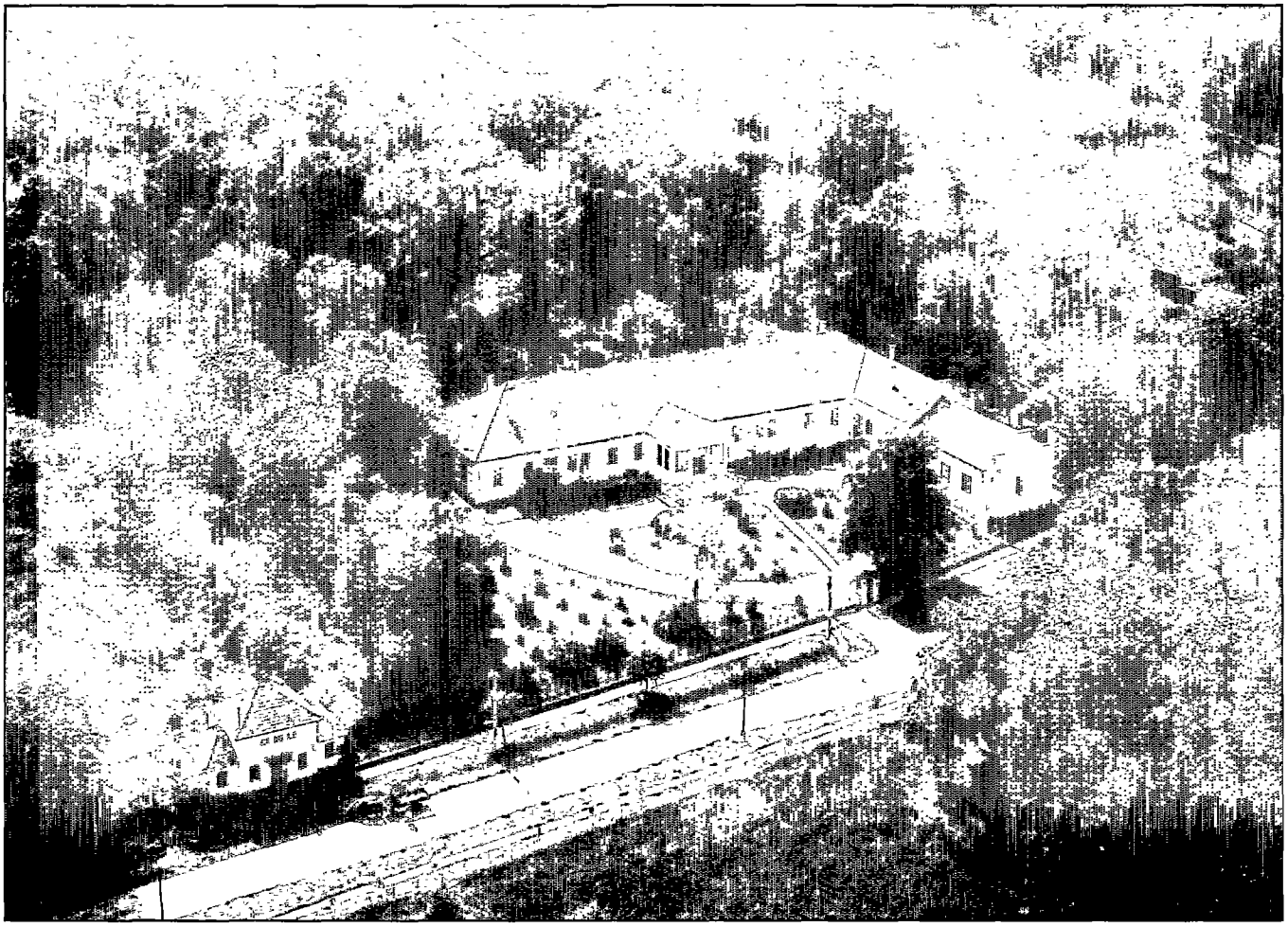


A bird's-eye view of the mansion where Mihály Zichy was born, now the Mihály Zichy Memorial Museum.

As could have been predicted, furious opposition arose to showing this open indictment of contemporary power politics at the International Exhibition. The French hosts were afraid of foreign reaction, since many of the recognizable figures on the paintings were potential visitors to the exhibition. The Austro-Hungarian Embassy intervened forcefully (through one of its diplomats, a certain Count Edmund Zichy!). In addition, the French had banned the exhibition of pictures of battles by their own painters. Finally, Zichy was forced to withdraw his favourite creation, which he exhibited privately. Most French artists of the time valued the work highly; Alexandre Dumas *fils* asserted: 'This painting expresses ideas that live in everyone, but no one puts into words; it is the history of our century with all its contradictions, its abysses, and firmaments.'

A true romantic

Born at Zala in 1827, scion of an ancient family of the lesser nobility, Mihály Zichy was imbued with patriotic and liberal ideas (the same ones that led his class to renounce their privileges in 1848 and create, temporarily, the first democratic system in eastern central Europe). His family owned a medium-sized, but heavily embarrassed, estate, in contrast to the *latifundia* of the other branch of the family, the Counts Zichy. There was sometimes open hostility between the two families: the counts had received their title by serving the Habsburgs, while the main line of Zichys derived their erudition from the French Enlightenment. In fact, the museum at Zala contains some 4,000 books, collected mainly by Zichy's grandfather (whose name also happened to be Mihály Zichy). Most of them are from the

eighteenth century, a rich source of the painter's staunch dedication to all aspects of freedom.

In spite of early manifestations of Zichy's talent – attested by his self-portrait aged 13, now exhibited at Zala – his family wanted him to study law and government. He complied, but he also learned to paint, first in Pest, then in Vienna, where his teacher was Waldmüller, the Austrian Biedermeyer master.

At the end of 1847, Zichy's career took a fateful turn: he was invited by the brother of Czar Nicholas I to teach drawing to his daughter. He moved to St Petersburg where he lived for forty-one years as court painter to four czars. His standing as a renowned foreign artist – he never gave up his Hungarian citizenship – gave him an intellectual independence he could not find even in the liberal Hungary that emerged after the 1867 Compromise with Austria: conservative and clerical critics hounded him for his ideas which they found far too modern.

Zala, his home town, remained during his entire life an object of nostalgic longing. He visited it several times, and once, in 1880, he even planned to stay there permanently. However, the hostile reception he received from official cultural circles in Hungary persuaded him to roam the world again and from an independent position abroad serve the culture of other nations as well as that of his beloved Hungary. After a long and creative journey in the Caucasus, he returned to the Russian court. Finally, after all the hostility and court intrigues he encountered, his all-encompassing love of life soured into a more or less bitter resignation. In the last phase of his life, he no longer even visited Zala, in spite of the fact that his much-beloved family – wife, children and brother – lived there. In 1906, his eventful life ended. Among his friends, he could count Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas *fils*, the Prince of Wales (later to become King Edward VII), Théophile Gautier, Maxim Gorky, the leaders of the Georgian national revival, and others. Among his adopted countries were Georgia, France and Russia.

Zichy's firm resolve, his sense of mission to realize his ideas both in his life and his art are reflected in his own words.

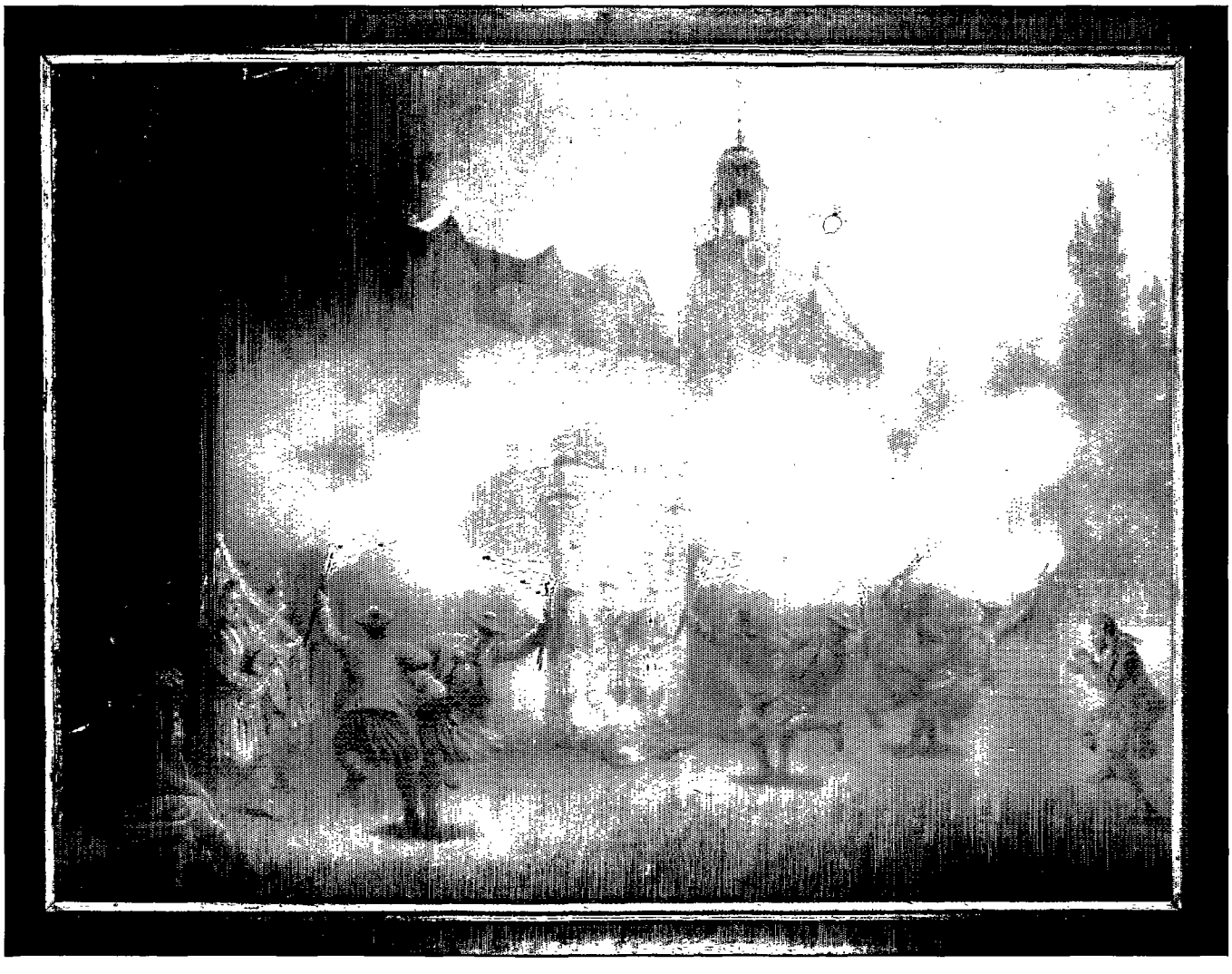
> In my long life there was never a time when I denied my views or convictions, or refrained from saying what was worth saying.
>
> The arts are not a luxury; they are just as much an instrument of education as the printed book, and it is their duty, just as it is that of a book, to serve with all their persuasive power the progressive ideals of their time.
>
> The Russian czars allowed me to become accustomed to relative independence. And so now I have no desire to bow my stiff neck to the yoke of little satraps.
>
> Let my painting sweep over the world, like a shriek of pain and terror. [Referring to *The Triumph of the Demon of Destruction*]'

Zichy was against every kind of violence: wars, the ravages of revolutions, acts of terrorism, racial, religious, and ethnic persecutions, even capital punishment. He proved to be a prophet of human rights, respect for personal and national identities, and human dignity.

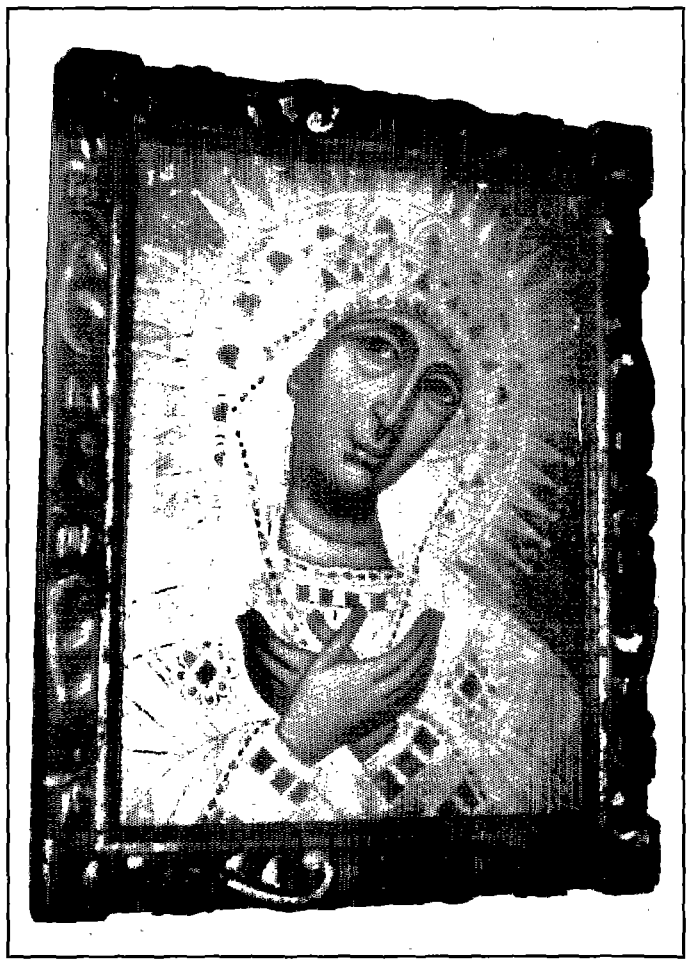
The perception of this led me, his great-grandson, returning home from a long exile after Hungary's liberation in 1990, to

re-evaluate Zichy's significance and present him as a truly European precursor of a leading idea of our age – human rights. The National Gallery of Art in Budapest agreed to the permanent loan of *The Triumph of the Demon of Destruction* and *The Jewish Martyrs* to the museum at Zala. These two acquisitions – together with his *Auto-da-fé* (burning at the stake during the Inquisition), already in the museum – emphasize the true human-rights significance of Mihály Zichy.

Throughout his entire life, Zichy showed a special respect for the rights of women and their position in society. With his art he rid the idea of love – both physical and spiritual – of age-old prejudices. His portraits and nude studies of women are a glorification of womanhood. One of his exquisite etchings of a beautiful nude is exhibited at Zala. Zichy's drawings depicting the act of love itself are a testimony to sweeping sensual desires, and of the master's own unabashed confession of the eternally human. His



Scottish Torch Dance, *by Mihály Zichy.*



The black Madonna, a Georgian icon.

viewpoint on love is well expressed by these words: 'I do not consider shameful that which causes the greatest joy on earth and which bestows life . . . The scandal lies not in the subject, but in the way it is presented. The virginal innocence of a Madonna and the physical union of a pair of lovers are equally difficult to render in art.'

But woman as mother is also a frequent theme in Zichy's work. He often represents a mother shielding her child and in *The Triumph* the features of the mother are those of his own beloved mother.

The making of a museum

The foundations of the Zichy Museum at Zala were laid by Mihály Zichy himself. Before returning home for a visit in 1880, he asked his brother to transform the greenhouse at the manor into a studio. He sent his art collection and the furnishings of his Paris apartment. While at Zala, he painted *The Modern Siren, or Nana*, inspired by Émile Zola's novel. It is far from being an illustration; in his painting Zichy identifies himself completely with Zola's social criticism. Its perfect composition and rich colours surpass those of most of his earlier works.

After his death, many of his personal belongings were transported from St Petersburg to Hungary. A third component of the museum, mainly reproductions and lithographs, were collected by my parents, Lieutenant-Colonel István Csicsery-Rónay and his wife, Maria Alexandra Zichy, who was the painter's grand-daughter and heiress. The couple established the Mihály Zichy private museum in 1927. In 1929, Ferenc Sidló's bas-relief of Zichy, a gift from the County of Somogy, was unveiled on the outside wall.

In 1944, when the region became a battleground for the retreating Germans and the advancing Soviet army, many pieces were carried off or destroyed by refugees who had been lodging in the house. I was in Budapest at that time. Having survived the fifty-one-day siege of the capital, I hurried to Zala at the first opportunity. 'Hurrying' at that time meant covering what was ordinarily a 150 km trip in five days! It meant travelling on top of railway cars, then hiding in Russian ordnance trains, or walking some 20 km in order to avoid being rounded up and carted off to Siberia by the Russian military police. After arriv-

ing at the seat of Somogy County, I found a group of Soviet army officers at the railway station in a state of total confusion. The news of Roosevelt's death had dropped like a bombshell: they were all convinced that war between the Soviet Union and the United States was imminent.

The following day I arrived at Zala where I learned that the Soviet commander in the neighbouring town, Tab, had removed most of the contents of the museum and had had them carted away to his own quarters. I hurried there and showed him the written order I had from Marshal Voroshilov, Head of the Allied Control Commission in Hungary, urging all Soviet authorities to give me assistance in every respect. In a few days, almost everything was returned to Zala.

A few years later, however, in 1947, I was arrested by the Communists who had taken over in Hungary with Soviet help, and was released after spending eight months in jail. I felt I had no choice but to emigrate. From then on, only my mother guarded the museum's collection.

In 1949, after I was sentenced to prison *in absentia*, the museum was pillaged by the bandits of the 'political police' and party secretaries – even the village schoolchildren used Zichy's letters to wrap their lunch. My mother mobilized the National Centre for Museums and on its behalf the painter Lásló Bényi embarked on rescuing the ransacked museum, reclaiming most of the stolen goods and reopening the exhibition (he was awarded a high state honour in 1991 for his daring and effective work).

Between 1977 and 1979 the building was renovated by the Somogy Assembly and the *objets d'art* restored by the Rippl-Rónay Museum at Kaposvár. By 1979, the Mihály Zichy Memorial Museum was again open to the public. My mother, who was director of the museum until her death in 1986, then concentrated on ensuring the museum's future and succeeded in having its contents declared a private collection, owned by the family but managed by the state, that is to say, under the auspices of the Rippl-Rónay Museum. The newly rejuvenated museum was inaugurated in 1992 by the President of Hungary, Arpad Göncz in the presence of French and Russian delegations, among others. In the words of President Göncz: 'Zichy's *œuvre* – as well as his life – spans an immense arc . . . It embraces the whole art of his age: it is entirely unique, comparable to none. What a joy to see such a comprehensive exhibition in the heart of Somogy County . . . It will attract all those who want to see the ocean in a drop; they can see the whole world in Zala.'

