Museum International

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City museums

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Le Canal du Casino,
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UNESCO celebrates its fiftieth anniversary

On 24 October 1945, the United Nations Charter came into effect. The new-born organization carried with it the seeds of another international partnership: its Article 57 provided for the creation of a specialized agency in the educational and cultural fields.

One week later, on 1 November, representatives from forty-four countries began meeting in London at a Conference to establish an Educational and Cultural Organization of the United Nations, which was jointly convened by the British and French governments. In his welcoming address, British Prime Minister Clement Attlee set the stage for the work to be accomplished: 'Today the peoples of the world are islands shouting at each other over seas of misunderstanding ... "Know thyself," said the old proverb. "Know your neighbour," we say today. And the whole world is our neighbour.'

After two weeks of lively debate, much of it focused on extending the new institution's role to reflect the spectacular progress made in the field of science, delegates hammered out the text of the draft constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – UNESCO. On 16 November, it was signed by thirty-seven states and the Final Act by 41. Its opening lines, penned by the poet and Librarian of Congress Archibald MacLeish who headed the United States delegation, gave the Organization its mandate – and its vision: 'Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed. . . .'[1]

In its fifty-year existence, UNESCO has worked unceasingly to break down geographic barriers to the spread of scientific and intellectual knowledge, and to encourage dialogue between cultures. Its activities have ranged from the spectacular – such as the safeguarding of great monuments and sites – to the humanistic – as in its persistent battle against apartheid – to the normative, for example, the Universal Copyright Convention. Along the way, it has helped train librarians, educate teachers, launch and sustain major programmes of research on the oceans and the biosphere, and provide thousands of fellowships for students from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, the Arab States and Latin America. It was instrumental in the founding of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in 1946, and has provided expertise and technical assistance to create and improve museums throughout the world. The publication of *Museum International,* first issued in 1948 under the title *Museum*, bears witness to the Organization's commitment to enlisting museum professionals in the common task of sharing expertise and promoting international understanding.

Today, UNESCO counts 183 Member States. Its 2,200 staff members are stationed in 54 countries. They comprise educators, scientists, archaeologists, anthropologists, journalists, jurists ... They provide assistance to help eliminate the greatest obstacle to development – illiteracy; to improve education systems; to preserve the environment and master the phenomenon of population growth; to increase access to science and technology while stemming the 'brain drain'; to protect cultural property in the face of natural and human-made disasters; to strengthen communication capacities and facilitate the circulation of information; to foster mutual respect and tolerance, democratic participation and awareness of human rights.

The emergence of a new international situation as a result of the end of the Cold War has added renewed urgency to these objectives. As it prepares to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, UNESCO is ever more conscious of the importance of its ethical mission and of its unique role as a forum and a focus for international co-operation on the key issues of our time.

M.L.

Note

[1] See Michel Conil Lacoste, *The Story of a Grand Design: – UNESCO 1946–1995*, Paris, UNESCO Publishing, 1995.

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Editorial

By the year 2000, one in two people will be living in a city. While world population is expected to grow by 50 per cent between 1990 and 2020 – from 5.2 to 7.8 billion – urban population during the same period is likely to increase by more than 100 per cent – from 2.2 to 4.5 billion.

UNESCO's concern with cities is thus a response to this overwhelming, critical and inescapable fact of urban life.[1] Today it is no longer the factory and the enterprise that reflect social conflict, but the urban fabric itself – the city – that is the locus of new rifts in society. Cities, which have been the wellspring of such vital concepts and practices as urbanity, civilization, politics and democracy, community solidarity and social bonds, are seen by many today as unwieldy agglomerations of disorder, chaos, violence and pollution. As pointed out by Ali Kazancigil, Editor of UNESCO's *International Social Science Journal*, 'the city as a place of sociability and civility, as the *polis* and the public space – *res publica* – where democracy and citizenship emerged, is altered within the sprawling conurbation'.

With the radical change of urban structures come new ways of life and new relations between architectural and cultural spaces. As buildings become more comfortable, they also become more self-contained and separated from the public spaces outside – technologies such as electric lighting, air-conditioning and telecommunications have seen to that. And interior comfort affects streets in another way, turning them into places of rapid and efficient movement rather than sites of gathering and conviviality. The sense of place that so characterized the early city has become mere space which may be readily subdivided, sold off and economically exploited.[2] Creators of a country's prosperity, urban zones now often bear the scars of its greatest poverty.

And yet cities continue to act as powerful magnets, drawing rich and poor from near and far, into an increasingly polyglot, variegated and ever shifting mix of cultures, customs and expectations. In the final analysis, this is where the city's true wealth lies: in the contrasts and conflicts that nurture creativity. These complex issues were evoked by the Director-General of UNESCO in his inaugural address to a recent international meeting in Rio de Janeiro on 'City, Environment and Culture': 'We must place our faith in cities as the way forward because the solutions lie within them; cities . . . are the laboratory which affords the best prospects of shaping our future . . . [they] are the most decisive and exciting of the challenges that lie before us as we enter the third millennium.'

City museums are part and parcel of this volatile urban landscape and, as the articles in this issue's dossier reveal, they are striving to come to terms with their new mandate and their new publics. The museum that speaks *of* the city must now also speak *to* the city.

Our dossier was largely inspired by the work of Nichola Johnson, who broke new ground in exploring the role of city museums; she has provided not only the introduction but generous and clear-sighted counsel as well. Her professional experience, patience and breadth of knowledge of this field were invaluable.

M.L.

Notes

1. See 'Tales of Cities', *International Social Science Journal* (UNESCO), No. 125, August 1990, and 'Cities Under Stress', *The UNESCO Courier*, January 1991.

2. See Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization*, New York, Norton, 1994.

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Discovering the city

Nichola Johnson

The first International Symposium on City Museums, held at the Museum of London in 1993, was largely the brainchild of Nichola Johnson, then Head of the museum's Department of Later London History and Collections. Trained as an archaeologist and art historian, she is now Director of Museology at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, England. In this introduction to Museum International*'s dossier, she explains the 'why' and 'how' of this new breed of museum.*

Museums of cities are a comparatively recent phenomenon. Although a handful of institutions calling themselves the 'Museum of ...' existed in the nineteenth century, the first great wave of city museums belongs to the early decades of the twentieth century, and essentially to Europe and North America. Their forerunners in Europe were the local and regional archaeological, antiquarian and philosophical societies, whose members were interested chiefly in the more distant history of their areas and hardly at all concerned with recording the history and changes being made around them. In the United States, on the other hand, historical societies were established in small towns and rapidly growing cities by people fired with the pride of knowing that they were, in the grandest and most self-conscious way, literally making new histories around themselves. The Historical Society has sometimes evolved into the city's museum: sometimes, though, it remains quite distinct from it in both collections and approaches to urban history. In other parts of the world, such local history societies continue to flourish alongside more recently established city museums.

As it became increasingly clear that rapid urban expansion and industrial development were suppressing and obliterating the physical evidence of past settlement at an alarming rate, concerned citizens began to argue for the establishment of museums which would act as repositories for rescued fragments of the city's past. Imposing urban palaces were colonized, converted or copied and generous bourgeois patrons gave their time and money – and often their belongings as well – to establish memorials to their own city. A city interpreted, inevitably, in the light of their own cultural and moral values.

These older city museums are, in some senses, disadvantaged by the length of their own histories, quite apart from that of the cities which it is their brief to interpret. Their early collections were often simply more modest versions of those in larger national or regional museums. Fine furniture, ceramics, paintings, costumes and musical instruments were collected into room settings that reflected the lives and aspirations of their early benefactors. Although many of the displayed objects were undoubtedly of local provenance, there was often very little apart from topographical prints and paintings which suggested those distinguishing characteristics and qualities which define every city.

Sometimes present-day curators, keen to reveal their awareness of the city's current complexity, have felt such collections as embarrassing millstones hanging around their necks, and they have done their best to marginalize or exclude them from their displays. In other instances those founding collections have defined the nature of a museum to such an enduring extent that it has chosen, perhaps advisedly, to see the guardianship and interpretation of such material as central to its role in the modern city. For yet other city museums, such collections have acted as an impetus to innovative displays and interpretive programmes which attempt both to value the museum's history and to look beyond it towards the city's past, present and future.

Equally encumbering or enriching, depending on one's point of view, are the vast collections of archaeological and architectural material which have accumulated in museums whose cities are places of ancient and continuous settlement. It has sometimes been easier for city museums to hide behind such collections and to see the past that is represented by them as the city's only valid history. In cases where there is a desire to integrate them with an outward-looking response to the contem-

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porary city, the curator is faced with further challenges. Should there be reconstruction in the museum galleries, with replicas standing for lost or assumed originals? Should such collections be displayed as art objects and those pieces undeserving of such elevated treatment be consigned to boxes in the basement? Should the material be speculatively reinterpreted according to the pressures of current political correctness? The problems – and opportunities – are legion. The tendency to retreat to well-defended academic bunkers is particularly evident, and to some extent understandable, in the wake of the kind of political changes that are currently affecting Central and Eastern Europe. When urgent social issues dominate the political agenda the city museum is more often seen as an expensive liability than as a potential agent of social change in urban and national centres.

By comparison, those city museums that have been established in recent years and that do not yet experience the weight of rich collections and constraining curatorial attitudes may appear to enjoy quite distinct advantages. They are free to respond essentially to the contemporary city and to the assumed needs of its citizens. They can employ the latest interactive technologies and most excitingly innovative approaches to the display of those objects which they do possess. They often operate within and from buildings that have been designed to take into account the multiplicity of academic, political and social demands which we presently make of our museums. But here, I suggest, lies their greatest potential disadvantage. There is currently a tendency to believe that if we can only 'get it right' the museum – and the city museum particularly – can be all things to all people: if we provide enough accessible public programmes and enough unthreatening opportunities for citizens to come into the museum and make their own histories, then we can surely cure most of the ills of contemporary urban society. This is, I know, a simplification of a complex attitude, but it is an attitude that can easily become arrogant and, paradoxically, patronizing. It also runs the risk of losing sight of what any city museum essentially is: an institution which collects, cares for and interprets locally relevant objects and their attendant human histories.