Instead of listing the inventory of the eight rooms, I shall enumerate only the highlights (in addition to those already mentioned). Among the paintings, the exquisite *Scottish Torch Dance* stands out. In the family room, a water-colour of astonishing beauty represents the artist's mother-in-law. While few of his drawings are on display, one room contains reproductions of his famous book illustrations, for *Faust, The Tragedy of Man*, and the *Ballads of János Arany*. A whole room is filled with documents of the life of Zichy and his contemporaries, and the history of the museum.

As Zichy was himself a collector, the museum houses ancient weapons, ebony furniture from India, the costume of a Siberian shaman, and other exotic objects, including a collection of giant pipes. A striking

The Triumph of the Demon of Destruction, *by Mihály Zichy, exhibited in the Great Hall.*

feature is the Georgian Room. Its inlaid chairs and boxes are watched over by a rare icon – a Georgian black Madonna. The photos of all thirty-four of Zichy's illustrations for Rustaveli's epic poem, *The Knight of the Tiger Skin*, a gift from Georgia, are also on display, while the hand-painted ceiling is taken from a Georgian house. However, the creation that dominates the entire exhibition is the giant *Triumph of the Demon of Destruction* that hangs prominently in the main hall.

The Mihály Zichy Foundation was recently established at Zala to develop the museum and to keep alive the artist's legacy, disseminating it to the world at large. ■

Recalling a legend: the Frida Kahlo Museum

Dolores Olmedo Patiño

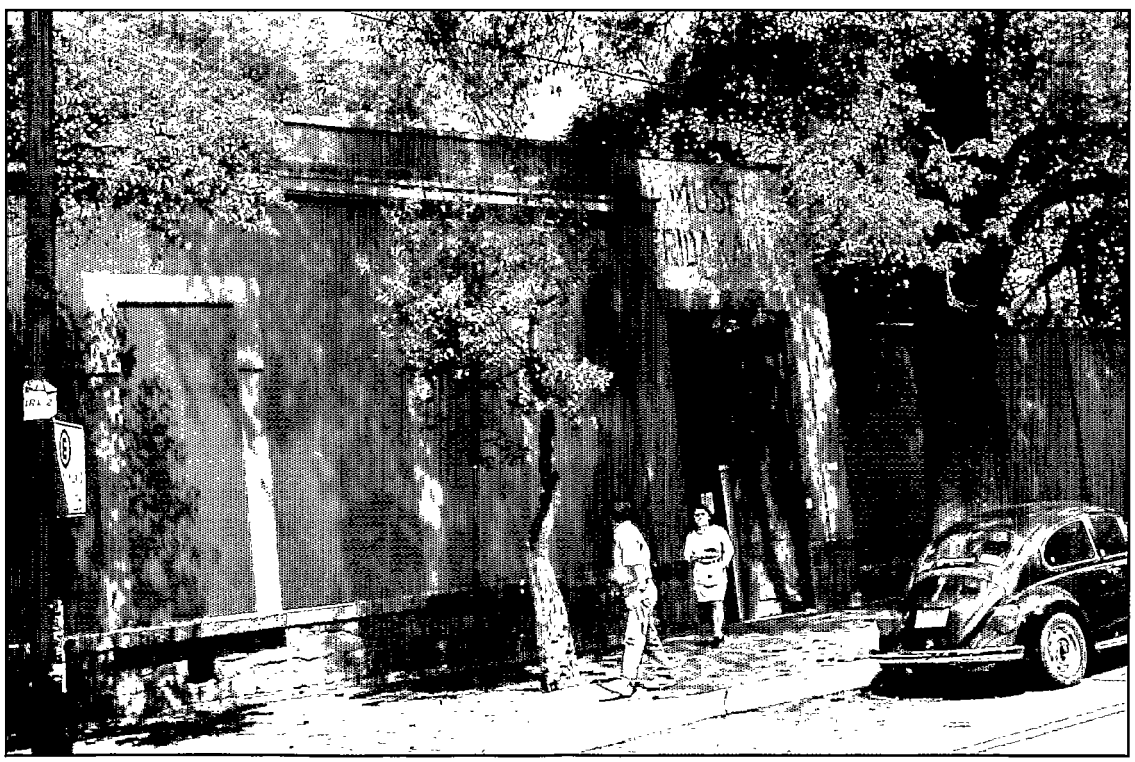
Rediscovered in the 1970s as one of the major forces in twentieth-century art, Frida Kahlo explored the female psyche with immense bravery and imagination, undaunted by excruciating physical handicaps. Her birthplace in Mexico has been transformed into a museum dedicated as much to her memory as to her work. The evocation of a life devoted to art and political struggle is described by the director of the museum.

In August 1955 the painter Diego Rivera created an irrevocable trust with the Bank of Mexico for the transfer to the people of Mexico of all his hereditary estate. He left his movable and immovable property, works of art and various objects to the trust for the creation of two museums: the Diego Rivera Museum (Anahuacalli) and the Frida Kahlo Museum. His bequest included his wife Frida Kahlo's house at Coyoacán, now the museum that bears her name. It was inaugurated on 12 July 1958, and covers an area of 2,000 m² which houses a valuable collection of Mexican folk art consisting of ex-votos, anonymous paintings and drawings, as well as the original manuscript of Frida Kahlo's diary, with her own illustrations. It also contains plans and sketches by Diego Rivera in preparation for his mural paintings, a number of easel paintings and the copyright in all of the couple's artistic and literary works.

Long before she died, Frida and Diego often talked of converting her house to a museum. They altered it several times during their married life there and enlarged it in 1946. Rivera drew the plans for the alterations and supervised the work, creating an enclosed area entirely in keeping with the couple's everyday requirements and taste. When visiting the Frida Kahlo Museum, a lasting tribute to the memory of a great artist, one inevitably thinks of her as the unique painter who made possible this new concept of an exhibition area, the first of its kind in the history of Mexican art.

By his very generous donation, Diego Rivera perpetuated the memory of the woman who became his third wife, an exceptional person with whom he shared twenty-five years of his life, an extraordinary and marvellous artist whom he both admired and loved.

Photo by courtesy of the author



Exterior of the Frida Kahlo Museum.

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Photo by courtesy of the author

'Prominently displayed in the studio, built in 1946, are the paintbrushes, tubes of paint, palette and easel . . . '.

As if this matchless bequest of all his important creative work were not enough, and in addition to Frida's collections and her house, Diego Rivera left his lifetime collection of items from the ancient indigenous cultures of Mexico, together with the Diego Rivera Museum (Anahuacalli) at San Pablo Tepetlapa, where, to quote Frida herself, 'thanks to his creative powers and financial acumen, that is to say his marvellous talent and what he earned from his paintings, he bequeathed to his country, Mexico, the most prodigious fount of beauty that has ever existed'.[1] Following his wishes, both museums have kept their names.

The subject of much controversy as an artist, Frida was born, lived, worked and died in the same house. On their marriage, Diego and she spent much of their time there. To him she was both friend and counsellor, child and wife, the light, consolation and joy of much of the life of the inspired artist who came from Guanajuato. The memory of Frida is inseparable from that of Diego. The abiding traces of their controversial marriage are to be seen everywhere in the house, in each nook and cranny, the garden, the pictures and small details.

Frida Kahlo was born in the Federal District of Coyoacán on 6 July 1907 of a Mexican mother and a German father of Austro-Hungarian origin. She attended secondary teaching-training college and graduated from the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria with a view to becoming a doctor, but a serious and totally unforeseeable accident interrupted her studies and changed the course of her life. On 17 September 1925 the truck in which she was riding was crushed against a wall by an oncoming tramcar. She suffered multiple injuries including a broken spine, collarbone, ribs and pelvis, eleven fractures of a leg already withered by a childhood bout of polio, a crushed right foot, and a permanently dislocated left shoulder.

Self-taught and universally acclaimed

With heroic determination, Frida faced and overcame the physical state to which the accident had reduced her. She lived a life of terrible pain. Immobilized in bed by a double fracture of the spine, she began to paint with water-colours lavishly provided by her father, the well-known photographer Guillermo Kahlo. Completely self-taught, she mastered her craft without any kind of formal education and without being influenced by any other artists. By sheer innate ability she became a teacher at the Esmeralda School of Painting, Engraving and Sculpture. She trained pupils who today figure among the best and most important creators, members of the younger generation of Mexican artists, known as *los fridos*. Frida always impressed on them the awareness that they should develop and preserve their individuality, both in their creative work and in their respect for and defence of their social and political ideals. Most of her pupils were members of the Mexican Communist Party. Starting at the age of 13, she herself was a loyal, committed and impassioned activist.

From the very beginning she showed enormous talent, constantly developing it until by the end she had produced a body of

work without precedent. Frida Kahlo is the only woman ever to have expressed in plastic art not only her feelings but her way of being a woman. Her painting *Mi Nacimiento* (My Birth) is the only known picture of which one can say that it represents with complete realism the natural act of the title. She was always unerring in her expression of sensations, emotions, ideas or concerns or even internal physical states.

Frida Kahlo held three one-woman exhibitions, in Mexico City, New York and Paris, where the Louvre Museum bought one of her most sought-after self-portraits. In Mexico she was awarded the National Prize for Painting. Her works are to be found in numerous private collections in Mexico, Europe and the United States. She has become a legend, perhaps because her work was so powerful that in the space of less than ten years she took her place in the art market as the most highly prized woman painter of the twentieth century. Even more, her personality was such that she became the standard-bearer of the international women's movement.

Frida Kahlo died on 13 July 1954, at a time when the National Institute of Fine Arts was preparing a tribute to her in the form of a major retrospective which would bring together as many as possible of her works from different private collections or museums not only in Mexico but also throughout the American continent.

From the very first moment of entering the Frida Kahlo Museum, one feels immersed in a Mexican folk ambience which pervades the whole building. One's eye is led to the garden, where lofty old trees cast a welcome shade, sheltering a pyramid built by Diego Rivera to house part of his collection of pre-Hispanic objects somewhat reminiscent of paintings by Henri Rousseau.

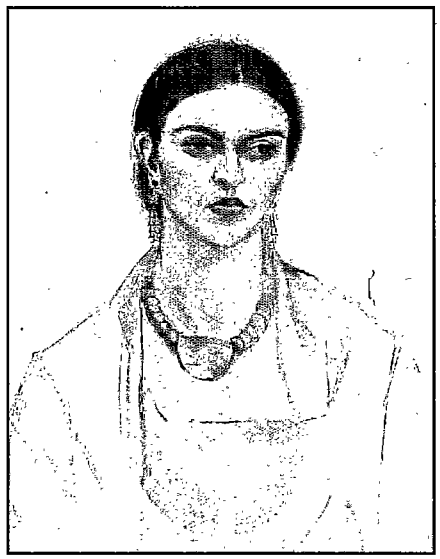

Photo by courtesy of the author

Self portrait of Frida Kahlo, painted in 1932.

The visit includes what was Frida's studio and later Rivera's. At present the first room exhibits paintings by Frida in the museum's collection. In a commanding position is an altar fireplace designed by Rivera, decorated with pre-Hispanic objects from western Mexican cultures, mainly the states of Nayarit, Jalisco and Colima. Frida Kahlo's work unmistakably shows the influence of folk painting, in particular folk ex-votos and altar pieces. In the centre of the room her diary is strikingly displayed: this is a poetic and pictorial work, which was recently published with great success.

In the second room, where Frida was born, two showcases contain various archaeological exhibits, a priceless gift from Diego Rivera. Two other showcases display typical costumes from various parts of the country and gold jewellery belonging to Frida. Alongside are four reproductions from pages of her diary and one of her double self-portraits, *Las dos Fridas*, and a small display of an exchange of letters and greetings between Diego and Frida; these manuscripts reveal the love and tenderness the two artists felt for each other. The third room houses a small but important

Photo by courtesy of the author

Frida Kahlo's beloved kitchen, decorated with jugs, casseroles and other cooking vessels.

collection of cubist works and a number of portraits by Diego as well as the landscape *La Quebrada* (The Ravine) (1956), dedicated to Frida two years after her death. In the fourth room are works by Mexican and foreign painters, including José María Velasco, José Clemente Orozco, Joaquín Clausell, Paul Klee and Ives Tanguy. The showcases in the fifth room exhibit female figurines of the lower pre-classical period from Tlatilco, in the state of Mexico, known as 'pretty ladies', and objects representative of the western cultures.

The kitchen retains the highly Mexican atmosphere which Frida adored. It is decorated with jugs, casseroles and other cooking vessels bearing the names of each of the loving couple. The dining room remains as it was, decorated with typical items of furniture and original creations by unknown craftsmen, as is the case in most Mexican households. Outstanding exhibits are still lifes and a number of *Judas* which are the work of Doña Carmen Caballero, who produced marvellous objects in cardboard and was much admired by Diego Rivera.

Beyond the dining room lies Diego Rivera's dressing room, plainly decorated and containing its original furniture. Above the bedstead is a portrait of Frida by the artist Nicolas Murray. At this point we leave the old part of the house owned by Frida's parents.

The part built by Rivera, which includes the stairwell, displays a number of ex-votos, a marvellous collection built up by Frida which is still today one of the largest and most important collections known. As noted above, there are also works by anonymous eighteenth- and nineteenth-century painters.

Prominently displayed in the studio, built in 1946, are the paintbrushes, tubes of paint, palette and easel – the latter specially made for Frida, the gift of Nelson Rockefeller – and the wheelchair she used in the last two years of her life. Beyond lie two small rooms, in one of which is the bed to which she was confined for many years. This room leads out into the garden, where many pre-Hispanic objects are on display.

The public facilities of the Frida Kahlo Museum include a cafeteria and a bookshop, where people meet to discuss and comment on the priceless treasures they have just seen.

Note

1. *Catálogo del Museo Frida Kahlo*, Mexico City, 1968.

A basketful of flowers: the Marianne North Gallery at Kew Gardens

Maïté Roux

A museum where every detail was painstakingly conceived and planned by the artist herself, where the paintings and their surroundings form an inseparable whole, and where the world of modern museology is strikingly absent – such is the Marianne North Gallery, located in England's world-famous Royal Botanic Gardens. As much a museum piece as a museum, the gallery is that rarest of creations: the realization of the artist's own vision of how her œuvre *should be presented and preserved for posterity. The author is a freelance journalist based near Paris.*

At Shrewsbury Station on 11 August 1879, a woman had just missed her train. So she decided to write a letter to Sir Joseph Hooker, then director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew in Richmond. That was how she whiled away the time as she waited. What did a train matter, there would always be others, whereas her letter brooked no further delay. An idea that had been going round in her head for some time needed to be given substance. Words had to be found to express her most cherished desire – to find a home for her paintings. To her mind, Kew Gardens were the ideal setting for her works, a lifetime of memories and work brought back from her travels. This fascinating, intrepid Victorian botanic artist was Marianne North (1830–90), a woman way ahead of her times, a spirited nonconformist who made her mark on contemporary society. In her letter to Sir Joseph Hooker, Miss North not only proposed to have a gallery built in Kew Gardens at her own expense, but even had her own suggestions about catering for visitors' convenience and comfort, solicitously inquiring whether they could be provided with 'tea or coffee and biscuits [nothing else] . . . at a fair price'![1]

The artist was to cover all the costs of the gallery, amounting to £2,000 at the time. Sir Joseph Hooker gladly gave the artist's proposal his blessing but . . . without tea or biscuits! (At that time there were no refreshments allowed in Kew Gardens and she had to give up the idea, though somewhat regretfully.) Work on the gallery could begin. James Fergusson (1808–86), a distinguished architectural historian and also a friend of Marianne North, designed the building. She chose the site. Her idea

Flowers and Fruit of Mangosteen and Singapore Monkey.

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was that it should be a rather secret place tucked away somewhere far from the main entrance, where only the attentive visitor would find it. Most of all, she wanted it to be a haven, a quiet retreat, for people strolling in the gardens after their visit to the glasshouses. Only true nature-lovers, connoisseurs, would know where to find that hideaway nestling in the greenery. Still today, this 'little jewel' with its Greek-temple-like structure and oriental-looking verandas is a tranquil, secluded haven in among the other curiosities of Kew.

Situated in Richmond in the county of Surrey, along the Thames, in the western suburbs of London, these extraordinary gardens have been widely acclaimed throughout the world. They were formerly the royal residence of George III (1760–1820) and his mother, Princess Augusta, who became the founder of the Royal Botanic Gardens to which she donated part of the estate in 1759. Most of the buildings in Kew Gardens at that time, including the Pagoda and the Orangery, were designed by Sir William Chambers.

On the death of Princess Augusta, her son enlarged the estate, adding the neighbouring property he had inherited from his grandfather George II (Richmond Gardens) to the grounds of Kew House. The Botanic Gardens' reputation was made under Sir Joseph Banks; his successor Sir William Hooker was appointed as Kew's first official director in 1841. The Museums of Economic Botany (1847, 1857), the Library and the Herbarium (1852) were added on his own initiative. The Jodrell laboratory was not inaugurated until 1876, under the direction of his son, Sir Joseph Hooker. The royal family contributed to the expansion of the Botanic Gardens, especially in the nineteenth century, by forgoing a large portion of its property. Laura Ponsonby, formerly education officer at Kew, a distinguished writer and a specialist on the life of Marianne North, tells us more about this:

> Kew Gardens is the best known botanic gardens not only in England, but in the world . . . It was started by the royal family in the eighteenth century; in 1840 it was transferred to the State and today it has a marvellous collection of plants not only outside but in the glasshouses.

Today there are nearly 40,000 different plant species in the gardens, collected here for scientific or educational purposes. Kew is also synonymous with plant and seed conservation, the preservation of flora in their natural habitat and also, most importantly, research, with a herbarium of 6 million dried-plant specimens. Kew is also involved in educational activities to ensure that future generations learn to respect plant life and protect the world's natural environment.

'An open doorway to the world'

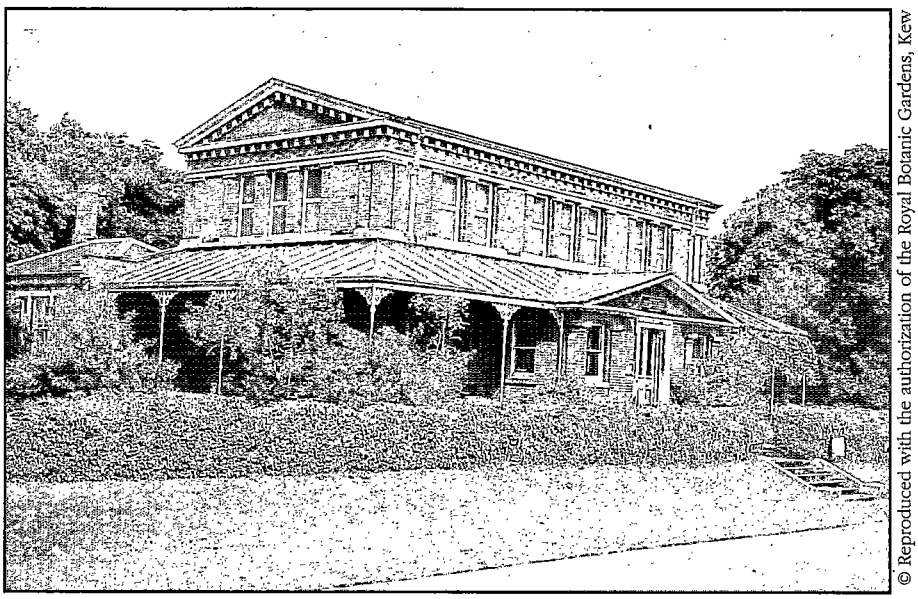
But all that must have been very remote from Marianne North's immediate concern in that month of August 1879, which was her gallery! In fact, her real reason for wanting to set up her own 'museum' went back to the summer of 1877, a particularly important summer for her, when she had had the great honour of receiving a private visit from the Emperor and Empress of Brazil. Their Highnesses had been to see the artist's paintings which were on display in her flat in Victoria Street at the time. Then, two years later, in 1879, came the success of her Conduit Street exhibition, where the drawings and sketches she had done in India were shown in public for two months. These two major events prompted her to conceive the idea of a lasting 'pan-

theon' for her paintings. Her dream became a reality. Sir Joseph Hooker approved of her idea and gave her his support in carrying out the project. It took her a year to plan the gallery between her return from Australia and her departure for South Africa – Africa being the only continent as yet unrepresented in her works.

Her 'little museum' consisted of only one room at the time. As a backdrop to the paintings, the lower parts of the walls were panelled in exotic wood brought back from her many voyages as a topographical reminder of the places visited – no fewer than 246 different species of wood, like so many fleeting punctuation marks in the story of a full, eventful life. Everything bore her signature and her stamp, from the layout of the gallery to the decoration of garlands and floral friezes. Her presence could be felt, like an invitation to a voyage, an open doorway to the world and its natural riches.

The opening of the gallery on 7 June 1882 aroused the interest not only of artists and literary people but also of scientists and renowned botanists. It had mostly good reviews. *The Times* was full of praise, saying that the gallery 'combines in an almost unprecedented degree the qualities of the enthusiastic traveller and accomplished artist'. The *Gardener's Chronicle* described her paintings as 'the skilful dashing work of a true artist, which completely succeeds in showing nature as she is', but had some reservations about 'the heavy classical ornament under the cornice and . . . the shiny black frames . . . too strong in colour'.

When the gallery opened, it housed 627 paintings in all. In 1883, when Marianne North returned from South Africa, another room was added behind the original one. In 1885, 848 works were listed, among them sixteen larger works which were removed some years later. According to Laura Ponsonby: 'They are not very good, they are very dark and perhaps painting on canvas did not really work with her. Today the total number of oil paintings in the gallery is an impressive 832, done over a period of thirteen years of travels around the world. In 1892, some of the paintings which had aged badly had to be revarnished and some of the decoration renovated. On the occasion of the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the opening of the Marianne North Gallery, it was given a face-lift (decoration refurbished, paintings restored, etc. . . .).



The Marianne North Gallery, a Greek-temple-like structure with its oriental-looking verandas – 'a tranquil, secluded haven in among the other curiosities of Kew'.

A place where time stands still

To quote the writer and painter Wilfred Blunt (1901–88): 'the Marianne North Gallery is not so much a museum as a museum piece: something as whimsical, as extraordinary, as "period" and as precious as the Albert Memorial or the Watts Mortuary Chapel at Compton, and it must never, *never* be touched'.[2]

A Medley of Flowers from Table Mountain, Cape of Good Hope.

The 'museum' has in fact never undergone any significant alterations since it was founded. As a result, one must not expect to find a modernized museum with all the appropriate audiovisual accoutrements. There are no films retracing the life of the painter, no video cassettes, no sound or lighting effects – nothing of that kind. Everything here is simple and charming or, quite simply, charming, a far cry from the criteria that have to be met in museums today. Here, time has stood still in tribute to a bygone age.

The gallery is really worth a detour. At first glance, the visitor feels overwhelmed; it all seems too cluttered, an ornate jigsaw puzzle with little breathing space. And yet the end result is there, commanding attention. An awesome, monumental floral cathedral, a hymn to the universe. One can imagine the painstaking trial and error, the doubts and dilemmas facing the artist in selecting and 'piecing' the picture together, in what Wilfrid Blunt has described as 'a gigantic botanic postage-stamp album'.

This swirling kaleidoscope draws one into a vividly coloured maelstrom of exotic landscapes, plants, flowers, birds and insects. The flora of all the countries visited by Marianne North are widely represented. Plant life is at its most exuberant here, spreading, reaching out in every direction, a feast for the eye, in a riot of colours that take one by storm, some almost too harsh, too bright, and others, on the contrary, perfectly lifelike and true to nature. And yet at times the naïve style reveals a meticulous, almost scientific attention to detail.

As Laura Ponsonby has commented:

> It is very difficult to analyse that actual style of painting: She is not a strictly botanic artist. She does not really fall into a category because she is not a flower artist either.... All the things that she painted she had identified botanically. . . . She gets the feeling of the painting well, so that the botanists in the Herbarium, one of the scientific sections of Kew where they identify plants, say that they can identify the things that she painted because she's got the character of the plant.

Altogether, she painted 1,000 species of plants. With her paintbrush she meticulously explored, scrutinized and delved into the mysteries of plant life. She painted a vast cross-section of plants (and flowers) in every country she visited. She roamed the world in pursuit of her vocation – 'painting plants in their homes'.

A passion for nature

This woman who led so unusual a life set out on her travels in 1871, at the age of 40. She visited no fewer than sixteen different countries between 1871 and 1885. Her extensive travels took her to the United States, followed by Canada, Jamaica and Brazil, then on to Japan, Singapore and Tenerife. Her next stops were Sarawak, Java, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and India, and then Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the Seychelles. Finally she went to Chile, her last voyage. Her work helped research by unveiling the mysteries of many plants previously all but unknown to botanists and horticulturalists. Four plants quite unknown to science at the time were named as a result of her work. One of them, named after her, *Crinum northianum*, from Borneo, was described on the basis of her drawings.

Her voyage to Jamaica, where she spent five months, marked a turning-point in her

Old Boat-house and Riverside Vegetation, Sarawak.

life, for it was here that she began her collection of tropical paintings of plants, which were her great passion. 'In the West Indies at last! Christmas Eve!' she wrote. A welcome and much-awaited halt which enabled her to perfect her art. She painted tirelessly, all day long, and never ceased to marvel at those idyllic landscapes. With characteristic perseverance, energy and endurance she would always paint the plants she discovered in their natural setting, in the open air, braving the elements and all manner of adversity and discomfort. Nothing deterred her from her sense of wonderment at what she saw or from her meticulous work of observation. Each homecoming brought with it a fresh set of paintings for her gallery. After her voyage to Jamaica, she returned to England for two months before setting off again for Brazil, where she was to spend nearly a year, producing about 100 paintings during that time, some of which were added to her collection.

In 1875, she left for Japan and then Singapore, and afterwards to Tenerife and California. She visited Borneo and Java on the way back, and then Ceylon (1876). Six months later she was off to India, where she spent fifteen months and produced over 200 pictures. Many of them found their way into her gallery at Kew, some under the floral garland 'sacred plants'. In June 1883, she returned from Africa, but by October was in the Seychelles. The following year in November she left for Chile and on her return home in 1885, spent some time adding her new paintings to the extension to the gallery. She had come full circle. All the countries she had visited now had their place in her souvenir album, the Marianne North Gallery.

Her work was of undeniable botanic and scientific value for the time. But that was not really what she was concerned about. What mattered most to her was to open her gallery and satisfy the public's thirst for knowledge and curiosity about things new and exotic, and that was what would make her paintings popular. The gallery was a place unique in the world, the work of a single woman, a 'basketful of flowers', so vividly coloured as to arouse the envy of Mother Nature herself. ■

Notes

1. Laura Ponsonby, *Marianne North at Kew Gardens*, Webb & Bower, in association with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, 1990.

2. Ibid.

The inspiration of the studio

Imke K. Valentien

The artist's home, transformed into a museum, becomes an exhibit in its own right, raising complex questions of authenticity, neutrality and public versus private space, according to Imke K. Valentien. The author has worked at museums in Stuttgart, Düsseldorf and Paris and is currently employed as a freelance art historian and gallery assistant in Düsseldorf. He has contributed a chapter entitled The Museum as Image of the Artist *to a forthcoming work to be published in Italy.*

'So this is where the artist used to live and work.' For the visitor to a museum of an artist's living and working space, this idea dictates the visiting experience and, in fact, has prompted the visitor to come to the museum. Many museums which are the result of a conversion of an artist's dwelling, however, have undergone a variety of alterations to the site, resulting in a new space and subsequently in a new meaning of this space. Though such renovations are usually carried out with the best intentions and the greatest care, the curators responsible inevitably inflict an interpretation on the site, thus dictating the ways in which the visitor will perceive the space. Since the whole concept of converted studios and houses confirms the assumption that some of the original spirit is contained within the original walls and furnishings, and is therefore an indication of the image of the artist, the predetermined reading of the space is a subtle manipulation of the visitor's perception by the interpreters of the site. The 'inspiration of the studio', that is, what the visitor pursues, is based on the concept that the authentic environment can assist in finding an additional key to understanding both the artist and the work.

The question implicit in the title of this article is thus: if the visitor is looking for enlightenment by visiting the artist's home and studio, in what ways can this be brought about without either mystifying or de-mystifying the validity of the site in relation to the artist. In other words, what are the underlying implications of the issues of display, objects, space and identification relating to such converted museums, how do they affect the vision of the artist's work, and how can the curatorial input assist most effectively in the perception and understanding of the museum without imposing a single and unique explanation. It must be noted, however, that due to the personalized nature of such museums (which is no doubt their greatest attraction), a balanced and all-encompassing debate is not possible. Only some of the most frequently observed and contentious points will be raised, thus demonstrating a type of analysis that may or may not be applicable. The aim of this article is not to criticize existing practices, but to raise awareness of some of the underlying implications found in many artist's museums.

The artist's home and studio turned museum is a phenomenon as frequently found as similar monuments to composers and writers. However, unlike music or the written word (and provided it is tangible and not intended for multiple reproduction), the singularity of a work of art is specific to the visual arts, and thus leads us to address the issue of their immortality. This is closely bound up with current display practices in general art museums, where works are usually presented in an environment stripped of any indications of time and history; decay and pollution, the most common signs of ageing, are minimized; the objects are highly safeguarded and protected from all external influences. As a result, art presented in these seemingly neutralized spaces appears untouched by the signs of time, it is displayed with an air of eternity. The Western concept of artistic immortality began several centuries ago, intensifying with the advent of Newtonian time. With growing interest in authorship in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the immortality of the object has shifted increasingly to include that of its creator, and it is in this association of one with the other that concern with the life and career of the artist is rooted.

The artist's desire to attain immortality by opening his/her environment to the public coincides with the public's curiosity regarding these spaces, and many artist's museums respond accordingly in their approach. Through interiors that are, or ▸

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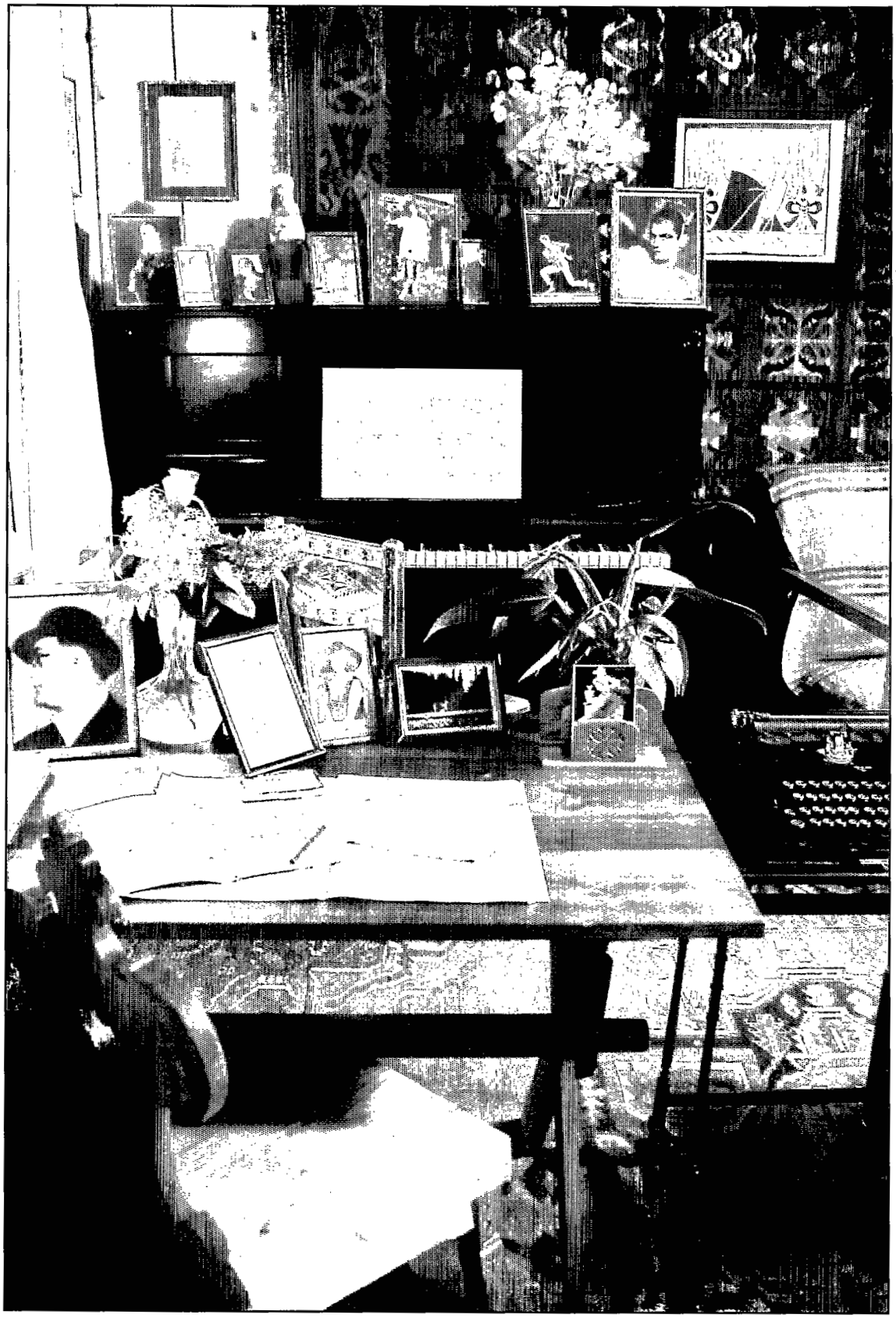
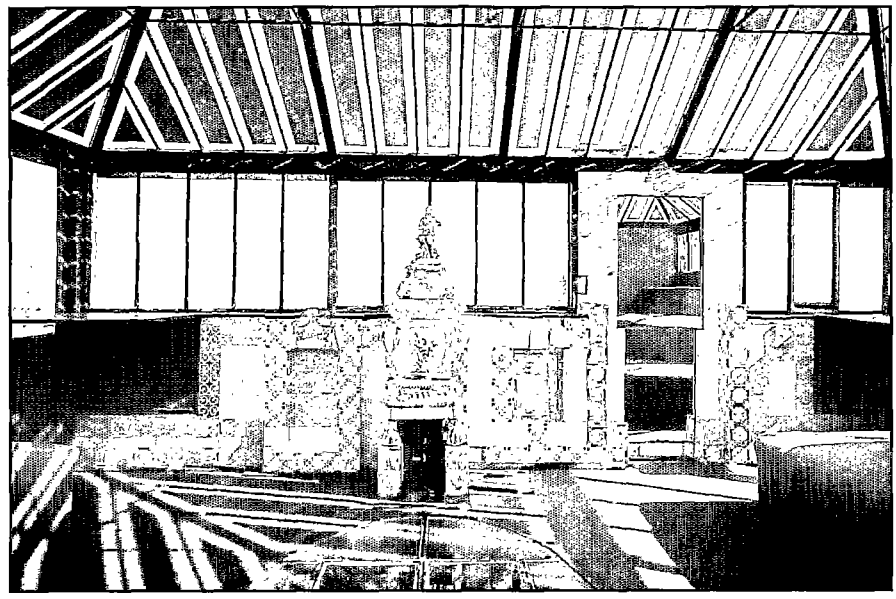


© S. Sarramon, Paris

Interior of the Villa Atma in Cracow, home of the composer Karol Szymanowski.

are almost, unchanged, the presence of the artist is conjured up. The established notion of the artist as genius has ascribed a mysticism to the site of creativity, and an aura of enigma impregnates the air with the spirit of this genius. This is a notion propagated and maintained by artist's museums, through their very existence and through their displays. Objects such as tools and plaster models, formerly used to execute the artist's works, are exhibited to stand in for the artist. The smock, that most intimate item, is often found hanging abandoned in a corner or



Victor Hugo's studio, Hauteville House, Guernsey.

casually flung over the empty easel; it reeks of symbolic presence, of timelessness, of eternity.