Accepting that the city museum cannot be all things to all people all of the time, however, does not absolve it of its responsibility towards all citizens. That responsibility demands that the museum attempt to take account of the histories, aspirations and urban experiences of citizens from many different cultural, economic and ethnic backgrounds and to retrieve lost or suppressed aspects of those histories. But once it loses sight of the city itself as the central object of its responsibility and activity it ceases to become a city museum and becomes instead a different, albeit no less valid, urban cultural centre.

One of the more exciting and challenging things about 'museums of place' is their freedom to explore an almost limitless range of curatorial and interpretative approaches. Some of the most stimulating enterprises in today's city history museums, old and new, are those that question, re-evaluate and revalidate the museum's collections. Contemporary artists can make particularly valuable contributions to the metropolitan museum and to the recording of the city. It would be virtually impossible to mount the many alternative displays that would be necessary if the museum were to attempt even an imperfectly realized account of the multifaceted, multicultural entity which is the modern metropolis. But the artist is able to operate beyond the

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constraints of space and ideology which inevitably limit even the most innovative and well-intentioned curatorial enterprises.

Photography, film, oral history, outreach programmes, media centres, and so on, all have their place in today's city museum and are ideally placed to exploit one of its principal advantages over most other types of museum; for the city museum sits, quite literally, on top and in the middle of its raw material. The best city museums act as a starting-point for the discovery of the city, which can lead people to look with fresh, more informed and more tolerant eyes at the richness of the present urban environment and to imagine beyond it to past and possible future histories.

Places and beliefs are central to our sense of who and what we are. But both are elusive, and however enlightened and imaginative our museological approaches, they cannot be captured in museums. The museum's collections can, however, be used to offer eloquent impressions of a city, which at their best stimulate and validate alternative engagements with the place itself.

The articles in this issue of *Museum International* illustrate some of the widely differing approaches to telling city stories. An alternative selection of cities and museums would no doubt have revealed different responses to urban environments and experiences, yet more diverse attitudes towards urban history and responsibility. All offer insights into the ways in which city museums are approaching the opportunities and obligations of addressing their various constituents through museum-related, though not necessarily museum-specific, activities. Finally – and perhaps most importantly – they reveal the imaginative commitment of so many people now working in city museums to the museum, its city and its peoples. ■

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Museums about cities

Max Hebditch

How does a museum go about 'presenting' a city to its inhabitants and visitors? And in an increasingly urbanized world, what can a city museum do to identify and explain ever more complex social phenomena? Max Hebditch, Director of the Museum of London since 1977, provides a framework for reflection on the challenges confronting these unique museums. He is an archaeologist by training and was president of the United Kingdom Museums Association from 1990 to 1992. He has served as Chairman of the British National Committee of ICOM and chaired the symposium 'Reflecting Cities' at the Museum of London in 1993.

Early in 1993, a symposium was held at the Museum of London under the title 'Reflecting Cities'.[1] It was the first conference, as far as I know, specifically to address the question of how museums set out to study and interpret the city. Given the considerable attention that urban studies command in universities and their importance to town planning, it is surprising that museums have taken so long to consider their own role. Unlike the great museums of art, archaeology and science found *in* our cities, the museums *about* cities are usually rather small and the public do not always understand their purpose.

The evidence we have is that many people do not realize that the Museum of London, which is a relatively large and high-profile museum compared with similar institutions, is about London. We could seek to make our identity clearer by calling ourselves 'The Museum of the History of London', but that would deny the relevance of contemporary London, geography, and the natural environment. Alternatively, we could call ourselves 'The Museum of London Life', but that would leave out the major themes of physical growth and cultural and economic influence which distinguish a great metropolis. Some museums accept the limitations of a more restricted purpose and are little more than displays of the fine and decorative arts of a city. In my view this is to take too narrow a view of the museum's role, particularly in a metropolis.

To be the museum about the city it is first necessary to define the city. There is little consensus among scholars which helps us to identify what is exclusively 'of the city'. Two lines of approach are apparent. The first emphasizes the geographical, administrative or built-up area which constitutes the city and opposes it to the countryside. The second emphasizes ways in which people organize themselves, and contrasts the urban society with the rural.

In traditional archaeology cities were identified as the principal artefacts of a civilization which was literate, and in which society was differentiated by class and function within a structure of overall 'political' control which might be royal, ecclesiastical or both. Such places have existed since at least the third millennium B.C. and are characterized by symbolic structures (palaces, parliaments, religious structures, monuments, museums, office blocks, memorials, banks). These symbols have remained important – even in the great linear cities and megalopolises of our own day such as Washington/Philadelphia/New York. But such features are not exclusive to the city: villages in the countryside have them too.

The concept of the specifically urban society can also be challenged. Some of the great centres of economic life in eleventh- and twelfth-century Europe were fairs on rural locations in northern Italy, Flanders and Champagne with no permanent settlement. Industrialization and manufacture have frequently taken place in the countryside. Parts of the city may not exhibit traditional urban characteristics. The settlements growing up around Istanbul, for instance, have social structures which are essentially those of Anatolian villages translated to the city by migration of people. In the new situation the village skills of trade and craftsmanship have of necessity to replace agriculture as the dominant element in their economy.[2]

While urbanists may not be able to produce a unified theory of the city and urbanism, we can recognize that there exist agglomerations of people gathered together, as Aristotle defined, for security, shelter, society and support. They are

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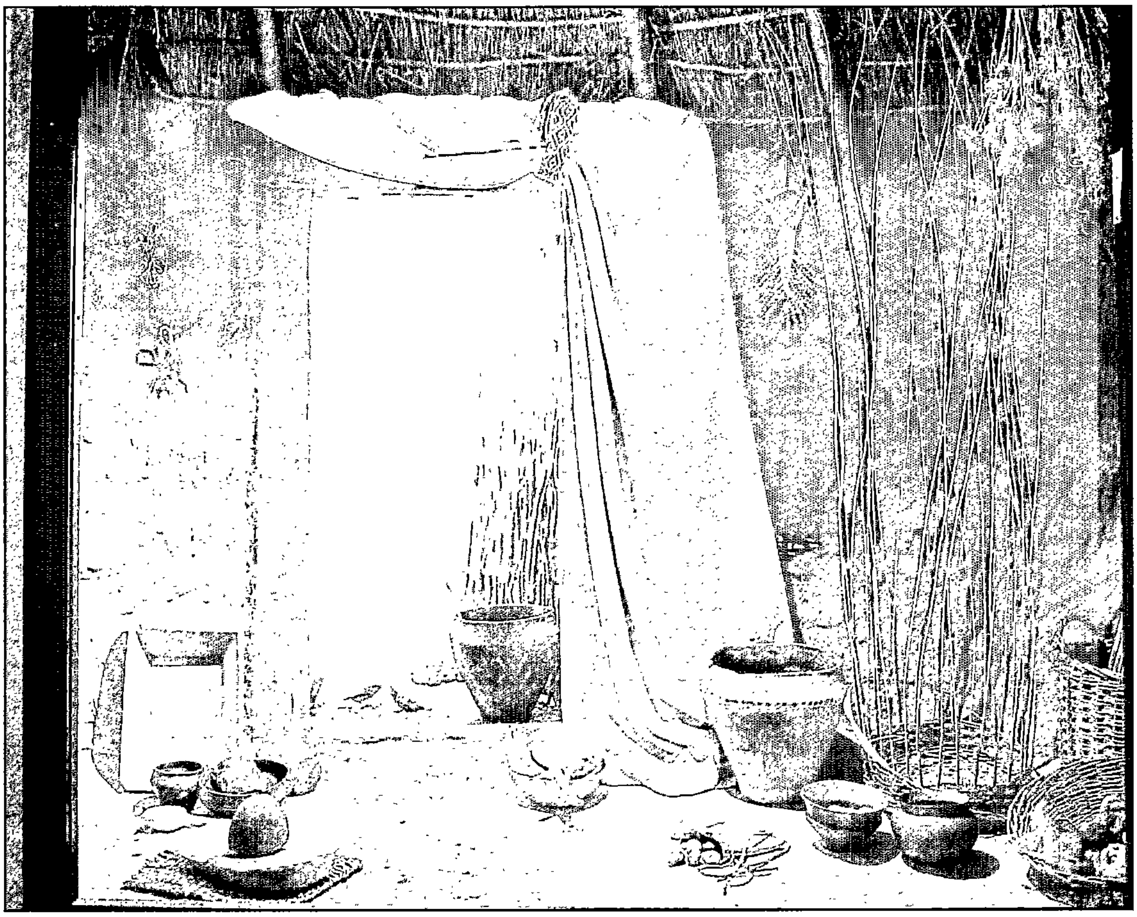

Photo by courtesy of the author

Reconstruction of Late Bronze Age/ Early Iron Age house, part of the new Prehistoric Gallery which opened on 21 November 1994.

magnets for migration and they grow, often beyond their administrative boundaries. City-dwelling is an increasing phenomenon of our times. Mexico City had a population of 7 million in 1970, 14 million in 1980 and could reach 31 million by 2000. Today, there are 226 cities with populations of over 1 million, twenty-seven with over 5 million and six with over 10 million.[3] Given this, it is surprising that there are so few museums about cities.

Collecting and interpreting

What tools do museums have to address the city phenomenon? The raw material is the same as for any museum: collections. But what items should end up in the museum about a city?