Authenticity or neutrality?

This being said, the most important factor is the authenticity of the site, which has become – though invisible – an exhibit in its own right. This is of course the greatest difference to general art museums or even collections of a single artist in a purpose-made building, where the neutrality of the space leaves a sense of eternal existence, of both the works and the mark of the artist.[1] To view the art of one person in the very space where it was created, surrounded by the tools with which it was made and the models that helped to form it, will trigger a mental process of imagining the artist working on the very site with the very tools. This can either lead to some understanding of the artist and/or the works of art, their process of production and sometimes even the source of inspiration, or it can create an air of mysticism around the exceptional qualities of the individual, coupled with an emotional justification for this superior status, thus resulting in a worship-like approach to the person and the work. Since such an approach is not in keeping with the contemporary discourse of artistic individuality and cannot be the sole intention of the museum, artist's museums which present preserved areas of an artist's life should at least offer some sort of secondary explanation, for example, their policy on display and collecting, and perhaps some sort of historic and stylistic context of the person, even if only in a modest leaflet.

As with personality museums of poets, writers, etc., the organizing principle of the artist's museum is dictated by the person rather than the occupation, a point which confirms the belief in the aura of the space and its content rather than in the information presented. Thus the museum as a content-filled site is laden with meaning, even if it holds no original works of art. The frozen state of the dwelling housing the artist's belongings has a two-tiered complexity attached to it, one regarding the site, the other the objects.

Firstly, the transformation of the site from a private to a public arena in a way negates the entire concept of personal space. To present the building as if it were exactly as it was during the artist's lifetime while at the same time to make it publicly accessible and to adhere to security, conservation and fire regulations, is impossible. Many museums have therefore chosen to provide a mix of 'untouched' spaces and modernized display areas. This alternative implies an awareness of the institutionalization of the site as a whole while also giving visitors the room, physically and mentally, to demystify the place, if they wish to do so.

Secondly, the objects displayed take on a mediating function. Together with the space, they act as a patchwork of past history, narrating the inhabitant's life. Such narratives, however, often rely exclusively on a particular (non-verbal) language, based on presumptions of mutual cultural comprehension and on a shared basis of social values. Subsequently, these objects cease

Figure for Landscape, *1960, bronze. Barbara Hepworth Museum and Sculpture Garden, St Ives.*

to be objects in their own right, but become representatives of taste, culture, understanding and finally of the artist's presence. The mediating role they acquire through this shift of meaning borders on 'fetishization', since the new meaning is not intrinsic to the objects' original sense, but is rather the signifier of a message outside its specific realm. Finally, because the existence of the objects outlasts that of the artist, they become, beyond their role as narrator, a mediator between the past and the present, a link between life and death.

The parallels of art and nature

Many artists, in both rural and urban environments, have sought inspiration from their surroundings. Thus for quite a few personality museums, the land- or cityscape is part of the perception process of the visit and therefore of the display. The Atélier Cézanne at Aix-en-Provence, France, is situated at the foot of the Mont Sainte-Victoire, the mountain which appears in numerous paintings by Paul Cézanne. The urban environment was crucial for the painter August Macke, whose house (now museum) in Bonn, Germany, offers many views that served as models for his paintings. Other examples are the Gabriele-Münter-Haus at Murnau, Bavaria (Germany), where she and Wassilij Kandinsky, together with artist friends, frequently painted the surrounding landscape; or the Barbara Hepworth Museum in St Ives, in south-west England, located in a landscape that greatly inspired the sculptor.

When the landscape surrounding the site is an influence or inspiration to the artist, when the natural environment is mirrored in the solid manifestations of artistic creativity, the parallels of art and nature can raise the artist quickly to spheres of divinity.[2] This is partly because our appreciation of art is based on the appreciation of nature,[3] and partly because the celebration of the artist as creator allows such parallels to be drawn. The artist's appropriation and subordination of nature to creativity adds another layer of meaning to the existing history and geography of a site. With the creation of the museum, however, an institutionalization of this environment takes place that goes beyond the museum walls. The focus on the landscape as a catalyst to the artist's creativity inscribes – with institutional authority – culture onto nature, thus transforming a place that grew, and exists organically, into a place with a defined site-specific culture. The incorporation of the environment in the display is often an unalterable factor due to the location of the museum. The museum can react by employing it solely to enhance the meaning and understanding of the artist's work, or it can raise awareness of the other

meanings of the site, thus extending its responsibility as a cultural narrative to further realms. By doing so, the close link between the artist's work and the environment becomes part of a larger history and can be seen in a wider context.

The artist's museum, as a concept, can range from a static display of a frozen past as a *memento mori*, to an approach to the person that celebrates the past as a means to understand the present position of the artist, the works and their influence on our time. In both cases, its rhetorical function serves prevailing interests, which are determined by current ideas about art and the preservation of culture. This imposition of set notions of culture (i.e. the necessity of a museum, involving public access, display, taxonomic order, etc.) is subject to common perceptions of ideology and politics, and the museum must address these notions with the same fervour that it employs in selecting the material to be displayed.

Since the very existence of the museum assists in the construction of the artist's critical fortunes and immortalization, it is accountable to the visitor for its approach. It is the responsibility of curatorial staff to be aware of these (and other) implications in order to present more than one reading of the converted private space. Since no two museums are alike, there is no set rule to the approach. Both ends of the spectrum, ranging from the purely didactic display with explanatory panels of historic, geographic and artistic context, to the truly preserved state with little alteration of the site, can be of interest to the visitor. It would be wrong to say that a mix of the two is the ideal. However, the visitor should not be left alone to unravel the various overlapping complexities of any such displays. It is the museum's responsibility to suggest more than one answer to the visitor who comes to seek out the inspiration of the studio. ■

Notes

1. See Thomas McEilley's 'Introduction' to Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, pp. 9–11, Santa Monica/San Francisco, Lapis Press, 1986.

2. To compare and thus equate artistic creativity to divine creation has been a dominant theme in art history. The equation has found its way into ordinary language and has become part of the accepted notions surrounding the artist – Ernst Kris and Otto Kurtz, *Legend, Myth and Magic in the Image of the Artist*, pp. 4–5, 58–9, New Haven/London, Yale University Press, 1979.

3. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (eds.), *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 4–5; see also Donald W. Crawford, 'Comparing Natural and Artistic Beauty,' ibid, pp. 183–98, 194–5.

Studio of Ary Scheffer, Musée de la Vie Romantique, Paris.

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Virtual fabrics: the Met puts its textiles on line

Suzy Menkes

A state-of-the-art centre for textile research and conservation at the Metropolitan Museum in New York offers a new look at age-old treasures. The author is fashion editor of the International Herald Tribune.

The velvet glows cranberry red with barnacles of gilt embroidery. You reach out to stroke the Moghul Indian fabric – and your fingers meet the flat, smooth surface of a computer screen. Virtual reality has come to textile studies. Philippe de Montebello, director of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, unveiled in Paris in September 1995 the details of a computerized textile conservation and study centre that will project textile research into the twenty-first century.

The Antonio Ratti Textile Center – named for the Italian fabric company that is its major sponsor – will group together for the first time the Met's fabulous collection of 36,000 textiles, from ancient archaeological fragments, through medieval tapestries, sumptuous Renaissance velvets, Chinese robes and dainty French lace to humble Amish quilts.

The result of five years of work, and the underwriting by Ratti of $5 million, is a 25,000 square-foot (2,250 m^2) centre that opened in December 1995. It will revolutionize not just the museum's existing system of study, conservation and storage, but ultimately open the textile collection to international scholars. In the new millennium, digital images and information about the Met's textiles could be on line to institutions across the world.

'It's a first,' says de Montebello. 'The centre will be the largest and most technically advanced in the world for everything that is based on fabric. And instead of the fabrics dispersed in different departments in the museum and therefore difficult to consult, they will be integrated into one centralized facility.' State-of-the-art storage and high-tech conservation areas will adjoin the study area, with fifteen conservators working in ultra-modern laboratories for dry and 'wet' cleaning in baths of purified water. Analysing dyes, colour measuring and fade-testing will all turn the art of fabric research into a science.

Storage areas are also technologically advanced with four separate systems, all designed to banish any components that can cause fabrics to deteriorate. Cabinets are lined with acid-free paper; open shelves are made from aluminium; framed textiles have hanging supports; and tapestries and rugs are in tubular containers.

The centre, on the museum's ground floor, has taken five years to plan and cost $10 million. For Antonio Ratti, 80, the donation is a celebration of fifty years of the company, based in the Como area of Italy and the world's largest producer of printed silk and natural fibres, with annual sales of $300 million. 'I feel proud when I see my name on the wall and so will my father be,' said Ratti's daughter Donatella, who attended the Paris launch. She explained that the grant came from the Fondazione Antonio Ratti, set up in 1985 to catalogue thirty years of her father's textile collecting and to support research and study into art conservation.

The Metropolitan Museum collection is the most important in the world, along with that in London's Victoria and Albert Museum, although that is different in concept because it is 'run by textile experts, not art experts', according to de Montebello.

At the Met, each department of American, Egyptian, Islamic, medieval or twentieth-century art has textiles among its other artefacts, enabling them to be assessed as part of an entire culture. Many will remain *in situ*, but will be catalogued, photographed and stored in the computer system. 'It is very exciting because it will allow us to think about the collection in a wholly new way across departmental barriers,' says Tom Campbell, supervising curator of the study and storage centre.

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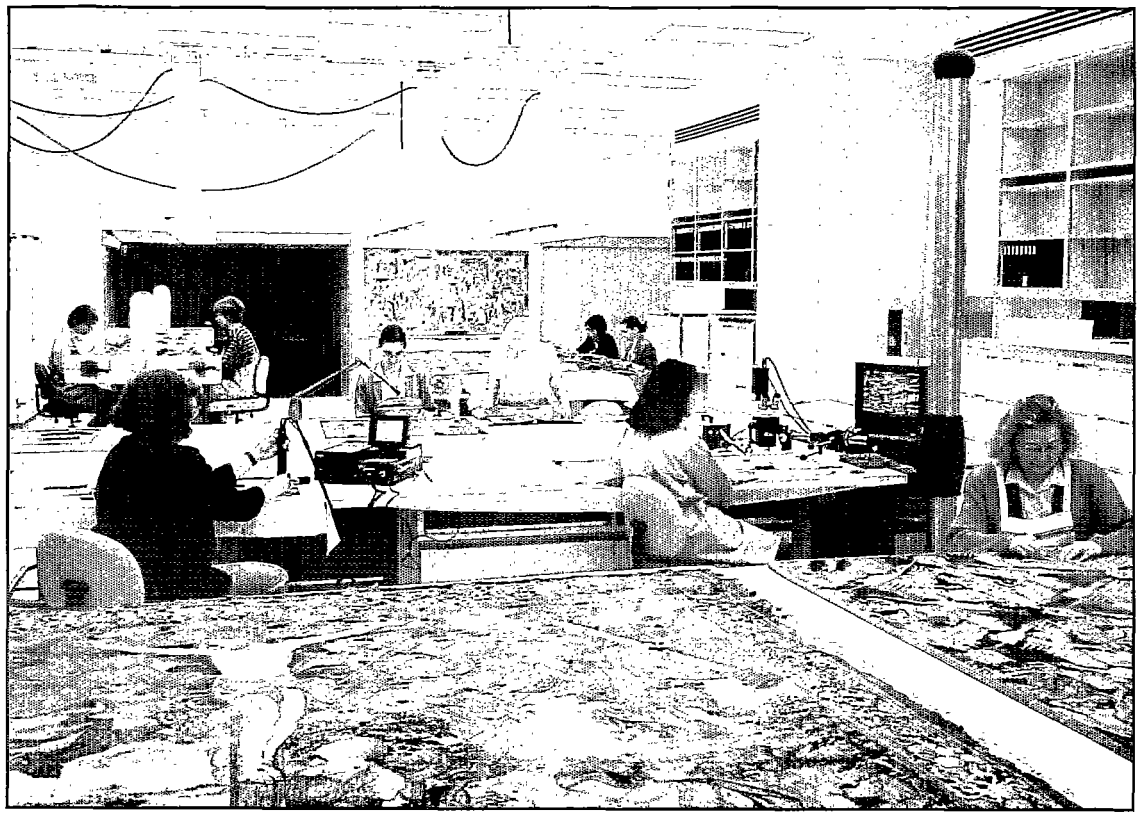

Conservation workroom, showing textile conservators at work.

The Met is also opening up a collection, much of which has never been on public display – and could never be for conservation reasons. The new system will enable eight or ten students (and that includes interested members of the public) to have access to the computers at any one time. Having studied information and images in their area of interest, they can then ask to see a few key pieces for hands-on study. Therein lies the strength and the possible controversy in the Met's textile centre.

Katell le Bourhis, a former costume curator at the Metropolitan Museum, now based in Paris, defines the enemies of fabrics as light, dust, acids and manipulation. Yet she also admits that the most advanced computer system is no substitute for seeing colour depth and brilliance, measuring the weight and feeling the texture of archive fabrics. 'But textiles are as fragile as paper, they are very dry and the threads break,' says de Montebello. 'It is easy to display a collection of statuettes in bronze on a coffee table. But where can you put fabrics?'

The same arguments about the need for conservation and the importance of the human eye apply to archive clothing. Antique costumes are increasingly under wraps, rather than on display, and museums are wary of allowing them to be handled. 'You have to balance the two issues – the need for access to collections and the need to safeguard them,' says Campbell. 'This will be a centre for learning and for propagating information. It will also give textiles a profile that they have not had before. It will encourage people to be much more interactive and to come in and browse laterally. It allows people to know what we have – without potentially exposing the fabrics to danger. But it is not a substitute ever for seeing with the human eye.' ■

Note

This article first appeared in the *International Herald Tribune*, 26 September 1995. – Ed.

The Tretyakov Gallery reopens its doors

Vitold Petyushenko

In its fourth issue of 1991, Museum *carried an interview with the Director-General of Moscow's Tretyakov State Gallery, Yuri Korolev (1929–92), and architect Gennady Astafev on the reconstruction of the gallery. The overall strategy was gradually being implemented and it seemed that it would not be long before it was completed. No one could have known that for reasons largely beyond the control of all concerned, it would take several more years, or that Yuri Korolev, the driving force behind the museum's revamp, would not live to see it finished. Vitold Petyushenko, a distinguished Russian cultural figure, describes the results of this major museum overhaul. He is academic secretary of the gallery and has written many articles for various reference works, albums and collections devoted to Russian and Soviet art.*

The Tretyakov Gallery was reopened to the public on 7 April 1995 and the time has now come to take stock. What has actually been achieved? One thing is certain – the reconstruction strategy itself was a success. The depository built in 1982–85 not only offered storage for the museum's entire collection for almost the whole decade it took to reconstruct the main building, but provided the room and facilities for it to be restored. We also managed (fellow museum-workers will appreciate what an achievement this was!) to conserve the unique collection of eighteenth- to early twentieth-century museum frames intact. Ten years' use of the depository in this way and the numerous comments of colleagues from abroad have confirmed that this is one of the most successful designs for buildings of this very specific purpose and type.

The subsequent construction in 1986–88 of what is known as the technical block, with its heating, power and air-conditioning systems, provided the technical base for the reconstruction of the gallery as a whole. Multifunctional in design, it substantially improved the gallery's ability to carry out a wide variety of scientific, research and educational activities which had previously been extremely limited in the absence of a conference room, lecture room or premises for a children's studio. Several dozen conferences and symposia, some of them international, have already been organized in the technical block conference room and forty series of lectures in the lecture room; the well-equipped children's studio is very popular and has been the scene of some experimental work on aesthetic education with very young children. Various exhibitions have been successfully staged in the technical block's comparatively small exhibition rooms (when compared with the size and importance of the gallery itself), the most important of which was *Masterpieces of the Tretyakov Gallery,* which ran for several years, to some degree as a substitute for the permanent exhibition. It is important to note that operating the depository and then the technical block for many years enabled technical workers to gain vital experience (especially with the air-conditioning system and security and fire alarms), preparing them for the incomparably more complicated work in the main exhibition building.

The next section to be brought into operation was the administrative block (1993): the reconstruction and extension of the first floor of this building, adjoining the gallery, provided work rooms for the scientific departments and services and their back-up which were far more comfortable than before. The manuscript department and scientific library had already been transferred from cramped and inconvenient premises to separate buildings in the narrow street next to the gallery. Each of these buildings, which date back to the eighteenth and first third of the nineteenth century, deserves to be dealt with in its own right. Unfortunately, as the years have shown, the quality of their restoration was not of a satisfactory standard.