Artefacts. Of primary importance must be things made and/or used in the city. Some will have a general context; they are from the city rather than somewhere else. Some will have a functional context; they are known to have been used in a city trade, for instance. Others will have a very specific context in the city, such as the contents of a twentieth-century room or of an excavated medieval rubbish pit. Such objects can often be associated with other artefacts to form a datable group – a 'time-capsule' in the popular idiom.

Environmental evidence. Museums can hold and study the evidence of people's impact on, and exploitation of, the natural world both now and in the past. The current natural history of cities is often ignored by museums. Few make use of the insights into past environments that can be gained from archaeological excavations. The evidence obtained will include faunal and floral remains, and human skeletal material. Post-excavation research can produce information about such things as diet and disease in the past, data which can often only be obtained from this source. The relevance to contemporary life of

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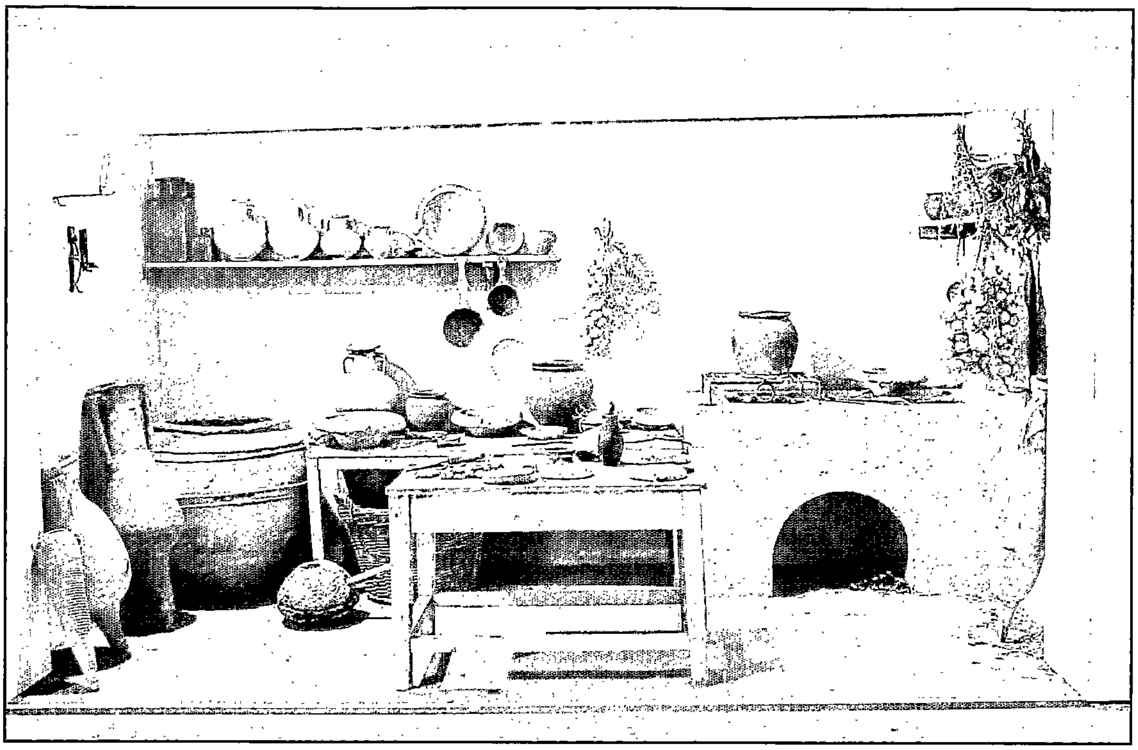

Photo by courtesy of the author

Reconstruction of a Roman kitchen, using a mixture of original objects (e.g. pottery) and replicas (e.g. furniture).

studying 'green' issues in a historical context should be grasped by museums about cities.

Records of places and activities. There are three classes: historic materials and archives, such as those from a business, associated with the artefacts collected by the museum and without which the artefacts cannot be fully understood; historic maps and plans of the city and its buildings; and the records generated as part of the museum's own research and collecting processes. Research and collecting records are the principal means of linking the artefact 'out there' (the fabric of the city itself) with the artefacts and other objects which are capable of being collected by the museum. Such data are crucial to understanding spatial distribution within the city, which can inform issues such as migration, changing social structures and land use, and economic activity.

Testimony. There are two types: images (paintings, drawings, prints, photographs) and oral testimony. Although objective information about the social and physical context of the museum's artefacts may be deduced from both, a great deal of their value lies in the subjective interpretation of the city by the artist and the feelings expressed by the person who records his or her impressions of life and work. Literary works also contribute to the body of testimony about the city but are not usually collected by museums.

These four elements are witnesses to the past and present of the city. They say very little of themselves: they exist; they have a context; they can be classified for the purposes of efficient storage and location. All this is reasonably objective. The urban dimension that distinguishes the museum of the city has to come from interpretation; the intervention of the scholar in understanding to what these things are witness. This is a process that must include the insights from evidence museums do not usually hold: the documentary sources which are the raw materials of the historian. Without the intervention of the historian, the museum will necessarily be limited in what it has to say to the public through its exhibitions, publications and educational activities.

The role of the museum's staff is crucial to interpretation. Few museums can employ

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all the academic disciplines that are needed as well as the particular skills of the museum in curation, conservation and interpretation. Museums need the help, usually from outside, not only of historians, but also of geographers, anthropologists, historians of art and architecture, palaeobotanists, palaeozoologists, natural historians, numismatists and so forth. The rôle of the curator must be to stimulate and to synthesize the work of all these disciplines. The approach is, in the broadest sense of the term, archaeological. Archaeology as a discipline has two qualities: first, the ability to bring together the products of many lines of inquiry into the past and present; second, its own distinctive contribution to understanding societies, some of it shared with anthropology. This approach to the evidence museums hold can be used particularly effectively to study patterns in material culture and the use of space; and the way both change through time. Artefacts have much to say about the way in which society uses goods. Contextual information relating to them provides both associations of objects and a geographical dimension. Using this data- the museum can examine some of the bigger issues of the power, economy and influence of the city, as well as the technology and organization of everyday life of its many peoples. By applying the chronological dimension, change and its processes can be demonstrated.

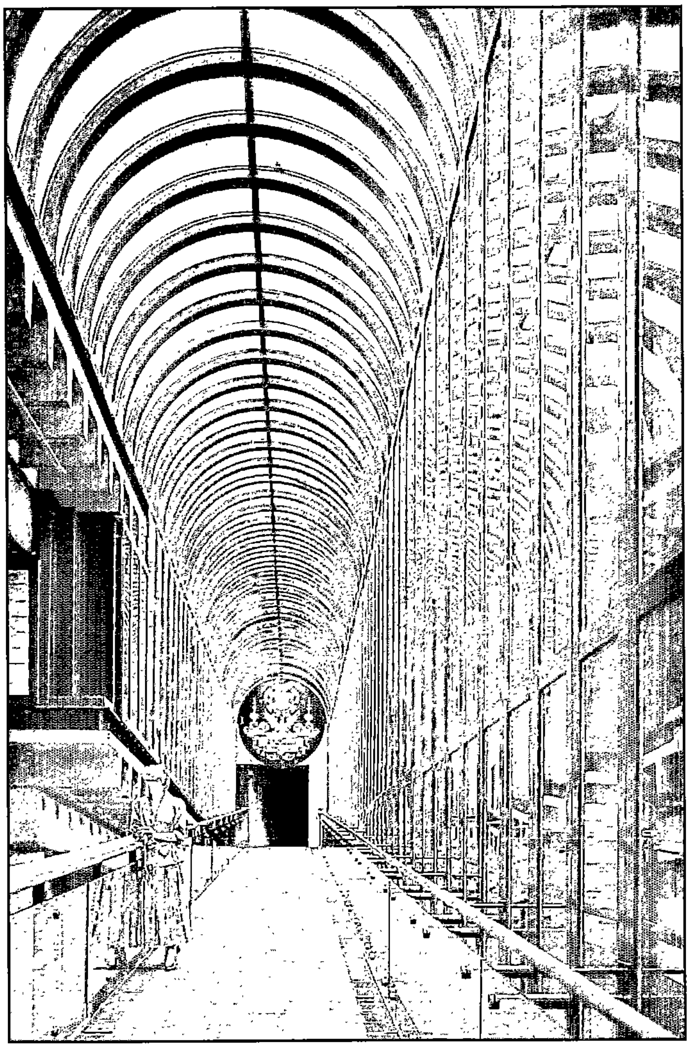
Photo by courtesy of the author

Ramp connecting the upper galleries (prehistoric times to the Great Fire of 1666) with the lower ones (post-1666).

Study of the collections and associated data in this way can show tensions and competition between groups and interests. It is possible to see survival strategies, for instance of migrants. Migration into the city has been constant throughout history and this is becoming a major feature of our times, creating problems such as shanty towns. It has to be remembered that what we see as problems are regarded as solutions, however inadequate, by those who live with them.

Explaining the city

The archaeological approach applies particularly to the artefacts, environmental evidence and records of places and activities contained in the museum. The evidence of testimony through pictures and reminiscence is different. It begins with the opinions and descriptions of past and present observers. They may relate their own experience in the city (e.g. as migrants) or their perception as artists of the city and the urban

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condition. The museum itself presents its own commentary on, and interpretation of, these opinions. The capacity of this type of witness to communicate immediately to our own age is very real. It has, how-ever, to be tested against understandings gained from the archaeologist and the historian.