So, finally, to the main building, the historic Tretyakov Gallery. Without repeating Y. K. Korolev and the architect G. V. Astafev in detail, here is a brief account: between 1985 and 1994 it was restored, reconstructed and comprehensively re-equipped with a view primarily to protecting the exhibits and improving the way they were displayed. Automated systems were used to maintain the set climatic parameters and the lighting level, which involved both natural light coming through the glass skylight (there are also automatically-controlled protective Venetian blinds) and artificial light. In addition, a basement foyer was created essentially from scratch,

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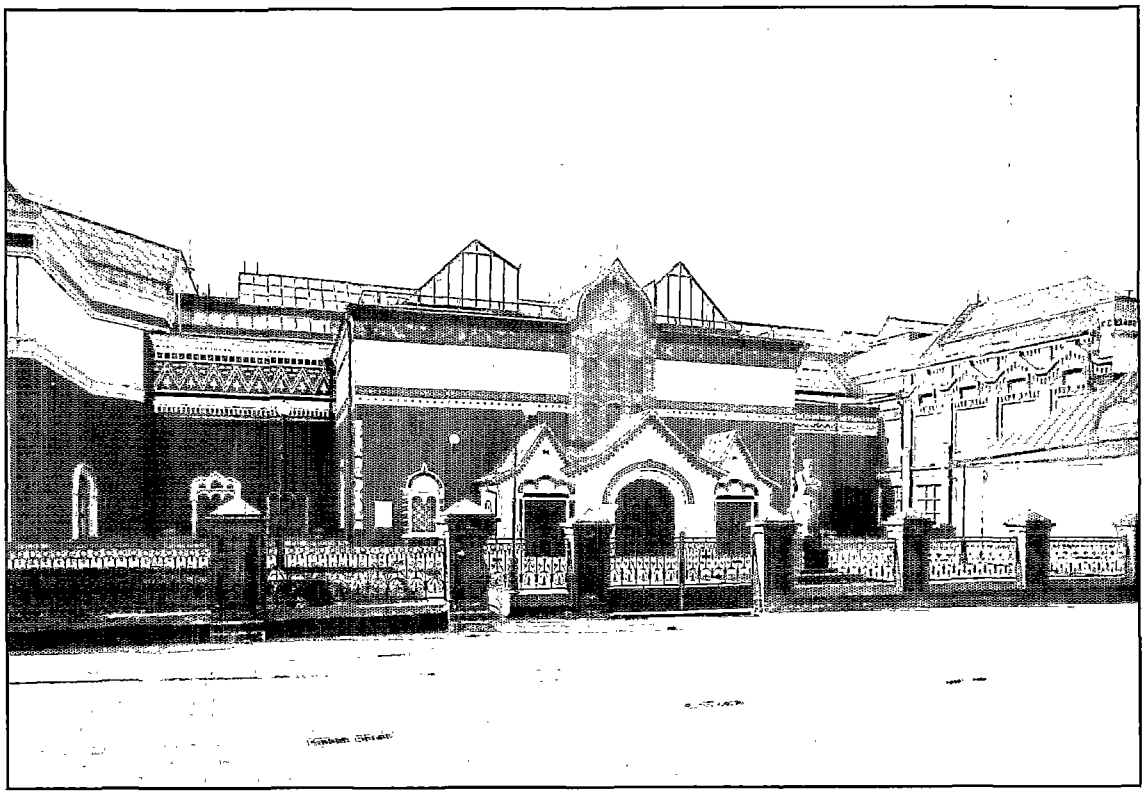


Photo by courtesy of the Tretyakov State Gallery

Central part of the Tretyakov State Gallery complex, main façade.

with a cloakroom, café-restaurant (where we used the old vaulted cellars to great effect), bookstalls and facilities of various kinds, all with the latest equipment and finishings. Of course, the main building, like the complex as a whole, is equipped with a sophisticated 'multi-level' system of security and fire alarms, using the latest electronic devices.

A creative reinterpretation of the past

Now that the reconstruction is completed, it is clear that the greatest care has been taken with the basic components of the old building which are historic and cultural monuments in their own right. The suite layout of the exhibition rooms which had evolved over the years was retained and construction over inner courtyards in the central part of the building gave some much-needed additional exhibition floor space. During such a substantial restoration involving the entire building, it was of course inevitable that the configuration of some rooms would be changed, as would the number and dimensions of the doorways, which in many cases had a marked effect on the exhibition, making traditional approaches impossible. The interior walls were repainted, fine woods were used to finish the door frames and the doors themselves, and cornices were installed to hang pictures instead of the old-fashioned crossbars. In their restoration of a conglomeration of buildings of different periods, the architects have achieved an overall unity of proportion and style (without allowing the effect to become stylized) which fits discreetly into the historic environment of the surrounding old city neighbourhood, at the same time giving it a 'new look'. The rebuilt bell-tower of the church of St Nikolai in Tolmachi (seventeenth to first third of the nineteenth century) which adjoins the gallery has now become architecturally dominant. The restoration of the church is approaching completion, and it will appear as it did to its long-time parishioner P. M. Tretyakov, the gallery's founder.

This church in fact offers an example of the successful resolution of the complicated question of relations between museums and churches in Russia today. The granting by the Moscow patriarch of the status of house church of the Tretyakov Gallery

means, in the first place, that it will hold regular services for church-going gallery workers and other believers. However, as it forms an integral part of the museum complex it will be subject to the same temperature and humidity controls and have the same security and fire alarm systems as the other parts. This will make it possible for the most valuable icons from the Tretyakov collection to be exhibited in the church, making them accessible to all the gallery's visitors even when there are no services. The status of house church will also make it possible, when necessary, to ensure no less than optimum conservation conditions for these icons, to introduce restrictions on the number of people allowed in at one time, the number of candles that can be lit and so forth.

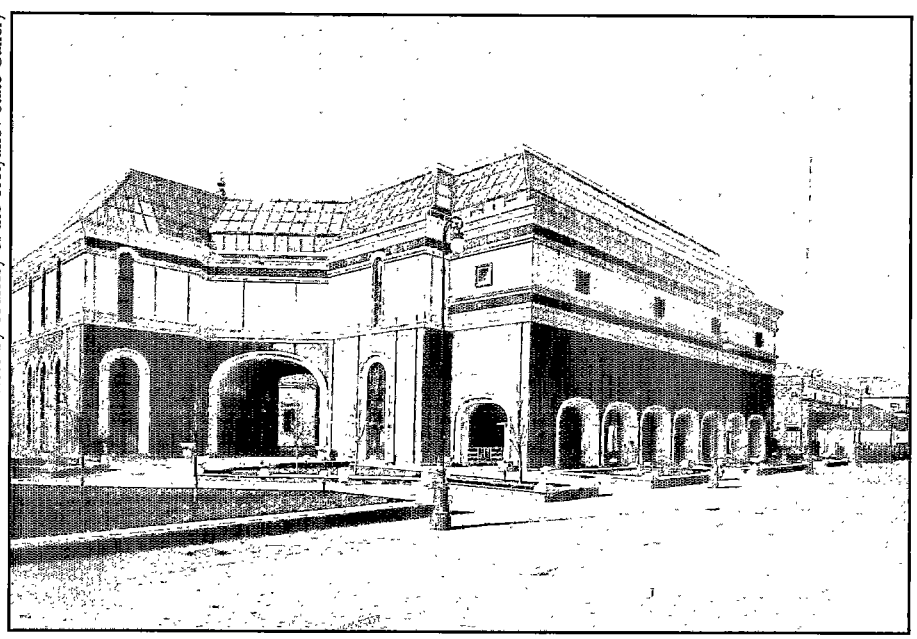
Lavrushinsky Pereulok itself, where the gallery is located, has become, now that some dilapidated old buildings of no architectural value have been demolished, a pedestrian zone and is paved right across with colourful stones. In preparation for the reopening of the gallery, a footbridge has been built over the Obvodnoi canal from Lavrushinsky Pereulok to the public garden where there is a memorial to the great Russian artist I. E. Repin. That and the construction of a coach stop on the other side of the garden on Bolotnaya Square make it possible to keep tourist coaches out of the museum precincts.

How has the reconstruction of the gallery affected exhibitions? It must first of all be borne in mind that the approach adopted was that the Tretyakov Gallery, albeit divided between two main exhibition areas – the building on Lavrushinsky Pereulok (eleventh- to early twentieth-century art) and the building at Krimskii Val (twentieth-century art) – is a single entity, a single exhibition. This one museum covers the entire history of Russian art from the earliest times to the contemporary period, illustrating it with the most outstanding works. The transfer of the Soviet and contemporary exhibition to the other building, when the reconstruction had created relatively little additional space for exhibitions, has made it possible to show more of the classical collection. Unfortunately this was misunderstood by the authors of some of the initial articles in the European press about the gallery's opening after reconstruction, who thought that 'inconvenient' artists had been 'exiled' to the Krimskii Val building.

The new permanent exhibition is the most objective (in terms of the actual history of Russian art) and comprehensive in all the years the gallery has been in existence. It continues to follow a historical, chronological progression and to group works by the same artist together. However, as in the old gallery, the placing of the section on early Russian art does not fit into this pattern: the exhibition begins on the first

The multifunctional technical block which provided the technical base for the reconstruction of the gallery as a whole.

Photo by courtesy of the Tretyakov State Gallery



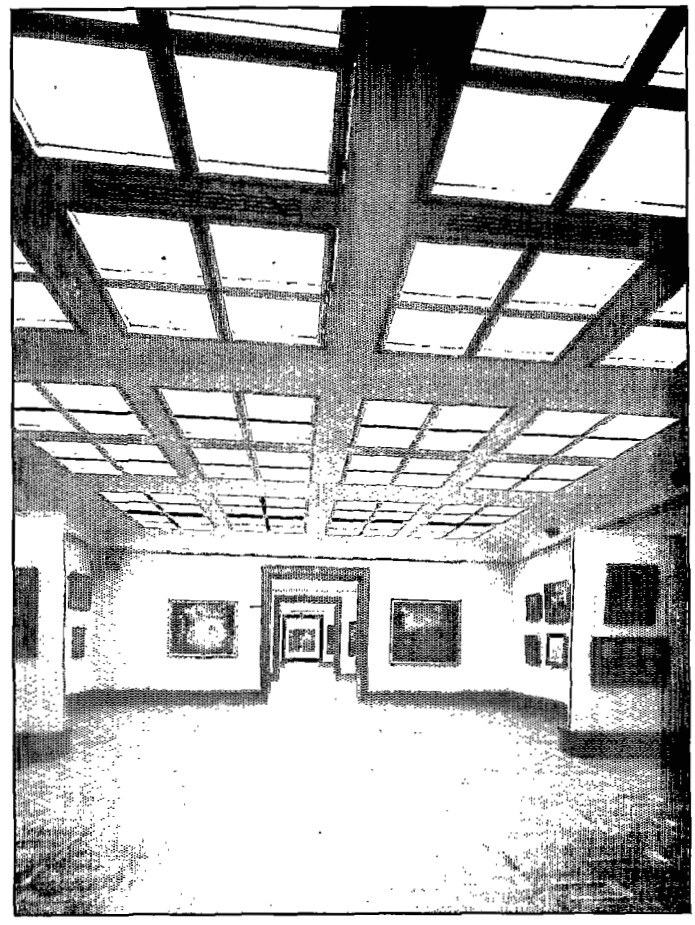


Photo by courtesy of the Tretyakov State Gallery

Suite of rooms containing late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century paintings.

floor with art from the turn of the seventeenth to the eighteenth century and concludes with art from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the early Russian period. Visitors may well wonder why the exhibition does not start with early Russian art. The answer is very simple: there are some pictures in the gallery that are too large to be shown on the ground floor with its relatively low ceilings. Building bigger rooms for them on the ground floor during the reconstruction would have meant abandoning the principle of keeping the historical building as it was. The first works to pose a problem in this respect were the immense painting by A. A. Ivanov, *The Appearance of Christ Before the People* (1837–57; 540 x 750 cm) and the panel by M. A. Vrubel, *Princess of Dreams* (1896; 750 x 1,400 cm). A large room adapted to house the *Princess of Dreams* panel (which was not displayed earlier primarily because there was no room in the gallery large enough to house such a large painting) and other works by Vrubel now forms a 'pocket' among the art of the second half of the nineteenth century.

As regards the exhibition as a whole, one consideration was that the museum must continue to be 'recognizable' and another was that some departments needed to be presented completely differently. 'Recognizability' is dominant in the rooms of the eighteenth to the second half of the nineteenth century, though even here there have been some minor changes: a new enlarged A. A. Ivanov room (the old one had to be completely stripped out), where perspective is opened up to striking effect by the creative lighting of the main canvas, *The Appearance of Christ Before the People*; a separate room for the numerous studies for the painting; and separate rooms devoted to the works of major painters such as K. P. Bryullov and V. G. Perov. A fair number of previously undisplayed pictures were introduced into these departments, broadening the general conspectus of the artistic processes taking place in Russia at that time. This is even truer of the department of late nineteenth to early twentieth-century art, which now offers a more varied and comprehensive coverage of that period than before. Here we could perhaps return to the room devoted to M. A. Vrubel. Although work on the room was not yet finished at the time of the gallery's opening, it already had considerable impact, demonstrating the different facets of the artist's work, from easel paintings to monumental and decorative work. The works of other important painters of the time (V. E. Borisov-Musatov, V. A. Serov, K. A. Korovin) are shown in individual rooms or grouped together to illustrate the most important artistic groups and stylistic tendencies of the first decades of the twentieth century, from *Mir Iskusstva* (The World of Art) and the Union of Russian Artists to the avant-garde.

Rediscovering the reserves

The exhibition of early Russian art has changed beyond recognition: whereas before it used to occupy two rooms it now occupies seven. The number of works on display has more than doubled and there has been a move to a specially designed system of single-row hanging which is practical for conservation purposes and makes for more effective displays. A whole room is now occupied by seventeenth-century art, and it also contains works which carried the icon tradition into the eighteenth century. Icons from various centres such as Tver' and the Byzantine and Balkan areas give a more detailed account of these schools than before. A welcome addition to this department is to be found in adjacent rooms where the gallery's small but interesting applied-arts collection is being shown for the first time. It contains various items in precious metals – icon frames and book covers, liturgical vessels, and so on. These rooms were opened to the public in the second half of 1995.

Sculpture is displayed both in the traditional way, together with paintings, and in separate sculpture rooms. There are exhibitions of the works of a range of important painters whose output is well represented in the gallery's holdings, including F. I. Shubin and S. T. Konenkov. The gallery is not entirely satisfied with the present organization of the sculpture rooms and does not consider it to be definitive; there is a fair amount of work ahead for the exhibitors.

A new feature of the gallery are the rooms of the eighteenth- to early twentieth-century prints and drawings which were previously shown on an irregular basis in temporary exhibitions. The exhibits in the six print and drawing rooms (created in space gained by building over the courtyards and artificially lit) will now be changed every four months so as to display different facets of the gallery's very rich graphic-art collection.

So, has the reconstruction of the main building solved all the gallery's problems? By no means. Many problems remain: it needs exhibition and display rooms to match the quality and scale of its annual exhibitions, more space for work with children and for production and technical work, and so forth. On 5 April 1995, the day the museum was officially opened, the foundations of the second section were laid on the side of the gallery next to the Obvodnoi canal. Next comes the decision on what purpose the building should serve. In any case, the construction of the second section of the gallery has important urban implications – as the museum complex looks out over the banks of the Obvodnoi canal and has a commanding view of the city. In the near future a reserve of early Russian art will be opened next to the gallery in a house built at the turn of the eighteenth century which is itself of architectural significance, as will the graphic-art centre, also housed in an architecturally significant building of the first third of the nineteenth century. This will allow the gallery's collection to be displayed more extensively. The gallery has been given other buildings in the neighbourhood, some of which are also architecturally and historically important, and they too will have to be adapted to its needs. A cultural and historical centre is thus gradually growing up around the Tretyakov Gallery complex. Many ideas for its future development have been mooted, but only time will tell what its final form will be. ■

The Scottish Museums Council: a model of museum support

Timothy Ambrose

The Scottish Museums Council is often cited for its outstanding work on behalf of the museum community. Timothy Ambrose, director of the council from 1986 to 1994, looks back on ten years of dynamic growth and service. He is now a senior research fellow in European museum studies at the Department of Arts Policy and Management at City University, London, and chair of ICOM UK. He has published widely on museum management issues.

The 400 museums in Scotland attract some 10 million visits annually. Their main channel of central government support is the Scottish Museums Council, which is one of ten such organizations in the United Kingdom where national councils exist in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, with seven regional councils in England. Founded in 1964, the Scottish Museums Council is an independent company limited by guarantee with charitable status. Its mission is to improve the quality of museum and gallery provision in Scotland by representing and promoting the interests of museums, and by providing a wide range of services, including financial support, to its membership. It comprises more than 200 member organizations which manage the vast majority of Scottish museums, including local authorities, armed services museum trusts, universities, independent museums with charitable status and historic houses.

The council is principally funded by the Secretary of State for Scotland, with a significant part of its work assisted by donations from the business community and grant-giving trusts, as well as income from membership subscriptions and fees for training, conservation and consultancy services. Central government contributes 65 to 70 per cent of its £1.1 million annual budget. The council's members determine its policies and elect its chairman and board of directors to oversee day-to-day work. Twenty-five permanent staff are based in Edinburgh.

Since 1984, the council's role and services have developed significantly, reflecting changes in Scotland's economic, political, professional and cultural environment. It has become a model for museum support organizations internationally and is increasingly consulted by overseas colleagues for information and advice. Its principal spheres of action are described below.

Planning and conservation

Since 1982, local authorities in Scotland have had a statutory duty to make provision for cultural facilities and activities, including museums. At that time, fewer than 40 per cent of local administrations had professionally staffed museum services. The council, through a mixture of advocacy, advisory reports and grant-aid, stepped in and over a period of ten years helped to establish new services and carry out some twenty development planning and appraisal studies for the fifty-six district and islands councils. Today, more than 90 per cent of local authorities can boast of professional museum services.

The council's policy of targeting support to local authorities has strengthened their contribution to museums. Professional services supplied by the council have improved collections care and user services and have raised political awareness of the importance of museums. The council encourages museums to establish forward plans by organizing advisory meetings, undertaking appraisal studies and providing grants for consultants, training and publications; it is responsible for assessing the planning framework as a prerequisite for approving grant-aid requests.

Conservation is also in the forefront of the council's preoccupations. In 1985, with support from the Getty Grant Program of the J. Paul Getty Trust, it undertook a two-year study of the conservation needs of Scotland's museums. The findings, published in 1989 as *A Conservation Survey of Museum Collections in Scotland*, have been used to develop a nationwide conservation programme and led to the launch, in 1991, of the council's 'Conservation Initiative: A Future for Scotland's Past'. This partnership between the public and private sectors aims to help protect Scotland's

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heritage by offering grant-aid to museums and ensuring access to information, advice and training for preventive conservation projects and remedial conservation expertise. A sum of £525,000 has been raised from the business and charitable sectors to contribute funding additional to the council's own grant-aid programmes.

A second study, *An Evaluation of the Conservation Needs of Museum Collections in Scotland* (1993), assessed the impact of 141 site surveys included in the initial study and identified the improvements that had been made and those areas still in need of attention. Its recommendations form the basis of the council's conservation service, which offers advice, training and conservation survey reports as well as remedial services in textile, paper and antiquities conservation. As the majority of museums do not employ their own conservators, the council thus provides a key conservation resource.

Fund-raising, marketing and information

The council's development service, aided by a development group drawn from business and industry, raises money from private and charitable sources and has, since its inception in 1986, garnered more than £1 million for special programmes, central services and grants. Although it does not raise funds for individual museums, it advises them on creating new funding mechanisms and has helped them generate between £25,000 and £500,000 annually.