The need to integrate all the evidence museums manage, and to link it with historical evidence, is vital to their public mission to explain the city. This has recently been demonstrated by a major three-year project at the Museum of London entitled '*The Peopling of London*'.[4] This was a programme of research and collecting leading to an exhibition, publication and outreach programme. It was designed to examine and explain the impact of people coming into London from overseas and the effect of London on them, throughout history. Three things about it were important. First, it challenged the assumption that migrants into London were not very visible in the records; testimony and artefacts were combined with historical studies to show that this was a misconception. In particular, personal accounts of the move to London, obtained through an oral recording programme, provided evidence of attitudes and experiences not available from other sources. Second, the Museum of London was found to be relevant to a number of communities in London with whom it had previously had little contact. Third, adopting a long chronological view (2,000 years of urban living and the prehistoric migrations before it) refuted current (often racist) misconceptions that migration is new and dangerous. Metropolitan cities, in which large numbers of people from different races and backgrounds live in close proximity to each other, are microcosms of the world as a whole. City museums, by applying their special skills, have much to say that is relevant to modern society.

Museums about cities need to interpret and explain urban society and the processes of change at work within it. The task requires curators to synthesize three types of evidence and the insights obtained from them. The first is essentially archaeological: (a) patterns of artefacts and the use of space; (b) the relationships between them; and (c) the processes of change. The second is the testimony of pictures and oral evidence, providing evidence of feelings and opinions. Both provide information unobtainable from other sources and are special to museums. The third is documentary evidence, for the periods where it exists, which contributes knowledge in its own right and also provides understanding of the other witnesses. The quality the museum needs to achieve its task well is a sensitivity to the unique character of every place. ■

Notes

1. Nichola Johnson (ed.), *Reflecting Cities*, London, The Museum of London, 1993.

2. Dogam Kuban, 'The Indeterminate Character of Istanbul Culture', *Biannual Istanbul*, pp. 1–19, Istanbul, Tarih Vakfi, 1992.

3. These are United Nations figures quoted in Emrys Jones, *Metropolis*, London, Oxford University Press, 1990.

4. Nick Merriman (ed.), *The Peopling of London*, London, Museum of London, 1993; the programme is reviewed in David Kahn, 'Diversity and the Museum of London', *Curator*, New York, American Museum of Natural History, 1994. See also page 12 of this issue.

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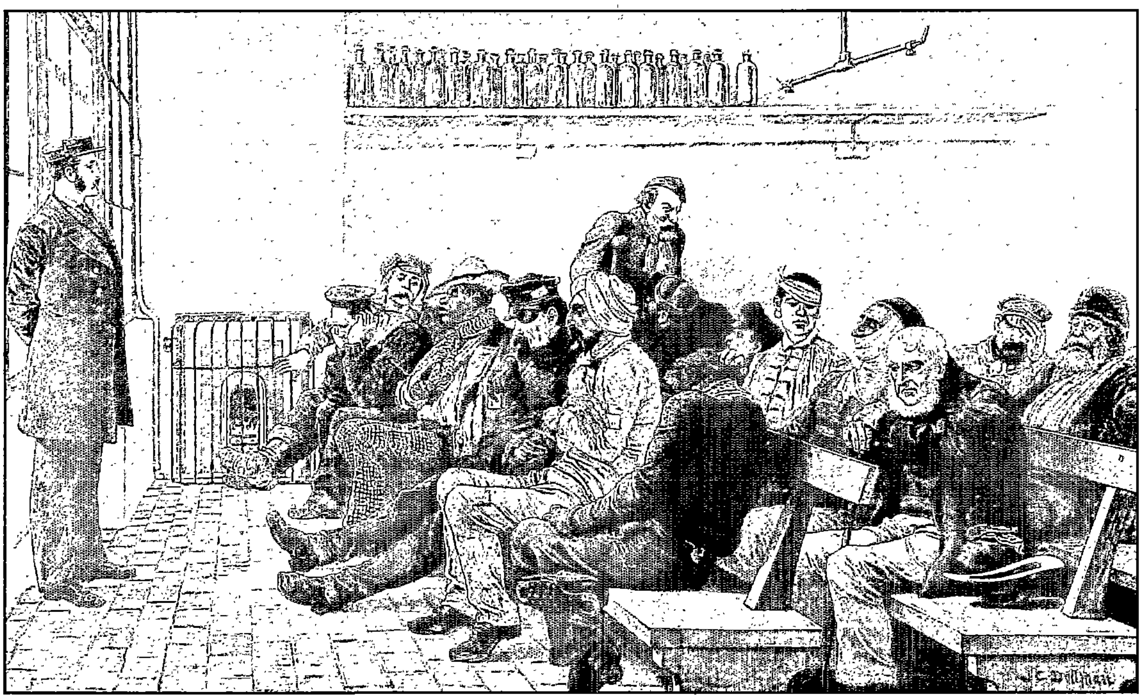
Hidden history: the *Peopling of London* project

Nick Merriman

A groundbreaking project at the Museum of London was designed to attract and involve entire segments of the city's population that had never before set foot in the museum. Nick Merriman is currently Head of the Museum's Department of Early London History and Collections. He studied archaeology and museum studies before working on a thesis exploring ways of broadening audiences for museums. The 'Peopling of London' project was an attempt to put these ideas into practice.

For many years now it has been accepted among archaeologists and social historians schooled in the theoretical debates of the 1970s and after, that any representation of the past in public is relatively subjective and necessarily partial. Critiques have repeatedly shown that museum displays consistently fail to represent adequately key areas of historical discourse such as women's history, a critical account of labour relations and the working-class movement, issues of sex and sexuality and the history of cultural diversity. However, relatively few museums have explicitly recognized the validity of this by undertaking exhibition projects that have tackled such hidden histories and potentially 'difficult' subjects, or by actually having a 'point of view' on a subject. It was against such a background that the Museum of London's *Peopling of London* project was conceived.

By 1991, market research, undertaken only recently in a comprehensive manner in the museum, was showing that, in common with other museums, the profile of the museum's visitors did not match that of the general population. In particular, it was found that, while over 20 per cent of Londoners classified themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority (1991 census data), only 4 per cent of the museum's public could be so classified. Doubtless, one of the reasons for this was the fact that there is hardly any mention of the city's long history of cultural diversity in the permanent galleries and, in particular, there is currently no post-war gallery. Thus there was no real incentive for anyone from an ethnic minority community to visit the museum, as their history seemingly had no place in the story of London presented there. Clearly the museum was failing to address the needs of up to a fifth of its potential constituency, and to obtain any credibility as an organization responsive to the public, it was important that these needs should be addressed. Furthermore, it was also important that these needs be addressed in a way that took account of



'Lascars' and European seamen waiting to see the doctor at the Seaman's Hospital Dispensary, 1881. Lascars were Asian and African sailors who worked in the merchant navy and formed small communities in the Docks area. Print from The Graphic.

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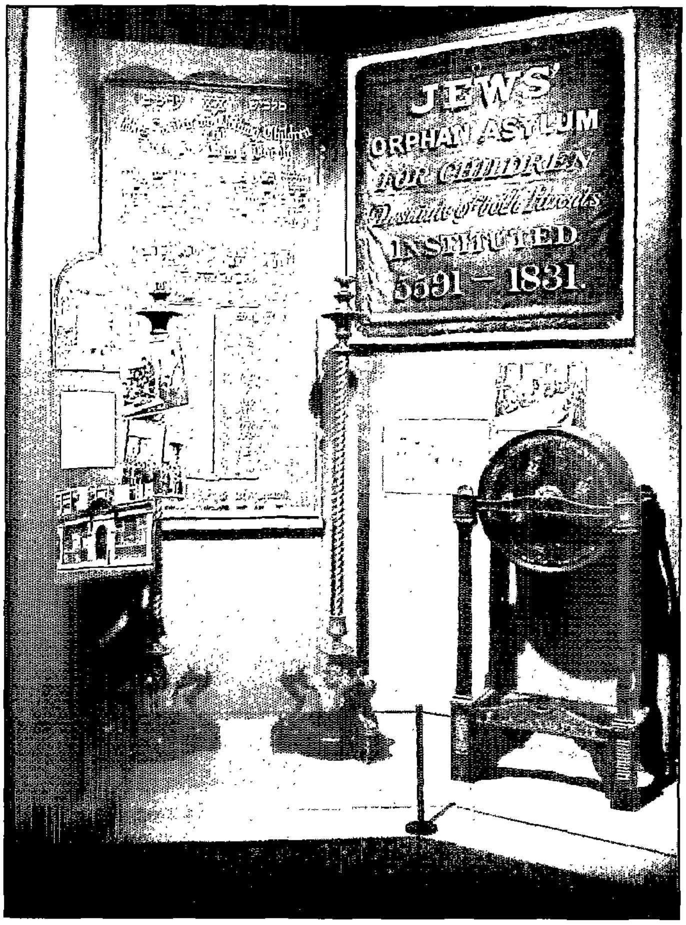

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Display of material relating to the Jewish community in the East End of London in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

changes in the representation of history by involving communities themselves as much as possible in the exhibition.

At the same time, with the onset of the recession and the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, it was possible to witness growing racism and xenophobia across Europe. The rhetoric of many far-right groups – in the United Kingdom at least – situated itself in history by constructing a mythical vision of the past in which a homogeneous, white, pre-war society had become overlain and corrupted in the post-war period by people with a different skin colour and customs who, it was argued, did not belong here. As the generators of public representations of the past, a number of us in the Museum of London felt that museums could serve a useful social purpose by exploding such myths and demonstrating that they were based on an erroneous reading of history.

These ideas coalesced around the idea of undertaking a project, ultimately entitled '*The Peopling of London: 15,000 Years of Settlement from Overseas*'. The project was to culminate in an exhibition that would show that, far from being a post-war phenomenon, immigration had made London a cosmopolitan and culturally diverse city ever since its foundation in the Roman period. In tracing the history of the different populations that have settled from overseas to shape the city's development, we would be revealing a previously hidden history which we hoped would be of relevance to members of those communities which did not usually visit the museum.

As well as undertaking research through the normal channels, for example by reviewing the museum's own collections and locating suitable loan material, the museum undertook several initiatives for the first time. A part-time researcher, Rozina Visram, was appointed for two years to examine primary and secondary sources in local archives, and seek out members of different communities who could help us with advice and information. To further this, and to publicize the initiative, a display about the *Peopling of London* project was mounted in a mobile caravan called *Museum on the Move* which toured parks, markets and supermarket car parks, in areas such as Brixton and Hackney that normally did not generate many visitors to the museum. With the attendant media coverage, this resulted in a much higher profile for the museum in these areas, and produced a number of useful contacts who helped the project by lending material or allowing themselves to be interviewed. Through this method, and through contacts generated via community groups, the oral history component of the overall project eventually interviewed sixty-five people on their experiences of moving to London from overseas. Extracts from these inter-

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views were ultimately reproduced in the exhibition and accompanying book.

Oral history was especially important in this particular project for a number of reasons. First, it added a human dimension often lacking in other exhibitions; second, it represented a mutually useful way in which people could become involved in the project; and third, it provided a valuable primary record of the experiences of first-generation settlers, most of whose history has never been formally written down.

At the same time, a network of contacts and advisers was being built up. This was crucial in working on the subject of immigration from overseas, dealing as it does with issues of community representation, racism and anti-racism. Fruitful links were made with the Black Cultural Archives in Brixton, London's two Jewish museums and a network of other community organizations and individuals who read through texts and advised on particular issues of representation.

The authors of the accompanying publication, which present a complementary series of essays on the history of thirteen London communities ranging from the African and Caribbean to the Spanish, constituted an important group of advisers. Almost all of them were from the communities about which they were writing, which enabled them to bring something of their own community perspective to their text, and to the advice they gave us on the exhibition.

The final exhibition itself, which was designed by Redman Design Associates, began with a thematic treatment of the post-war period entitled 'The World in a City' and was followed by a five-minute audio-visual overview of the major themes of the exhibition. After this introduction, visitors could see a history of overseas settlement in London presented in seven major sections: 'Before London' (which began during the Ice Age when Britain was devoid of population); 'Roman London', 'The Age of Migrations' (450–1066); 'Medieval Europeans' (1066–1500); 'London and the Wider World' (1500–1837); 'The Heart of the Empire' (1837–1945) and 'After the Empire' (1945 to the present). Within these were various subsections covering either specific themes, such as 'Living and Working in the Port' (1837–1945), or specific communities, such as 'The Early Black and South Asian Presence' (1500–1837). Labels were all in English, but a summary of the exhibition was available in leaflet form at the entrance, in nine different languages.

Involving the public

Just as important as the exhibition was the programme of public events and activities that complemented it. For practical reasons it was difficult for members of London's communities to become actively involved in the process of mounting the exhibition: the relationship developed was more of a consultative one than one of active collaboration. The public programme was devised to involve communities as much as possible, to amplify points made in the exhibition (or even to dispute them), to add new dimensions to the representation and to bring new audiences to the museum.

A central feature of the public programme was the series of 'focus weeks' in which a community group was invited to use the museum's facilities for a week to present in its own terms something of its history and culture in London to other Londoners. Different communities interpreted this brief in quite different ways, and there was no editorial control by museum staff. Representations included exhibitions, theatrical presentations, story-telling, poetry reading, a fashion show, food tastings, musical per-

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Portrait of Louisa Perina Courtauld, an eighteenth-century businesswoman, from a display on the Huguenots.

formances, historical walks, performance art, films, lectures and discussion groups. The initiative was particularly successful because it genuinely allowed people to represent themselves in their own voices; communities generated their own publicity alongside that of the museum; and a double incentive in the form of the exhibition and the events was provided to visit the museum. As well as the weeks focusing on particular communities (Irish, South Asian, Cypriot, Chinese, for example) were programmes focusing on particular areas of London (Soho and Spitalfields), on special interest groups (refugees), and a longer-running series of lectures on particular themes such as the experiences of women, and on the stereotyping of different communities.

Running alongside the public programme was a programme especially designed for schools. With a small amount of sponsorship from Carlton TV a 'Teachers' Pack' was produced giving background information, ways of relating the subject to different elements of the national curriculum, and practical examples. A specific project was also developed with Artists and Craftspeople in Education (ACE) who worked with school groups to produce art works reflecting the project's theme. For the general public, an artist in residence, Timo Lehtonen, was employed for two months with an open studio adjacent to the exhibition.

In promoting the exhibition, the museum spent a good deal of time and resources informing the ethnic press, radio and television stations as well as its more usual channels, and paid for advertising in some key publications such as *Time Out.* One of the most successful promotional activities was a campaign on the London Underground aimed specifically at attracting people from African/Caribbean, South Asian or Chinese backgrounds, which pointed out how long these communities had been part of London's population. Seven per cent of visitors surveyed specified that the poster campaign was their source of information about the exhibition, and 24 per cent recalled seeing the posters when prompted.

Measuring success

The project was designed from the outset to be evaluated, so it is possible to measure the extent to which the project was successful in realizing its various aims. In terms of attracting a wider audience, the project was quite successful, in that the proportion of visitors from ethnic minorities went up to 20 per cent during the exhibition. In overall numbers, the exhibition attracted 94,349 visitors, which was more than predicted, especially after admission charges were introduced while the project was being planned.

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Moroccan food-tasting event. The series of 'focus weeks' attracted a completely new audience to the museum.

Sixty-four per cent of all visitors to the museum visited the exhibition during its lifetime, and the public programme reached 8,428 people. The objectives of challenging the notion that immigration is a post-war phenomenon and revealing the previously hidden history of London's cultural diversity were achieved through the process of putting on the exhibition. The extent to which the messages given out were assimilated, and the extent to which the histories portrayed avoided falling into cultural stereotyping is more difficult to ascertain. These issues were the subject of a series of focus-group studies, which formed part of a project conducted jointly with the University of East London and carried out by Art and Society, and was the subject of a report published in 1994. Initial indications are that such an exhibition is always likely to be visited by those who are already sympathetic to the message and thus are predisposed to assimilate it in the ways intended by the exhibition team.

However, the focus groups did isolate a number of areas of concern, such as the exclusion of certain groups and lack of space devoted to others, together with a certain amount of stereotyping, as well as issues such as a lack of provision for younger children and a reluctance to dwell on the less positive aspects of the immigrant experience. As indicated earlier, the nature of the final exhibition, dealing as it did with a huge time-span and many communities, precluded for practical reasons another initial aim of the project which was the active involvement of community groups in the production of the exhibition.

Overall though, the exhibition can be judged to have been relatively successful by its own standards. Its budget was large (£140,000 for the whole project, of which £40,000 was raised in grants, particularly from the Baring Foundation and the City Parochial Foundation) but the approach adopted could be followed in projects with fewer resources at their disposal. In fact, much of the groundbreaking work in this area has occurred in the smaller museum services that have developed close relationships with their constituent communities, and many of the initiatives described above have already been developed in other services. However, it was important that a relatively large and culturally authoritative institution such as the Museum of London take on such a project as it was able to provide a considerable amount of resources and thereby demonstrate to London's communities the importance of the topic, and to the museum world that apparently difficult and controversial subjects can be tackled.

An archive of the exhibition and the research undertaken for it is available for consultation in the museum. The museum has recently taken the decision to refurbish its permanent galleries, and to extend the story of London up to the present day. This now provides an opportunity to incorporate both some of the new information revealed during the *Peopling of London* project and something of its method of community outreach and involvement and the espousal of a more people-centred approach. ■

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The artist as curator in a city museum

Carl Heideken

What is the place of the artist in a non-art museum, and, more particularly, a museum of social history where imagination and information must strike a frequently delicate balance? Carl Heideken, curator in the Exhibitions Department of the City Museum of Stockholm, draws upon his experience as an artist in London and Paris, and as a lecturer at the Edinburgh College of Art, to reflect on this timely question.

Discussing with fellow museum-workers the artistic aspects of producing an exhibition, I very often find myself taking a defensive position, which is something I do not like. I cannot understand why art should have to be defended in the eyes of science or education. And still, I keep doing it. But it has more to do with artists' methods and integrity than with their actual participation in exhibitions. Because if I look around at museums in my own neighbourhood, the trend of introducing art into museology has become common practice. It has resulted in some exciting and stimulating exhibitions, some more successful than others. Even outside the museum world, what we now see is a merger of art and science, forgetting that the two once were almost the same thing. Artists are concerned with biology, physics or anthropology and scientists look to art for creative ideas and methods.

But what happens when art is introduced as a method in non-art museums? When I do it in my own museum I get angry letters from some visitors and enthusiastic comments from others. By tradition a museum is much concerned with scholarship and education. Its exhibitions are expected to reflect the content of collections and archives in a factual, 'reliable' way. But when the means of expression begin to look more like those of an art gallery, the borderline between fact and fiction could be seen to be blurred with 'truth' evaporating. On the other hand, those who appreciate the innovative and dynamic language of the artist perhaps also recognize imagination as something equally important as information in the process of learning. Imagination in the hands of an artist is a professional tool. The artist's use of fiction to describe reality could therefore be a stimulating complement to the work of the historian or the social scientist. But fiction could also be seen as a threat to fact. Only on condition of mutual respect and equal terms has the artist a chance to survive in the staff-room of the museum. If the artist is reduced to a consultant visualizer of preconceived historical or social opinions, very little is going to change. On the other hand, turning the social history museum into an art gallery is equally meaningless if we want to achieve something new. In my view it is the artist's interpretation of the museum itself as a special place that may intensify the dialogue between museum and visitors, inviting the public as co-creators and co-interpreters.