The council also encourages museums to cater to new audiences. National market surveys carried out in 1985/86 and 1991/92 demonstrated strong support for museums by some 90 per cent of the population, a finding that was most useful in obtaining new funds from public and private-sector bodies and in convincing museums of the value of market research. Further research in co-operation with other cultural and tourism agencies gave new perspectives on how museums could better serve tourist and leisure day-trip markets. A two-year research programme undertaken in 1987/88 with Strathclyde University revealed important insights about museums' attitudes towards marketing and led to the appointment of a specialist to assist them in drawing up marketing plans, as well as to help the council market its own services.

Providing information tailored to meet the needs of museums is the task of the council's information centre. Established in 1982, it houses approximately 3,000 books on museology, more than 200 periodicals, an extensive range of leaflets on museums in the United Kingdom and abroad, press cuttings, suppliers' catalogues, photographs and items relating to heritage organizations. The council's own publications are another source of valuable professional information: the twice-yearly *Scottish Museum News; Museum Abstracts*, a monthly abstracts service based upon a substantial computerized database, and made available on subscription nationally and internationally; *Tak Tent*, a monthly news digest; *Bibliographies*, subject bibliographies based on the Centre's holdings; *Factsheets/Information sheets*, specially written pamphlets on various aspects of museum work. Information about crime in museums is circulated through a crime-reporting network based on the ten area museum councils in the United Kingdom; the network acts as an early-warning system for particular types of collection under threat, notifying curators of stolen items and stimulating awareness of the need for effective museum security.

Professional training and research

Some 500 participants benefit from the council's annual training programme, which provides an average of twenty-five short courses covering museum management, user services, and collections management and conservation, as well as a two-day conference on a theme of interest to the museum community. A training co-ordinator and a training assistant manage the programme and develop further training activities with other cultural agencies and universities. The overall aim of all these initiatives is to improve the quality and range of museum training and to increase the number of professionally trained museum staff.

Research is another important council service. Over the past ten years it has carried out national collections research programmes which consist of documenting Scottish museum collections in various subject areas. Data are collected by questionnaires and field visits and collated to form a computerized database which is then transferred to the national collections database managed by the National Museums of Scotland. Reports on the programmes are published regularly and thus far have covered collections in the natural sciences, university collections and foreign ethnographic collections.

These research programmes provide national overviews which facilitate comparative studies and offer opportunities to advise on management priorities in light of the findings. They also inject much needed expertise into museums that may not have subject specialists in particular disciplines. The benefits are clear: improved collections management and more effective presentation and interpretation for users. The programmes have been funded by public and private-sector sources and are excellent examples of intermuseum collaboration.

The council also focuses on policy research to help build the case for museum support. An example is *The Charter for the Arts in Scotland*, a collaborative exercise carried out from 1991/93 with the Scottish Arts Council, the Scottish Film Council and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. Extensive consultations identified the needs of artists and arts organizations and their audiences, and provided policy guidelines for cultural organizations at national, regional and local level. The council has incorporated into its forward planning relevant recommendations from the *Charter* and has, with its partner agencies, monitored its impact.

Developing new partnerships and programmes

The council's grant-aid programmes have helped to improve the quality of museum provision in Scotland and are an integral part of its services. These grants are not intended for the day-to-day operating costs of museums, but rather aim at fostering specific improvement projects. Since 1984, a total of £3.7 million has been granted, and annual allocations have risen from £148,000 in 1984/85 to £514,000 in 1994/95. Since 1991/92, funds raised from public and private-sector sources have complemented the council's government grant-in-aid. Grants may cover up to 50 per cent of the cost of a project, which may vary from £200 upwards; for projects costing more than £20,000, the council may provide funds for selected components. The scale of demand has steadily increased: requests in 1994/95 totalled £3.65 million, broadly equivalent to the total amount provided since 1984.

Grant-aid is allocated only to museums registered under the national Museum Registration scheme, a voluntary, minimum standards programme introduced in Scotland in 1990. Almost all eligible museums participate in the scheme, which has been most successful in ensuring that appropriate standards of management are achieved in museum work throughout the United Kingdom.

In addition to its core services, the council has established several three- to four-year programmes on specific museum issues. Focusing on leisure learning, museums education and the natural environment, the programmes encourage all types of museums to develop new audiences and to make the museum more accessible to all sections of the community. They are managed by a co-ordinator working for a management committee of expert museum staff and other specialists.

The council has, through partnerships with organizations at all levels, spurred greater investment in museums. Its ever-growing international awareness was reflected in the creation, in 1994, of an international cultural desk with the Scottish Arts Council and the British Council. The desk advises museums and other cultural organizations on opportunities for working with European and overseas counterparts, thus favouring the export of Scottish expertise through tourism, publications, study visits and exchanges while at the same time enriching the international experience of museum staff.

Such collaboration has allowed the council to extend the range of its services and to enhance its strategic role in representing the interests of museums. In 1984, the Museums and Galleries Commission commented: 'In its practices and its performance [the Scottish Museums Council] is the closest to our ideal of what an Area Museum Council should be.' In 1994, its thirtieth anniversary, the council could look back with pride over ten years of active contribution to the development of Scottish museums. ■

Note

Space does not permit publication of the detailed bibliography provided by the author which may be obtained from *Museum International* on request. For further information about the Scottish Museums Council, please contact the director, Scottish Museums Council, County House, 20–22 Torpichen Street, Edinburgh EH3 8JB; telephone (131) 229 7465; fax (131) 229 2728. – Ed.

ICOM at fifty

Patrick J. Boylan

In November 1996 the International Council of Museums (ICOM) will celebrate fifty years of service to the museum community. During its half-century of existence, ICOM has played a significant part in the explosive development of museums of every kind in every part of the world. The fact that the great majority of today's museums are younger than ICOM itself bears witness to the council's influence and its unflagging commitment to the development and promotion of museums and a worldwide museum profession. Patrick J. Boylan, Vice-President, is one of three Executive Council members writing the fiftieth anniversary history of ICOM. In the following article he offers some personal reflections on the principal aspects of ICOM's evolution and achievements.

During the Constitutive Assembly of ICOM in the Louvre, Paris, from 16 to 20 November 1946, delegates were present in person from fourteen nations (Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America), from the United Nations, UNESCO, the International Museum Office, the French Foreign Office, and the Swedish Legation in Paris. In addition, letters of support announcing co-operation and the formation of National Committees were received from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, Egypt, Finland, Greece, Haiti, India, Nicaragua, Peru, the Philippines, South Africa, Turkey.

At the first meeting of the Council on 16 November, Chauncey J. Hamlin, Director of the Buffalo Museum of Science, in the United States, was appointed Chairman (subsequently re-titled President). A constitution and by-laws were approved unanimously on 18 November. During the following two days the broad lines of future policy were considered in some detail. At the practical level it was decided that ICOM should operate through a system of national and international committees, and the first seven international committees were formally constituted, each covering different types of museums. These were: Science and Health Museums and Planetaria, Museums of Art and Applied Arts, Museums of Natural History, Museums of History of Science and Technology, Museums of Archaeology and History and Historical Sites, Museums of Ethnography (including folk art and culture), and Zoological Gardens, Botanical Gardens, National Parks and Forests and Nature Reserves and Trailside Museums. (Three of these still survive in broadly their original form: Natural History (NatHist), Archaeology and History (ICMAH) and Ethnography (ICME), while the present International Committee for Museums of Science and Technology (CIMUSET) dates from the 1948 General Conference's merging of the original committees for Science and Health Museums and Planetaria with the Museums of History of Science and Technology Committee.)

Defining a 'museum'

In view of ICOM's subsequent history and internal debates, it is important to stress the wide range of institutions and cultural facilities recognized from the very beginning as falling within the definition of what constitutes a 'museum' for ICOM (and indeed UNESCO) purposes. Three out of the original seven committees were responsible for institutions and facilities that were at least in part not traditional collections-centred, buildings-based museums. ICOM included in its definition of museums, and welcomed into its membership, science and health museums and planetaria (which were initially clearly distinguished from collections-based museums of history of science and technology), historical sites, zoos, botanic gardens and a wide range of natural sites.

From time to time over subsequent decades the membership of ICOM has been deeply divided into two very different camps. On the one hand there are those who have continued to take the same broad view as the founding members about the nature and role of the museum in relation to the physical heritage as a totality. Indeed, in the 1970s in particular, ICOM, through two of its directors, Georges-Henri Rivière and Hughes de Varine, and other key members, played a leading part in promoting the concept of the integrated museum concerned with the whole of its natural, cultural and social territory and setting.

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In contrast with this view there have been, and remain, those within ICOM who equally strongly consider that the term 'museum' should be used in a far more restricted sense, accepting as museums only institutions that are based wholly, or at least predominantly, on traditional kinds of scientific, historical or art collections. In this view, one should consequently exclude from the definition of a museum those institutions that are not primarily collections-centred, for example, many science museums, planetaria, historical and natural sites and monuments, and zoological and botanical gardens.

Thus, in the 1960s ICOM's perceptible, if perhaps only temporary, hostility towards accepting its long-established responsibility for the fields of historical monuments and sites and for national parks and nature reserves made virtually inevitable the creation of a new international NGO linked to UNESCO – the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). Allowing a climate in which such a split could develop was perhaps the greatest mistake in ICOM's first quarter century. Arguably, the artificial division of responsibility for the world's 'physical heritage' between museums narrowly defined as collections-based institutions on the one hand, and historic and natural sites and monuments on the other, continues to weaken and impoverish both sides of this schism.

Professionalism and ethics

With regard to ICOM's general policy and objectives, the 1946 inaugural meeting focused on one special priority: the status and development of the museum profession, including training and exchange of students and curators, a recurring theme of ICOM's programme and activities throughout its fifty-year history. It should be recalled that traditionally museum employees could be separated into two very distinct groups: on the one hand there were what can best be termed 'scholar-curators' (or museologists in the traditional sense), who usually comprised the whole of the museum's professional staff, and who undertook almost all of the museum's specialized work (e.g. acquisitions, research, cataloguing and documentation, publications, organizing permanent display galleries, temporary exhibitions, and educational programmes). These 'generalist' scholar-curators (usually very few in number) were in turn supported by a single category of non-professional support staff, lowly regarded manual workers mainly undertaking security, cleaning and building maintenance duties.

This situation has dramatically changed and the history of ICOM itself over the past fifty years documents at least in part the increasing diversification and division of labour within the museum world. The first full ICOM General Conference in 1948 called for the proper recognition and training of the museum's technical staff using the then current title of 'museographers' to cover a wide range of support staff, including collections care and exhibition technicians. The following General Conference, in London, 1950, recognized 'restorers' as a distinct museological profession, and initiated a survey of the provision of professional training, qualifications, salaries, and other conditions of work. The next General Conference, held in Milan in 1953, recognized the need for museums to have education specialists with teaching qualifications and set up an international Committee for Museum Education (the forerunner of today's very successful and influential CECA Committee).

The New York General Conference in 1965 was perhaps the most important and influ-

ential in the earlier years of ICOM, recognizing as valid and important elements of the museum profession a diverse range of museum jobs, including curators, scientific laboratory personnel, restorers, conservation technicians, 'qualified persons . . . recruited from the teaching profession' in charge of educational and cultural activities, and 'a wide range of technical personnel including specialists in audiovisual techniques, [exhibit] installation and presentation, lighting, climate conditioning, security, library techniques and documentation etc.'. The New York conference also recognized the need for the special training of the personnel of small museums where necessarily one or two people have to undertake a very wide range of specialist tasks.

This ever expanding diversity of the museum profession has continued to this day. In addition to those working in traditional curator and director jobs, ICOM now recognizes officially through its various specialized international committees the following roles: conservator-restorers and other specialized technical personnel (Conservation Committee), registrars, librarians, computer specialists and other documentation specialists (CIDOC), museum teachers and other education, communication and community liaison staff (CECA, MINOM), museum-based researchers (ICOFOM and all academic subject International Committees), museum architects, designers and interpreters (ICAMT), exhibition personnel (ICEE, CIMAM, ICFA, ICAMT), audiovisual and new technologies specialists (AVICOM), museum library, archive, documentation and information specialists (CIDOC, SIBMAS), field archaeologists, ecologists, geologists, ethnographers, social historians and other external fieldwork staff (ICMAH, NatHist, ICME, ICR, MINOM, etc.), general and specialized management and administration personnel, including those responsible for financial, personnel, legal and buildings management (INTERCOM), museum security specialists (ICMS), public relations, marketing and other commercial activities staff (MPR, INTERCOM), and museological education and training personnel, including the museum training officers and the teaching staff of museological training institutions (ICTOP).

Another major concern of the past twenty-five years has been the question of standards of conduct on the part of both museums as institutions and of individual museum professionals. Following many years of campaigning by ICOM and other bodies over the growing scale of illicit trafficking in stolen and illegally excavated and exported works of art and other cultural objects, UNESCO adopted in 1970 the international convention on the illicit import, export and transfer of ownership of cultural property. ICOM quickly responded in support of this by the adoption in 1971 of an ICOM Code of Ethics of Acquisition. Following this, work began on the preparation of a comprehensive Code of Ethics which, after extensive consultations, was unanimously adopted by the Buenos Aires General Assembly in 1986. The code provides a general statement of professional ethics, respect for which is regarded as a minimum requirement to practise as a member of the museum profession.

Museums in contemporary society

A major turning point in ICOM's self-perception was the ninth General Conference held in Grenoble and Paris in 1971 on the theme 'The Museum in the Service of Man, Today and Tomorrow'. After a quarter of a century of focusing on the

traditional roles of museums – collecting, conservation, curatorship, research and communication – ICOM, in the Grenoble sessions, now placed a major emphasis on the potential role of museums in society, in education and in cultural action, arguing that the traditional primary functions of museums should be seen as 'first and foremost in the service of all mankind', and of a constantly changing society, and positing that the 'traditional concept of the museum which perpetuates values concerned with the preservation of man's cultural and natural heritage, not as a manifestation of all that is significant in man's development, but merely as the possession of objects, is questionable'. Henceforth, each museum must accept that it has a duty to serve the whole of the social environment within which it operates, and not just the traditional museum-visiting public. The Grenoble meeting also saw the first use of the term '*écomusée*' (ecomuseum), and led directly to the 1972 UNESCO Seminar at Santiago de Chile on the role of museums in contemporary Latin America and the Santiago 'Declaration', nowadays regarded as the starting point of the international '*nouvelle muséologie*' (new museology) movement, with its focus on the museum as an instrument directly serving society and social development.

The principles of the radical reorientation of ICOM's basic perception of the essential role of the museum in society adopted by the Grenoble/Paris General Conference was carried through into a parallel and far-reaching review of ICOM's own role and membership, on the principle that ICOM 'must improve its ability to respond to the needs of the general membership'. The conference instituted an urgent and throughgoing review of the structure, statutes, rules, programmes and services of ICOM. Extensive consultations subsequently led to the drafting of detailed recommendations and a completely new set of statutes and rules submitted to the Copenhagen General Conference in 1974, which decisively changed ICOM's membership policy away from the traditional NGO model of small national committees composed of individuals carefully selected by an appropriate national body. Instead, ICOM became an entirely open mass-membership organization of individuals and museums, welcoming into unrestricted membership every recognized museum and every professional and technical museum worker in the world (subject only to ICOM's traditional prohibition on accepting dealers in cultural property, and the requirement that every member must accept a fundamental code of museum ethics).

This change in membership from a very restricted number of nominated experts to a large-scale and open membership has had an even greater impact on the workings of ICOM's International Committees. The annual meetings of these bodies are in many cases nowadays major conferences in their own right, in marked contrast with the small, tightly knit, working sessions of earlier times, creating significant new problems in relation to logistics, organization and, not least, funding.

Over the past twenty years or so since the adoption of these fundamental revisions to its statutes ICOM has grown massively, so that today its worldwide membership is far greater than that of many otherwise comparable NGOs serving far larger professions, (e.g. librarianship, university teaching or performing arts, to quote just three of very many examples). With some 12,000 individual members and 106 National Committees, ICOM has witnessed a comparatively rapid expansion that has significantly modified its operation and, arguably, its fundamental nature. ■

ICOM and the battle against illicit traffic of cultural property

Elisabeth des Portes

UNESCO's longtime ally in combating the worldwide traffic in stolen cultural goods, ICOM has forged an ever-growing vigilance on the part of museum professionals and, more recently, among the major players in the international art market. It has undertaken a spate of initiatives to counter this threat to the preservation of cultural memory and the spread of scientific knowledge, which are described by ICOM Secretary-General, Elisabeth des Portes.

When an organization has been in existence for fifty years, it is time to take stock. The International Council of Museums is no exception to this rule. Thus, in 1996, a host of events are taking place in the four corners of the world to mark this significant stage in the life of the organization.

ICOM, which owes its origins to a mere handful of men and women of goodwill – a characteristic of the major internationalist post-war movement – now has no fewer than 12,000 members on five continents. Its twenty-five International Committees are professional forums in which exchanges take place between the different disciplines that museum management requires in the modern age.

These fifty years have witnessed considerable changes in the museum institution, and we believe that our Organization has made major contributions to the reflection and work which have enabled museums to give greater satisfaction to the expectations of their public and attain the level of success which is now theirs as the century comes to a close. Special credit should go to ICOM for some of the achievements of this period: the professionalization of staff, the educational role of the museum, the evolution of the concept of heritage, community participation, professional ethics, and so on.

A fifty-year-old organization should not only take stock, but also identify the challenges and major issues that the profession will have to confront in the future, one of them clearly being to respond to the threats which cultural property increasingly has to face. Economic difficulties, political instability and armed conflicts have created situations of genuine danger in which heritage is taken as hostage and destroyed or subjected to a flourishing illicit traffic. This article describes both the situation and the mobilization which ICOM has spearheaded in recent years with its partners in order to bring it to an end.

A global problem

A look at the situation reveals that all the world's countries are affected by the illicit traffic of cultural property. Contrary to conventional wisdom, it is not only the developing countries that fall prey to it, but all the developed ones as well.

In Europe, it is churches and castles that are the easiest prey of thieves. Some of the major museums (including the Louvre in Paris) have had to strengthen their security measures after several instances of theft. Galleries and private collections are being 'visited' more and more often. The unstable situation in countries of the former USSR has brought antique dealers in the West a large number of illicitly exported objects. Precious manuscripts have been stolen from the national library of St Petersburg.