After the ups and downs of the art market in the 1980s, the art of the 1990s again shows a shift of focus towards social and political issues. Which again makes art and artists interesting to city museums. And conversely, a city museum is again attractive for artists in order to reach 'ordinary' people. There seems to exist a common ground between some of this socially oriented contemporary art and the ambition of some museums to look for new ways of communicating with their visitors.

What, then is the relevance of the artist's approach to fact and to fiction in relation to the museum context? To me it has to do with art as a cognitive tool. Visiting art galleries I contemplate constructions and installations. I let myself be aroused by fictional stories in films and novels not just to be entertained but to learn about life. This is the cognitive function of emotion and imagination. Furthermore I notice how a number of artists are already working in the idiom of museums, using the aura of truth and authority connected with such institutions. Numerous showcases containing everyday objects, faked archaeological finds, brass plates with dry factual captions have been exhibited in art galleries in the last twenty or so years. Other artists work with rituals, social manners and ecology.

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Piotr Kowalski's work *The Population Cube* included in the exhibition *The Earth – Global Changes* (shown in Bonn in 1992–93 and in Stockholm in 1994) is one example of socially oriented art totally lacking propagandistic or demagogic overtones. It is on the contrary minimalistic, which in this case means simple and beautiful. It consists of a large glass-cube containing 5.5 billion glass marbles. Every second five marbles are added from above and two are shed from below. This corresponds to the population growth rate of the earth. Five children are born every second and two people die. The list of artists could be as long as you like: Joseph Beuys, Mary Kelly, Christian Boltanski, Barbara Kreuger and so on.

At this point I should like to introduce a distinction between construction and reconstruction in relation to everyday museum practice. The concept of reconstruction is fundamental to the whole idea of a museum, which is supposed to 'reconstruct' the past and aid the collective memory. But let us accept for a moment the idea of reality as a mental construction and not something concrete lying 'out there' and ready to be picked up, classified, presented and preserved, for example in a museum. Let us accept the idea of history as a subjectively written 'text' and not something absolute and objective. If we accept these ideas, which today are commonly discussed, we should also be able to accept the museum as a subjective creation rather than an institution of objective truth. I personally agree with those who say that we may reconstruct a broken pot or a partially rotted wooden boat but with more complex structures we soon move from reconstruction to construction, in the sense of creating anew, whether it be a theory or a specific museum display. This is what a growing number of artists discover when looking at museums today: room after room of happenings and installations, constructions of the imagination. Some have also commented on this with their own work interfering and mixing with museum collections.

The faked showcase

One such project was initiated at the City Museum of Stockholm a few years ago by Chris Dorsett, a sculptor based in Oxford. He has developed artists-in-museum projects since 1988 at the Pitt Rivers Museum. In his opinion museums used to be great places for curiosity but with a more didactic and pedagogic attitude showing in today's exhibitions and collections, he feels that curiosity is not encouraged as much as it used to be in the old-fashioned museum. In his introduction to the project with art-students merging specifically created works with the permanent collection, Chris Dorsett writes:

> My aim was not to add a layer of extra exhibits but to animate the widest range of experiences felt by visitors to the museum. The variety of approaches currently being used by artists, particularly those involved with installation and site-specific art, make possible an interesting fission between what museums and artists do.

One of the installations in the Stockholm City Museum project consisted of a faked showcase containing three plaster heads with instruments of torture called 'bajans', that is, nose-bajans, mouth-bajans and screw-bajans. According to the label, the use of the instruments was illegal but flourished among groups of German inhabitants in the seventeenth century and later spread throughout the entire population. On 7 February 1695 the people of Stockholm had had enough and marched to the Royal Bajansworks and tore it down.

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All the remaining bajans were thrown into Lake Mälaren. Some of our visitors were completely taken in by this exhibit, commenting on the cruelty of earlier ages. The deliberate and friendly misleading was of course not an end in itself. Its purpose was to make the visitor aware of the fact that all museum displays are arranged by curators and designers, and that meaning, too, is a result of construction and not inherent in the objects themselves. I think this is a very exciting point of departure. Continuing these art projects as comments on permanent collections is, however, not enough. They would soon become permanent themselves and loose their freshness. What I look forward to is the long-term effects of integrating artists interested in showing the visitor ways of 'reading' the museum as an institution which primarily reflects the culture of its own time.

Designers and architects are regularly employed when a new museum is built or a major exhibition installed. Painters and sculptors, photographers and film-makers, take part on these occasions as illustrators, animators and visualizers. There is nothing controversial about this until we realize that we live in a time of changing professional roles, overlapping fields of interest and competence, blurring of borderlines between architecture, scenography, sculpture, theatre, ethnography, literature, and so on. Possibly the artist/curator may have a mediating function here. He or she could speak the language of both the artist and the scholar and would not be easily impressed by the artist's egocentric behaviour, while at the same time demonstrating an understanding of the vulnerable position of the creator, whose greatest professional asset is his or her personality. In contrast to the scholar, who can always refer to a bulk of compiled knowledge, the artist has to refer to personal feelings and reactions. It seems there are two opposing ways of handling artists' involvement. One is to give the artist complete freedom and accept, or not, the result. The other is to commission a specific piece of work, carefully stating the conditions. Both cases, I think, represent the easy way out. The role of the artist/curator would be to negotiate the possibilities between the two simplified extremes. But he or she must also know something of the ambitions and methods of the historian, anthropologist or educationist and thus be prepared to judge quality of content as well as quality of form.

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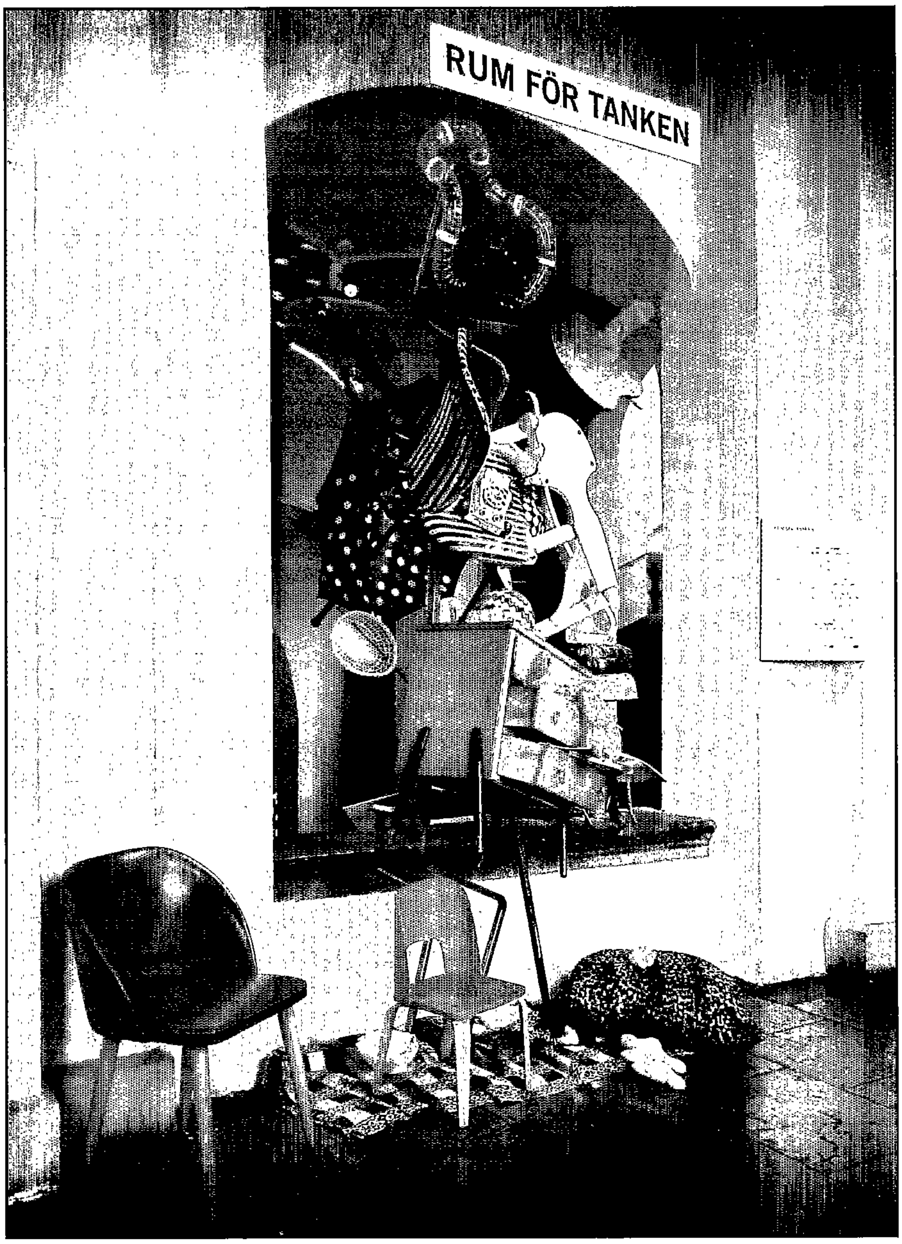
'No Spare Time', tableau in the Hem *exhibition based on an interview with Stina.*



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'Room for Contemplation', tableau based on an interview with Katji.

Codes, contexts and visitors

As curators we are all aware of the significance of cultural codes and contexts and are amused and inspired when codes are broken and things happen out of context. But to visitors who are not familiar with the grammar and syntax of exhibition-making, the effect can be confusing. The expectations generated by a museum of social history are very different from those of a gallery of modern art. Of course the goal is never to confuse the visitor. But the surprise effect of seeing the unexpected could be used as a tool. It could help visitors to see the codes and conventions of the museum.