The situation in the developing countries is even worse. The countries of sub-Saharan Africa, which for ages had their ethnographic objects looted by passing visitors, missionaries and foreign residents, are now the prey of looters of archaeological sites, and are being subjected to the same fate as Egyptian sites. The Niger river valley has been particularly affected, so much so that some archaeologists have been able to establish maps of looted locations. It is believed that in Mali, for example, over 70 per cent of the archaeological sites in certain regions have been destroyed by clandestine excavations. Other major archaeological sites, such as the Sao sites in Chad, have also suffered the same fate.

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Scientific excavations are also being carried out, on condition that the archaeologists keep them secret and publish the results obtained only when they think that their work is completed. This was the procedure followed for the exemplary excavations in the Bura site of Niger in 1983 which uncovered a vast necropolis, hundreds of square metres in area, and dating from the second to the eleventh century.

In countries in which tourism is developed, the traffic can affect other types of heritage. Thus, in the case of Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania, wooden furniture and the famous carved doors of the East African coast are much in demand from Western buyers. Moroccan doors from communal garrets and Madagascan Sakalava funerary statuettes are in the same situation.[1]

Museums themselves, the guarantors of the authenticity of objects, now also fall prey to thieves, probably because of the circulation of 'imitations' of higher quality. In the space of eighteen months in 1994 and 1995, major thefts took place in Nigeria's three principal museums at Ife, Jos and Ibadan. Thirty-four objects were stolen at Ife in November 1994, and nine at Jos in January 1995.[2] The Museum of Ibadan was emptied of its collections – put into storage while the museum was being renovated – in the course of two successive thefts.

In Latin America, 'professional' looters are known as 'cattle rustlers': looters of tombs. Their methods are well known: pickaxes and dynamite. They are primarily interested in terracotta objects, precious metals and semi-precious stones, and are active throughout Central America. The extent of the situation can be judged by the example of Ecuador which, in 1983, retrieved 9,236 archaeological objects that had been illicitly taken out of the country and were in the possession of a single Italian collector.

The thefts now also affect museums, especially small on-site museums, like the Inga Pirca Museum, on Ecuador's only Inca site, as well as museums situated in medium-size and large towns: the Nicolas Avelladana Museum of Tucumán (Argentina) and the Anthropological Museum of Mexico. Churches throughout Latin America are also systematically looted: sacerdotal objects, religious sculptures and paintings are in demand on the art market.

Likewise, the looting of archaeological sites in Asia also caters for demand on the art markets of Hong Kong, Japan and, beyond, of Europe and the United States. In Cambodia, King Norodom Sihanouk alerted the international community to the situation, saying that the temples of Angkor have been more greatly damaged by looting in the last ten years than throughout the rest of their history. Chinese archaeological objects are found in the possession of European antique dealers in such great quantities that Interpol has decided to send a mission to the country.

Scientific and ethical motivations

ICOM has always been actively involved in this fight alongside UNESCO for a variety of reasons. First, from a scientific point of view, the looting of archaeological sites makes any interpretation of the objects impossible. Removed from their context, they cannot provide the information whereby their historical significance can be determined. This situation is dramatic for a large number of countries, and is even more so in the case of Africa which possesses few written archives. Without the discoveries yielded by archaeological excavations, the memory of the continent

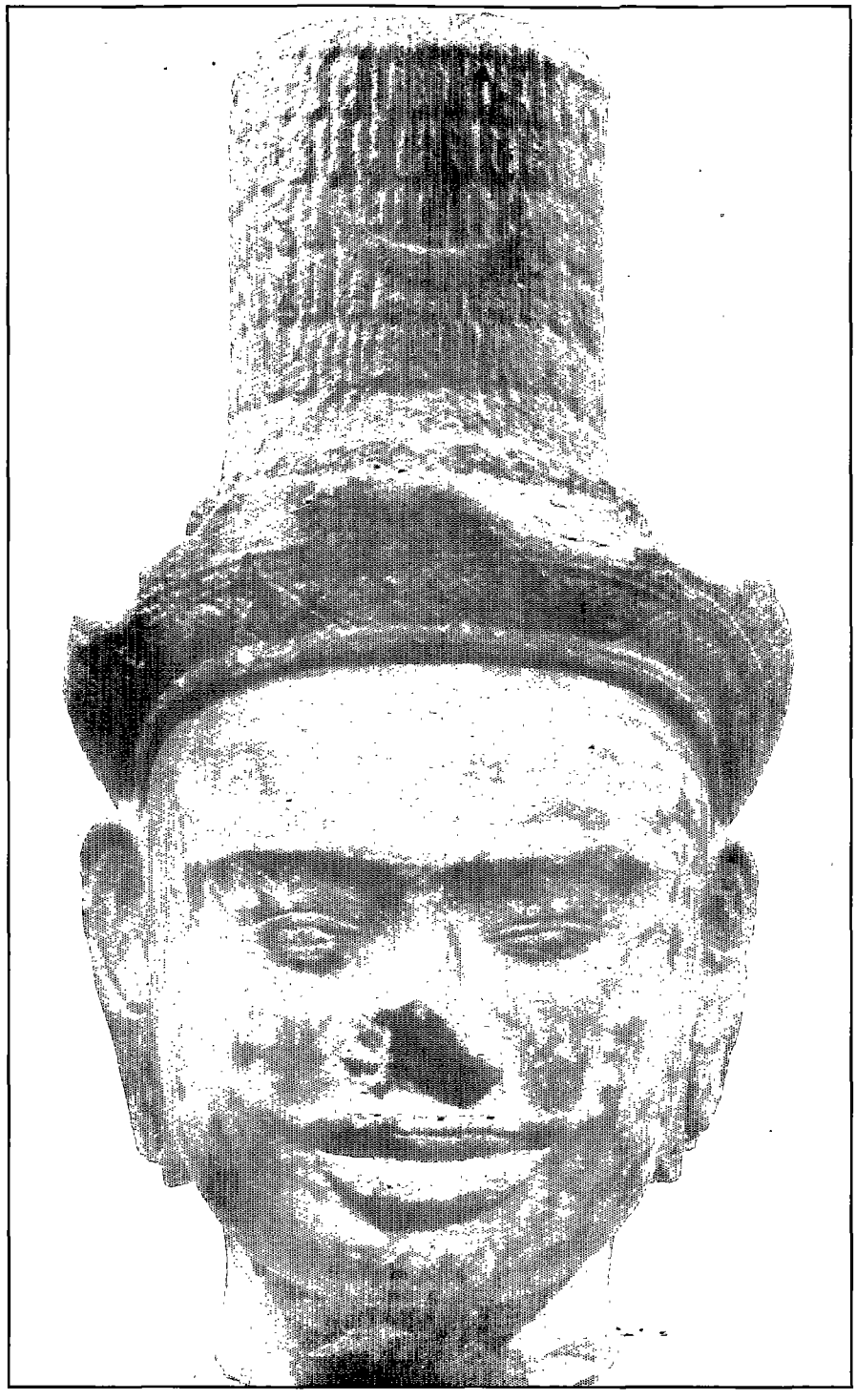


Photo by courtesy of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient

Head removed from a statue of Shiva, stolen from the conservation storehouse at Angkor and recently acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; after verification with ICOM, the museum authorities contacted the Cambodian Government which has now officially requested the object's return.

will be lost and it will no longer be possible to reconstitute its history. Hence what some people call 'cultural genocide'.

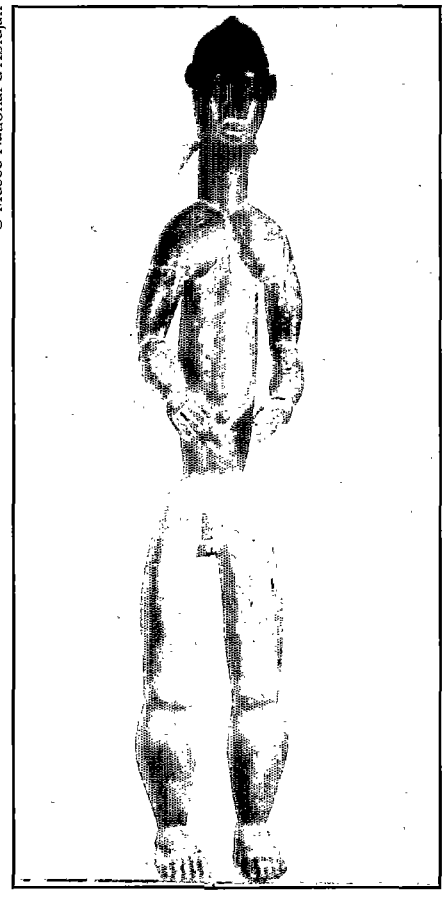
ICOM has also always wished to have a well-defined position as regards ethics. Its Code of Ethics, adopted in 1986, stipulates that 'a museum should not acquire . . . any objects unless the . . . responsible officer [is] satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title . . . and that . . . it has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin . . . in violation of that country's laws'. These provisions on acquisitions also apply to exhibitions. Each member of ICOM is requested to adopt the code on its accession to membership of the Organization. It has been translated into sixteen languages and now serves as an international reference.

The Code of Ethics also refers to the rules of mutual respect which should govern relations between museum professionals. They are of crucial importance to the international co-operation which is required for the fight against illicit traffic. Hence the appeals launched by African professionals to the international community to stop the haemorrhage of their heritage from the continent, and the appeal launched by Prince Norodom Ranarridh at the United Nations in 1991.[3] In recent years, the Committee of ICOM responsible for ethics has had several cases submitted to it and reminded a number of museums of the principles of the code. This provides an explanation of ICOM's position with respect to the art market which we would wish to see observe ethical principles and also adopt a code of ethics. We believe that the art market complements the cultural action of museums, given that when individuals become buyers and – who knows? – collectors they also help to preserve and promote heritage. But to continue to buy and acquire objects, they should be able to do so in conditions of optimum security. Today, however, the art market is the only sector of economic life in which one runs a 90 per cent risk of receiving stolen goods.

Since the adoption of the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, with whose preparation ICOM was closely associated, the latter has requested its National Committees to urge their governments to ratify it. Museum professionals are most directly concerned

in having the international conventions adopted by their politicians and legislators: they play a crucial role in this area. Particular pressure was more recently brought to bear on a number of European countries, the majority of which have yet to ratify the Convention. The French Minister of Culture pledged in 1995 that the Convention would be ratified in the following months, and a number of steps were taken by Switzerland. All of which is proof that after twenty-five years, it is still not too late to obtain success in this domain.

ICOM has made particular effort to give greater publicity to the Implementation Act of the Unites States, the only major country active in the art market to have ratified the UNESCO Convention. This act makes it possible for countries which have also ratified the Convention to ban the sale of objects belonging to their heritage, especially those stemming from clandestine excavations, on American soil. The act, which is insufficiently known in 'exporting' countries (and the responsibility for whose supervision is entrusted to the Cultural Property Advisory Committee which has too limited means to be able to promote it satisfactorily) led to agreements with only four Latin-American countries, El Salvador, Bolivia, Peru, Guatemala, and one African country, Mali.



Bêté statuette, stolen from the National Museum of Abidjan. Seized at the Drouot auction house in Paris in December 1994, it was returned to Côte d'Ivoire in December 1995.

Happily, both changing attitudes and the rules established by the codes of ethics have led, over the past few years, to a revision of legislation, with the onus of proof being reversed. Individuals acquiring cultural property can thus no longer be considered to be acting in good faith (the notion of good faith being one of the weaknesses attributed to the UNESCO Convention) if they fail to prove their 'diligence'. The 1993 European Directive and the 1995 Unidroit Convention are united in this objective, and constitute a great step forward. As in the case of the UNESCO Convention, ICOM has pledged to urge its National Committees to encourage ratification of the Unidroit Convention.

The work of the International Committees

Heritage professionals are responsible for preventive action to protect cultural property. A number of International Committees within ICOM serve as platforms for the circulation of information concerning the advances made in each discipline. Four of them have the more specific responsibility for ensuring the protection of collections.

The security of collections requires suitable training for all museum staff. Since ICOM was created in 1946, it has worked to ensure that the staff responsible for the care and protection of heritage have professional training. The International Committee of ICOM for the Training of Personnel in museums (ICTOP) has published a syllabus listing the different types of training required for the good management of museums and their collections. It has established a catalogue of such training offered at both national and international levels, and disseminates information about it.

The cataloguing of collections is essential to ensuring their security. For still too many museums, such catalogues are nonexistent or incomplete, yet only collections files can provide proof that an object does belong to a given museum and help to identify it. CIDOC (ICOM's International Committee for Documentation) helps museums to establish their collections catalogues. Thanks to its international Working Groups, which are active in the preparation of international professional standards, an initial List of Minimum Data Categories or 'fields' was drawn up in 1978 and published in the UNESCO review, *Museum*, in order to bring it to the knowledge of all professionals. Other working groups co-ordinate vocabulary and terminology, establishing lists of specific categories of objects and analysing the information which museums use for management, research, exhibitions and the conservation of objects. This professional co-operation is crucial to information exchange at the international level, the only way an effective network can be created.

In addition to this documentary work, between 1992 and 1995 ICOM took practical action in response to the needs expressed by a number of countries with respect to documentation and catalogues. A pilot project for the Standardization of Collections Inventories in Africa was thus set up within the framework of ICOM's AFRICOM Programme. Six museums were selected to play a regional role of promotion and training. They worked together on the common standardization project, receiving equipment and training and committing themselves to extending the project to cover the other museums of their countries and the subregion. Identical projects are planned in Latin America and the Arab countries.

The application of security measures in museums, whether based on advanced technology or not, ensures effective protection against theft. ICOM's International Committee for Museum Security (ICMS) publishes international directives on security and organizes training courses for management staff. It holds annual meetings which provide the opportunity for analysing preventive measures and security systems, as well as for sharing experiences.

In many countries, cultural heritage is not put on display in museums, but still kept within the communities that produce it. This also holds true for natural heritage. Local inhabitants should therefore be made aware of the importance of their heritage which is the repository of their cultural identity. To achieve this, museum professionals should establish closer ties with the communities in question and co-operate with them. Indeed, this is one of the tasks of ICOM's International Committee for Education and Cultural Action (CECA) whose members are museum staff specalized in the interpretation and dissemination of information about collections among the general public. In like manner, the

protection of archaeological sites already, or yet to be, excavated by professional archaeologists requires the active support of local inhabitants who are seen as the only effective guardians of this type of heritage.

Workshops for police and customs officers

In order to improve the application of the 1970 Convention, UNESCO and Interpol began, several years ago, to bring together heritage professionals in regional workshops. An ICOM representative was also invited to participate in workshops organized in Thailand in February 1992, in Cambodia in July 1992, and in Hungary in April 1993.

In September 1993, ICOM decided to play a more active role in these initiatives and to raise funds to enable museum, police and customs professionals all to be brought together at these workshops. This would ensure co-operation at the national level between the representatives of these three professions, and at the regional level with their counterparts in other countries. By such co-operation, which involves the setting up of on-site teams directly concerned with heritage protection, the situation in the field can be considerably improved.

The first workshop of this kind was held in Africa and took place in the United Republic of Tanzania in September 1993. The second took place in Mali in 1994, and the third in Ecuador in 1995. For the first time, professionals who had never met at the national level were brought together, and we have great expectations concerning the links which have thus been forged.

Public information

A number of bodies publish and disseminate photographs of stolen objects: Interpol and UNESCO, first of all, IFAR in the United States, the magazine *Trace* in the United Kingdom, various science journals such as *Minerva* in the United States, and sales catalogues such as the *Gazette de Drouot* in Paris. *ICOM News*, the quarterly bulletin which is distributed free to ICOM members, contains photographs and descriptions of missing objects with Interpol file numbers. Several Japanese art objects stolen in 1989 from the Tikotin Museum in Haifa (Israel) and a human head in bronze stolen from the National Museum of Nigeria were recovered recently thanks to the 'Protecting the Heritage' section of *ICOM News*.

Encouraged by these successes, ICOM has sought to strengthen this policy by publishing a series entitled 'One Hundred Missing Objects'. These documents are widely distributed to museum professionals, police and customs services, art-market professionals, salesrooms and galleries. The first edition, devoted to Angkor, was published in September 1993, and the second, on looting in Africa, in 1994. Four other editions are being prepared for Latin America, Europe, the Arab countries and Asia.

These publications are designed both to inform and to warn, with the title of the series indicating that over and above the objects in the publication, it is to the heritage as a whole that they represent that we wish to draw attention.

First, they are aimed at informing museum professionals whose primary duty is to be extremely vigilant towards the acquisitions of, and donations to, their

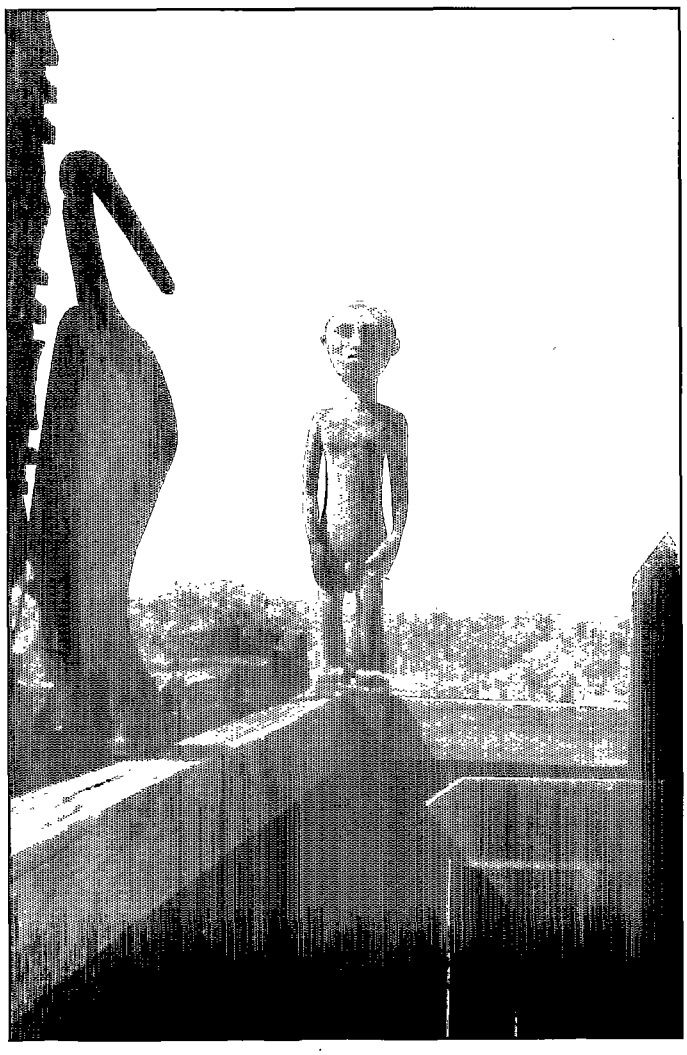
museums. We very quickly came to realize that our endeavour was not without justification since the publication served its purpose in the best-informed museums: witness the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York where – and it immediately informed us of this – a Khmer head shown in the publication *Looting in Angkor* was discovered. We hope that it will be rapidly returned in response to the request made by the Cambodian Government.