Reflecting on the negative reactions to some of the artists' work in my own museum, I can very easily sympathize with disappointed visitors. I imagine them going to the museum to verify some private experience or memory. On their arrival they do not find what they came for, that is, 'the real thing'. Instead they think they are being presented with something faked and artificial. But I prefer watching the increasing number

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'The Crusade', tableau based on an interview with Timo.

of visitors who smile in recognition of our attempts to mix facts with fiction without losing track of the truth. I hope this attitude will come across in the illustrations to this article. They are all from the exhibition *Hem – om känslans rum och samhällets planer (Home – Private Emotions and Public Planning)*, a temporary exhibition about housing in Stockholm at the City Museum of Stockholm, 28 May 1994 to 15 January 1995, produced by Carl Heideken. In this exhibition we offered two levels of visual interpretation, a photograph of a number of inhabitants of the city, and a tableau based on an interview with each of them. The edited interview, which is in fact a literary text, constitutes a third level. This is to invite the visitor to participate in and complete the interpretation of the homes by combining the three versions at will. Hopefully 'truth' emerges as a result of insight rather than blind belief. ■

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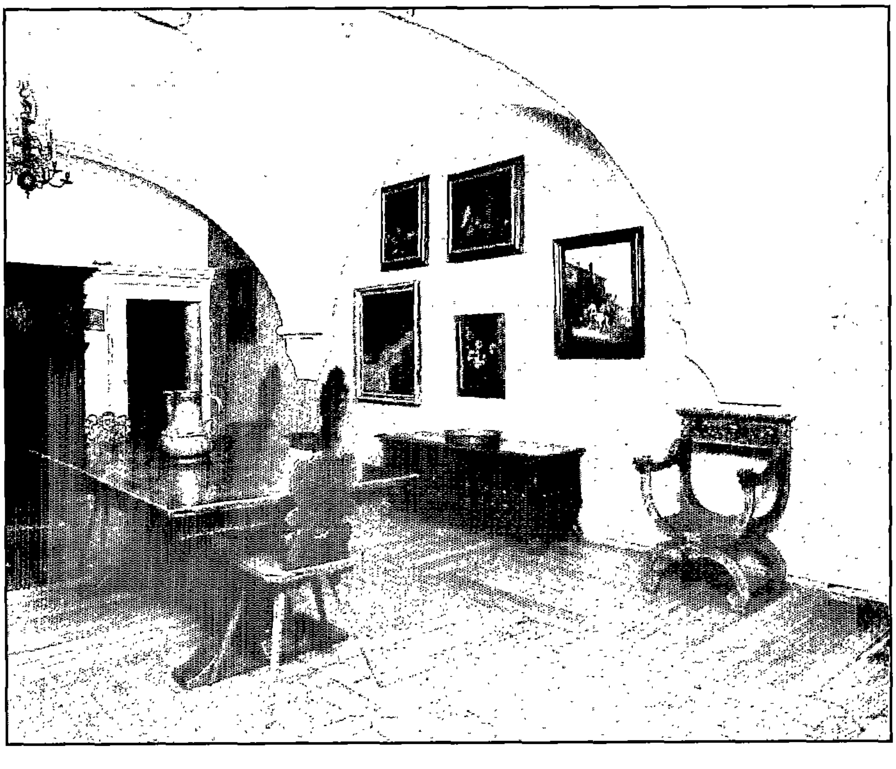
History, ideology and politics in the Historical Museum of Warsaw

Beata Meller

The story of the Historical Museum of Warsaw reflects in many ways the troubled and turbulent movement of Polish history itself. Beata Meller describes how the museum's search for historical truth survived the decades when 'one of the most frequently employed modes of controlling the past was to surround it with silence'. The author has been working in the museum for twenty-five years, first as a curator of the display featuring the history of nineteenth-century Warsaw and, since 1991, as vice-director. She has written many publications on nineteenth-century customs and culture.



Interior of an early seventeenth-century burgher's house.

© E. Pawlak

When the Historical Museum of Warsaw was established in 1948, the city itself was for all practical purposes non-existent. Some 85 per cent of the city had been destroyed during the Second World War by the German occupiers, and it had lost about 800,000 inhabitants. In this situation doubts were expressed whether in the midst of charred ruins, Warsaw would be capable of functioning as a capital.

It became apparent, however, that attachment to the city and its historical tradition as well as its national symbolic significance remained extremely strong in Polish society. It was precisely the call for rebuilding Warsaw which made it easier for the communist authorities to achieve the integration of society around a new ideology. One of their first slogans was 'The whole nation builds its capital'. The reconstruction of Warsaw was assigned top priority and exerted an impact upon the awareness of each Pole, giving rise to an enthusiasm produced by a joint effort to raise the town from rubble; as a consequence, it had considerable influence upon a variegated perception of the new political system.

Fortunately for Warsaw, the Old Town was rebuilt according to historically shaped forms. All extant plans, drawings and other iconographic sources were employed for this purpose, and each architectonic detail was approached with great piety in order to re-create the beauty of Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque façades and interiors. Let us add, however, that prior to the decision about the historical reconstruction of the town in accordance with its past image, élites of architects, art historians and town-planners who had prepared in clandestine studios documentation for post-war restoration, were compelled to wage a true battle. The main threat was that the town would be dominated by a copy of the Soviet style, embodied by the Palace of Culture, a 'gift' from the Soviet Union.

A distinct reflection of the actual intentions of the authorities, who skilfully manipulated the feelings of the population, is to be found on a special plaque installed after the completion of the Old Town Market Square; it declared that 'The Government offers to the Nation' a fragment of renascent heritage which, after all, was rebuilt with the hands of the population itself.

The search for a method

Houses on one side of the Old Town Market Square, rebuilt in the years 1948–53, were to become a museum. The choice of this site possessed unquestioned merit. The adaptation of eleven burgher houses for museum purposes offered wide opportunities for architects who to the best of their abilities brought forth extant architectonic details

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such as Gothic fragments of walls, stone portals, ceilings, stairs and metal doors which added authenticity to the restored buildings.

The organization of a museum upon such a large scale (the final space was to amount to approximately 3,500 m^2) confronted a group of young historians with an extremely formidable task of preparing a historical exhibition that would depict the seven-centuries-long history of Warsaw. This undertaking, took place in a period when history had been taken over totally by the communist authorities, and when one of the most frequently employed modes of controlling the past was to surround it with silence.

Young scholars, therefore, found themselves in a particularly difficult situation since, on the one hand, they wished to salvage the historical memory shared by the nation and, on the other hand, they were subjected to demands that each particle of history bear the official seal of 'scientific Marxism'.

The Historical Museum was granted the rank of a central institution and was supposed to mould the newly shaped historical consciousness. There were no professional patterns on which it was possible to base further work and, in particular, there was no concept of a 'historical museum'; in its stead, there was only a conviction and an assumption that it is not enough to gather souvenirs, 'relics' or testimonies of the past in order to present history. The total devastation of the town and the aspiration to achieve its 'ideological' re-creation made it necessary to embark upon efforts concerned with new museum forms.

The fact that the Historical Museum of Warsaw paved methodological paths for the creation of historical displays upon the basis of its experiences and the many years spent working on a method whose programme is composed of a number of stages, is especially noteworthy.

The registration of objects rescued during the war was accompanied by the inauguration of research and documentation work which produced their own workshop for examining the history of the town. This research embraced a wide range of problems: demography, the history of the city's crafts, industry, commerce, the organization of municipal authorities, political life, social movement, culture, science, art and the struggle for independence. Although the research itself was, as a rule, conducted in a truly thorough manner, not all its results could be made public because they were censored.

The presentation of the outcome of research was to a considerable measure subjected to state propaganda. The authorities had launched a slogan: 'Museums – the universities of culture'. Taking into consideration the promotion of various social groups, special importance was attached to educational pursuits which were to disseminate suitably prepared knowledge and culture with whose assistance social consciousness was being refashioned in the spirit of Marxist theory.

Despite the need to take all those issues into account, it became obvious that an exhibition illustrating the history of Warsaw should not become a textbook; none the less staff members who remember the first version of the display recall that it did not avoid excessive descriptiveness, lengthy explanatory texts and quotations.

The translation of the history of Warsaw – from antiquity to the seventeenth century – into a language appropriate for a museum encountered numerous obstacles. The exhibits were scarce and as a result the blueprint included a large