They are also designed to inform the art market. Two months after our first publication, an antique dealer in Paris returned a Khmer statue. Later, two other objects sold by Sotheby's in London and New York were formally identified, and Cambodia has since made requests for their return. Despite co-operation by Sotheby's, we regret the fact that their 'experts' appear to be so uninformed, and allow a renowned institution to put on sale objects that are widely known to come from systematic looting.

There has been similar success since the publication of *Looting in Africa*, the second edition in the series. A Madagascan statue has been returned by an antique dealer in Paris, and six others have been confiscated in Brussels. A Bêté statue stolen from the National Museum in Abidjan has also been returned and a Malian Bankoni statue has been confiscated in Paris.

Symbolically few though these retrieved objects may be, the speed with which they are sometimes returned by antique dealers demonstrate an increasing wish for transparency. Our closer co-operation with INTERPOL and the police in different countries also clearly facilitates contacts for us.

We have been able to reach a wider public through these publications. The written press, radio and television have relayed our concerns, enabling us to reach the public opinion which alone can engender marked changes in certain practices. We are being increasingly assisted in this process by the exhibitions staged by the museums themselves, which draw the attention of the public to the question of endangered heritage when they put an example of such heritage on display. Such was the case during the exhibition *Valleys of the Niger*



© Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie, Madagascar

Sakalava funerary statuette, stolen from the Sakalava tomb at Morondava, Madagascar. Seized from a Paris antique dealer in March 1995 and returned to the Madagascan authorities; six similar objects have been seized in Brussels.

which was staged between 1993 and 1994 in Paris, Leiden (Netherlands), and then, for the first time in the history of the exhibition of African art, in the six African countries concerned. Attention should be drawn to this latter initiative which is still uncommon. For instance, no such procedure was followed by the *Africa 95* exhibition which was mounted at the Royal Academy in London.

The policy of combating the illicit traffic of cultural property can bear fruit only in the long term. Results can be achieved only through patient action in co-operation with the concerned 'actors': museums, the police, customs, the art market. It will require a change in attitudes which can only come about by increasing the awareness of the general public. The mobilization which exists against the sale of ivory and the protection of a number of endangered species should also be achieved for the cultural property that preserves the memory and identity of nations.

This, at all events, is the deeply felt conviction of our organization, a resolute combatant in this battle on whose outcome will depend the survival of heritage in the twenty-first century. ■

Notes

1. *One Hundred Missing Objects. Looting in Africa*, pp. 96, 97, 101, 113, Paris, ICOM, 1994. (ISBN: 92-9012-017-7).

2. *Illicit Traffic of Cultural Property in Africa*, Paris, ICOM, 1995 (ISBN: 92-9012-121-1).

3. Appeal echoed by King Norodom Sihanouk in *One Hundred Missing Objects. Looting in Angkor*, pp. 6–7, Paris, ICOM/EFEO, 1993 (ISBN: 92-9012-015-0).

Forum

With this issue, Museum International *launches a new feature to serve as a forum for current thinking on significant museum questions. Our aim is to pinpoint an important topic and to invite experts to express their views. Kenneth Hudson, director of the European Museum of the Year Award and author of fifty-three books on museums, social and industrial history and social linguistics, including the well known* Museums of Influence, *has agreed to be our 'gadfly', and will set out the issues so as to elicit lively, controversial and provocative responses. We hope that the addition of an open forum for discussion and debate will provide a rich source of new ideas for our readers and we welcome their comments on the topics presented, as well as suggestions for future themes.*

Kenneth Hudson's viewpoint on:
Art Museums

Art museums are the backward children of the museum world. They are still doing essentially the same thing today as they were 200 years ago, hanging pictures on walls and placing sculpture in the middle of the floor. Looking at these exhibits demands a lot of walking and a lot of standing. A visit to an art museum is a test of physical endurance, even when resting points are provided.

If I have a picture in my home, I can sit in a comfortable chair in front of it for as long as I like, absorbing it and having new thoughts about it. After half an hour, I can go to sleep and then find the picture still there, waiting for further attention. The understanding of art demands a great deal of time because it involves the emotions as well as the intellect. One can speed up the working of the intellect to quite a considerable extent, but the emotions cannot be rushed. For this reason, the walking tour which a visit to an art museum has become encourages the intellect at the expense of the emotions. The intellect can adjust to the cavalcade of pictures in a way that the emotions cannot, which is one of the reasons why art historians are an over-intellectualized race.

What I am demanding, in the interest of satisfaction and self-preservation, is a new breed of art museum, which shows very few works at any given time and which is arranged and furnished to cater for the sitting, contemplative visitor, not the museum athlete. At present I can get much more from a reproduction of a painting, looked at in a leisurely fashion at home, than from the original, competing with the works on either side and trying to give some value to the never-ending promenade passing by in front of it.

Marilyn Martin, Director of the South African National Gallery in Cape Town, comments:

The South African National Gallery does not fit Kenneth Hudson's description of, or requirements for, an art museum. While it holds in trust a historical and contemporary art collection on behalf of the people of South Africa, it is no longer only a repository for objects, a place that caters for a privileged élite. We provide a cultural and educational resource, encourage involvement in the visual arts and work directly with the different constituencies which comprise our communities. We continue to assess and test every function of the institution against the needs and requirements of a rapidly changing country. We also regard it as part of our mission to nurture a culturally diverse but shared national identity, and to participate in the writing and rewriting of our history and history of art. This art museum is

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fully part of the transformation of our society.

A number of ground-breaking exhibitions have been curated at the South African National Gallery during the past few years. These involved working hand in hand with the people whose histories and/or visual culture we were representing, or engaging individuals in the production of the exhibition and written documentation. As a result, the people of South Africa are laying claim to their national art museum and we are enriched and vitalized by the exchange.

Great thought, attention and care are given to the display of the objects, which at any given moment can range from nineteenth-century British paintings to carved African headrests, ceremonial staffs and other objects of similar chronology; from contemporary South African art to beadwork; from a retrospective of a neglected artist to photographic portraits. Visitors are encouraged to experience, to linger, to sit, to pause for refreshment. There is no need to rush, there is always the possibility of returning, as admission is free. We trust that we offer delight and instruction to the casual and ignorant visitor, as well as those who pursue intellectual passions and emotional responses. No mechanical reproduction, be it in a book or on the Internet, can replace the direct encounter with, or contemplation of, an original work of art.

Readers are invited to address their comments (which should be no longer than three paragraphs) to: Editor-in-Chief, Museum International, *UNESCO, 7 place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP (France), fax (33.1) 42.73.04.01, referring to 'Forum on Art Museums'.*

Technology update

'Virtual: 1° *Philos.* or *Lit.* Having only the potential to exist; which is only latent in a real being; which has within itself all the necessary conditions for becoming a reality.'

The virtual reality engineered by a computer makes possible the simulation, temporally, spatially and aesthetically accurate, of objects and buildings in real or deferred time. Curators will find that the animated images thus produced are both a precious tool for use in mounting an exhibition and an excellent teaching aid for teaching individual items in collections.

The virtual exhibition model

Instead of the scale model over which curators would normally pore to assess what an exhibition would be like, there is a three-dimensional computer-generated animation in which they can move about, with the computer mouse serving as a guide. To make this virtual model and retransmit the instructions given by the curator, computer engineers need a specific database, derived from the general catalogue, comprising a list of the works that will be in the exhibitions, their sizes, and, if possible, stylized depictions of them, their frame dimensions, their weights and their resistance to light and humidity. Computer engineers also need data about the place where the exhibition is to be held, lighting, electrical installations and the sizes and precise locations of doors and windows. They are then in a position to compile all this information on the basis of the plan for the layout of the exhibition (geographical, chronological, thematic, etc.) drawn up by the curator, and offer a range of proposals.

This method gives individual curators a more realistic idea of how visitors will experience new acquisitions or other types of renovation in context. Lighting effects, space and texture: these are some of the factors that a computer can take into account and easily change, unlike a model, where the roofless representation, materials used and vertical observation impose a distorted vision of the result. This virtual presentation gives the different departments of the museum (security, education, press relations and others) a more active role in the mounting of exhibitions. Each can view them well in advance, put forth its point of view and describe constraints, and optimize the quality of the final result.

For example, Jean-Louis Schulmann, a virtual-reality architect, worked in conjunction with the curator of the art collections at the Louvre Museum on the display of paintings and new showcases in Gallery 13 of the Richelieu Wing. This initial experience prompted him to make the following remark: 'Used intelligently, computer science can provide a basis for dialogue between the different parties involved and lead to increased efficiency in the installation process by avoiding unnecessary handling of the exhibits.' This technique is particularly useful when the works are heavy and three-dimensional: a sculpture exhibition, or the presentation of a site, for example.

The virtual object

When, in the case of a relic, remnant or fragment, hypotheses are being put forward about the conditions required for making the original object, the computer can be used to test them. It thus becomes an invaluable tool of scientific research as well as a means of popularizing museum science. Since computer graphics can combine an infinite number of prescribed conditions, archaeologists and historians are able to compare different possibilities and sift through them efficiently. For example, through the virtual reconstruction of an object or a building we can appreciate the work of its author and the techniques used when it was first made, and are better able to understand its ethnological context and explain it to others.

Virtual animation is also a means of making works explicit. Thus, a visit to the ruins of the Cluny Abbey in France is enhanced by a 3-D animation which gives the visitor an idea of the gigantic proportions of the interior and exterior of the vanished buildings. Likewise, the virtual exhibition, *Nefertari Virtually Real*, created in 1994 by the Getty Conservation Institute, enables the visitor to visit Nefertari's tomb in real time as it was when discovered in 1904 and after its renovation in 1992, to understand the methods of treatment used to overcome conservation problems and to decipher the hieroglyphics on the tomb. Lastly, besides being a teaching aid for visitors, virtual animation can be used as a professional tool for the conservation or restoration of a site or collection. For example, Jean-Louis Schulmann carried out a virtual reconstitution in Rouen of a building discovered when the Rouen Métro was being constructed. Thanks to the animation, visitors thus have an idea of the extent of the discovery even before they actually see the stones and vestiges of the site. Plans or views derived from the animation can be reproduced on paper, audiovisual media or CD-ROM in order to convince the rest of the community of the need to support a particular project. Plans for real models or compilations with other forms of animation can also be obtained from the computer program. In every case, images prove to have a stronger impact than texts in putting across information.

Virtual art

Computer graphics are gradually making their way into museums as an integral part thereof, rather than merely as teaching aids. The new

avant-garde artists create 3-D virtual animations to be used in real, palpable space. Some claim that this is a new way of exploring reality, an imaginary digital world in which a new interpretation of dreams takes 'shape'. Despite the scepticism still surrounding these creations, their novelty and their new and different approach to movement fascinate people. Above all, however, they are engendering new mystical hypotheses and a new approach to the public.

Catherine Ikam and Louis-François Fléri are the authors of *Messager* (Messenger), a work which was produced for an exhibition entitled '*Cités Cinés 2*', staged on the heights of La Défense in Paris in 1995. It was a face, made up of 3-D digital images, which came to life as individual spectators drew near, looked at them and spoke to them. The interactivity between spectator and artist was striking. Would it be so fanciful to imagine interactive multilingual guides answering visitors' questions in every museum?

Report by Marine Olsson, technician at the National Centre for Study and Research in Advanced Technologies, Dijon, France, responsible for the feasibility study and the networking of computerized and photographic inventories of museum collections in the Burgundy region.

Professional news

Getty launches Web site for arts education

ArtsEdNet, a new interactive World Wide Web site for arts educators is now on line from the Getty Center for Education in the Arts. *ArtsEdNet* is one of merely a handful of Web sites that provides art resources, and offers two innovative services that make it stand out for use by teachers: it presents more than 250 pages of well-developed lesson plans and other curricular materials that can be downloaded for use in the classroom; and it give participants a chance to 'talk' regularly with recognized artists, historians and educators. In addition, it acts as a forum for the exchange of information on the comprehensive teaching approach known as discipline-based art education (DBAE), which combines the four disciplines that contribute to the creation and understanding of art – studio art, art history, art criticism and aesthetics – and which is now taught in more than 400 school districts across the United States. The Web site also provides gateways to other arts and education resources on the Internet.

Online address:
http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/.
E-mail address: artsednet@getty.edu.

Second Asia–Pacific Triennial

The Queensland Art Gallery in Brisbane (Australia) will host the second Asia–Pacific Triennial exhibition of contemporary art late in 1996. The first Triennial, held in the autumn of 1993, proved to be a ground-breaking event that attracted more than 60,000 visitors and brought together nearly 200 recent works of art including painting, sculpture, print-making, photography, performance and installation art. Seventy-six artists were represented from Australia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. The 1996 Triennial will also feature a major international conference.

For further information:
Asia-Pacific Triennial
Queensland Art Gallery
P.O. Box 3686
South Brisbane

Queensland 4101 (Australia)
Tel: (07) 840.73.18
Fax: (07) 844.8865.

IIC Congress 1996

The sixteenth international congress of the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works will take place in Copenhagen (Denmark) from 25 to 30 August 1996, in association with the Danish National Museum. Under the title 'Archaeological Conservation and its Consequences', the congress will offer new perspectives on the conservation of archaeological sites and finds, both on land and under water. Particular attention will be given to ways in which attitudes toward archaeological conservation have been reassessed in recent years as the consequences of previous approaches have become evident. The official language of the conference will be English.

For further information:
IIC
6 Buckingham Street
London WC2N 6BA (United Kingdom)

New publications

Illicit Traffic of Cultural Property in Africa. A publication of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), Paris, 264 pp. (ISBN 92-9012-121-1). Available from ICOM, UNESCO, 1, rue Miollis, 75732 Paris Cedex 15 (France).

Since 1991, ICOM and the UNESCO Division of Cultural Heritage have embarked on a worldwide programme of regional workshops to alert museum professionals, governments, and customs and police officials to the threat of theft and pillage of cultural property, and to the means available to combat this ever-growing international traffic. This new publication assembles the papers presented by participants in the workshops held in 1993 in the United Republic of Tanzania, and in 1994 in Mali. It also describes the efforts undertaken by ICOM, UNESCO, INTERPOL, and the United States Information Agency, and details the experiences of several European and North American museum curators and researchers which illustrate the collaboration that is indispensable in fighting this scourge. The result is a comprehensive panorama of the situation confronting the African continent.

A Practical Handbook for Literacy Educators; A People's Museum; Practical Interventions for Basic-Skills Museum Visitors. Published by the Musée de la Civilisation, 85, rue Dalhousie, C.P. 155, Succursale B, Quebec (Canada), 1995.

These three booklets are the result of the Musée de la Civilisation's 'Alpha-Museum' project, which aims to simplify access to the museum for adults participating in literacy programmes. Since International Literacy Year 1990, the museum has worked in co-operation with adults and educators from three literacy centres in Quebec in order to devise and realize a project that would serve as a bridge to reach this special clientele so as better to respond to their needs. Approximately twenty educators and almost 200 adults from eleven literacy centres in Quebec took part in validating the documents produced during the course of the project. *A Practical Handbook for Literacy Educators* presents the exploration activities contained in the information document *A People's Museum* which was designed for adult literacy learners. It also includes suggestions for learning activities that prompt discovery and exploration of the treasures of other museums and cultural institutions in the region. The document *Practical Interventions for Basic-Skills Museum Visitors* is intended for the museum's guides who must deal regularly with people unable to read or write, and will be of use to the staff of museums and other cultural bodies who come into contact with people lacking basic skills. The overall aim of the three publications – and of the Alpha project itself – is to

demystify museums in general by helping literacy learners get acquainted with the Musée de la Civilisation.

Standards for Touring Exhibitions. Published by the Museums and Galleries Commission, 16 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AA (United Kingdom), 1995.

By setting out standards for lending to exhibitions, for organizing exhibitions for tour and for taking full advantage of showings, this publication aims to help museums and galleries of all types and sizes to deal successfully with touring exhibitions and to make their showing more effective. It deals with such themes as the place of touring exhibitions in overall exhibition policy, market research to determine potential visitors, exhibition concept and the importance of academic research, the use of formative evaluation in developing the exhibition, the organization and administration of the tour, scheduling, budgeting and fund-raising. Questions relating to agreements, legalities and collection care, as well as design and handling are also explored; the extensive use of case-studies provides readers with a host of practical suggestions.

Techne: La science au service de l'histoire de l'art et des civilisations. Edited and published by the Laboratoire de Recherche des Musées de France, 6, rue des Pyramides, 75041 Paris Cedex 01 (France).

This new illustrated journal, which is scheduled to appear annually, explores the application of various sciences to the study of cultural heritage. Each issue is based on a particular theme linked to a newsworthy event; the first issue, published in 1994, was devoted to the artist Nicholas Poussin on the occasion of the major exhibition of his work at the Grand Palais in Paris. Written mainly for museum professionals, scientists and archaeologists, it provides a forum for researchers, curators, historians, artists and philosophers to dwell upon the relationship between art and science. It also presents the results of research undertaken by the research laboratory of the museums of France, at the Louvre. Published in French with summaries and photo captions in English.

museum international

Correspondence

Questions concerning editorial matters:
The Editor, *Museum International*,
UNESCO, 7 place de Fontenoy,
75352 Paris 07 SP (France).
Tel: (33.1) 45.68.43.39
Fax: (33.1) 42.73.04.01

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