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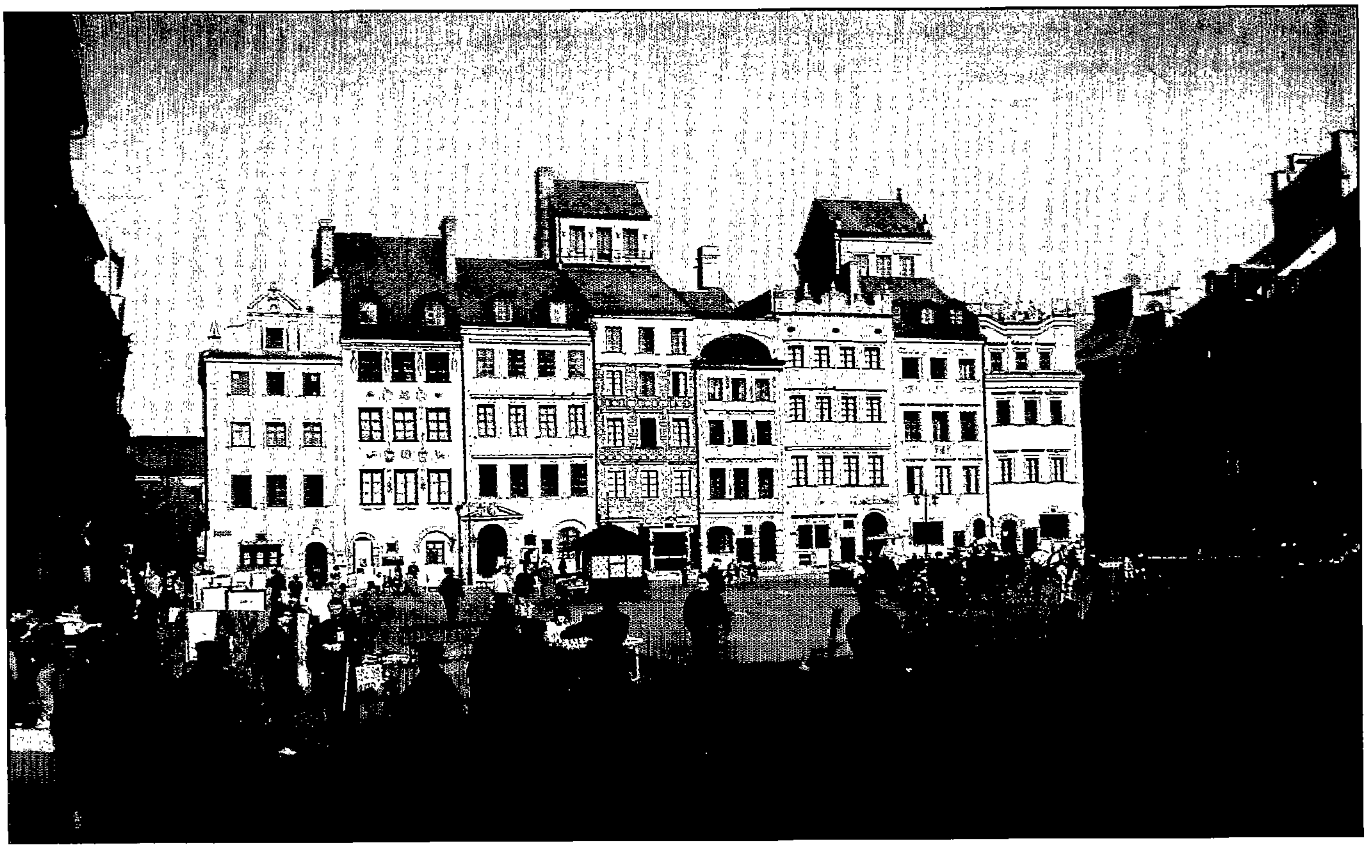
number of 'substitutes' in the form of maps, models, tables and charts. At times, the exhibition resorted to copies of works of art or objects originating in other regions of Poland.

The display featuring the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was capable of showing the history and beauty of the town to a greater extent; paintings, the graphic arts as well as authentic examples of Warsaw crafts were used. The chronological-thematic course of the narrative was retained, and certain topics such as the spatial development of the town, the population structure, the crafts, commerce and culture recurred. The museum re-created burgher chambers from the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a goldsmith's workshop and the interior of a printing shop. The first exhibition was opened to the public in 1955, during the twilight of Stalinism and the appearance of the first symptoms of a 'thaw'.

A room with a view

Already at that time, the museum had established co-operation with outstanding architects and artists. Their aesthetic vision, which was sometimes the outcome of stormy discussions with authors of the exhibition plan, was based on bold plastic solutions and the gradation of effects and impressions; from the ground floor to the third storey it endowed the interiors and displays with a new character. Subtle accents were interspersed with stronger em-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The site of the Historical Museum of Warsaw.

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phasis upon historical material, an effect achieved by the employment of colour, light, special decorations and showcases. The purpose of these artistic efforts was to stress the atmosphere of a given period and to accentuate its typical events. The retention of suitable proportions between history and plastic creation became the true measure of success.

The museum, which collected objects from the past, did not cease being a part of the surrounding world. Through the open windows visitors could observe the busy Market Square, crowds of tourists and local residents and historical houses; in this manner, the exhibition was not divorced from the town and its unique substance.

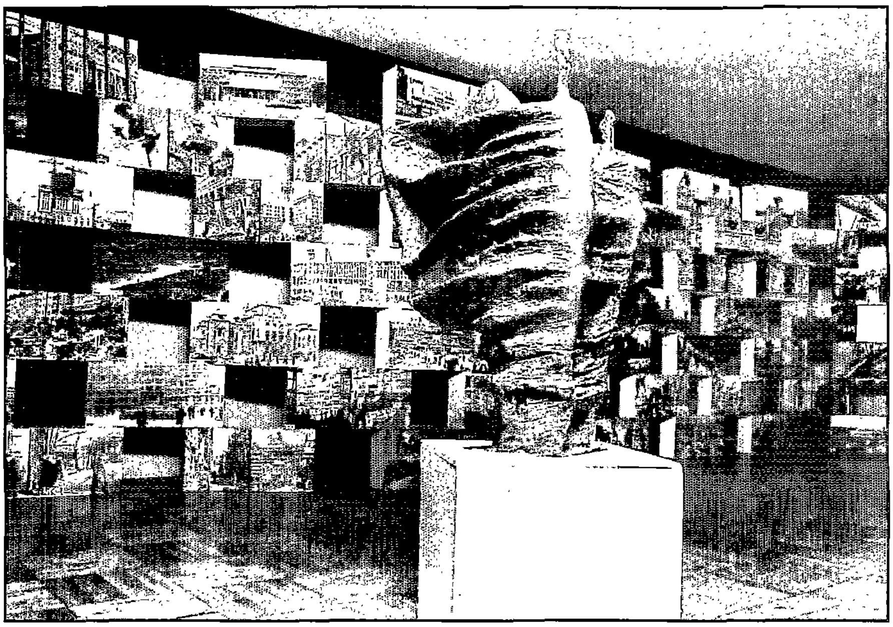
Thanks to its special location, the museum was a frequent host to foreign delegations of various levels; furthermore, it was, naturally, visited by large groups of tourists from abroad. This element too probably contributed to special treatment of the museum by the authorities.

As a precursor in the areas described above, the Historical Museum became a model for others and assisted in the organization or the preparation of blueprints for several historical museums in Poland; from the end of the 1960s, it also shared its experiences with foreign institutions such as the historical museums in Lille and Amsterdam and began an intensive exchange of exhibitions with the West.

Censorship and propaganda

The expansion of the collection required numerous supplements and changes in the contents and form of the exhibition. Successive years saw new publications about the history of Warsaw which made a prominent contribution to Polish historiography as a whole. None the less, the display which depicted twentieth-century Warsaw was the last to be presented. The closer one came to contemporary times, the more complicated the situation became. History was ostentatiously involved in politics. Communist censors paid particular attention to the interpretation of the facts of recent history especially considering that witnesses of indoctrinated collective memory still lived.

The authorities were particularly concerned with the independence tradition which was cultivated before the Second World War and which to a considerable measure was automatically directed against Tsarist and Bolshevik Russia; they were also interested in creating a history that would match their own current needs, a striving that was expressed by the imposition of new political schemes, signs and symbols within the context of anniversaries burdened with the directives issued by consecutive party plenary sessions or leaders.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The permanent exhibition displays a photographic profile of Warsaw as the capital of the Polish People's Republic, 1945–89.

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The absence of a synthesis of studies concerning contemporary Warsaw together with the pressure of propaganda and censorship required that the museum staff maintain an equilibrium and possess a *sui generis* political perception which would allow them to make apt decisions about the manner of presenting and interpreting historical events or ignoring them. At times, the matter concerned only the contents of a phrase or its vocabulary; on other occasions, it involved a single word (e.g. a special ban of the censor pertained to the word 'anti-Russian'; the advisable formula was 'anti-Tsarist'). Topics were divided into those that were taboo and those that were preferable.

The same held true for special displays. Alongside exhibitions featuring various aspects of Warsaw's past – the result of research and the gathering of new objects – whose purpose was to supplement gaps in the permanent exhibition, the museum held many displays whose themes were imposed by the central authorities and which contained an unambiguous ideological message such as Polish-Soviet friendship, the theory of revolutionary (i.e. communist) movements in other member states of the Warsaw Pact, and exhibitions prepared in capitals of socialist countries since this was the form to which foreign contacts of the museum were restricted. A separate group consisted of anniversaries connected with the post-war regime. This pressure adversely affected the professional initiative of the staff engaged in the preparation of new themes by depriving them of an opportunity for their realization. It must be said clearly that for the museum employees this was frequently a situation in which morality was sought under highly immoral conditions.

The interdependence of politics, ideology and a historical exhibition was shaped variously and with differing intensity. Clearly distinct in the 1950s, with time it grew less clear-cut (at the turn of the 1960s) and ultimately, in the 1980s, it became almost invisible but none the less remained present. This state of affairs was determined primarily by the given stage of 'flirting' with society, and thus upon the prevailing political line and the relation of forces between society and the system of power that guarded and subjugated it. If we bypass the breakthrough of 1956 which brought an end to the stage of 'pure' Stalinism, the museum made use of the subsequent and temporary moments of the 'liberalization' of political pressure for filling the 'dark' chapters in history; in this way, in 1969, it opened an exhibition hall featuring the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, previously neglected simply because the communists were not involved in it.

The attitude towards the authorities was expressed in the essentially tragic duality of thought, divided into 'public' and 'private'. Recent history presented in a museum or taught at school often radically differed from truths transmitted in the privacy of the home or even observed in the street.

As if in spite of the surrounding reality and the tidal wave of official historiography (especially considering that Polish historiography, which was closely connected with Western research centres, thrived from the 1960s on, though it did not deal with the political history of Poland), interest in history and the search for historical truth did not diminish but, on the contrary, grew in a society which organized itself around ideals of liberty and democracy, and embarked upon attempts at regaining its continuity and identity.

The appearance in the mid-1970s of a democratic opposition and its initiation of

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a 'second circulation', also known as underground literature, published in clandestine conditions, slowly broke down the information monopoly of the authorities. The number of uncensored books and periodicals rose, and a foremost place was assigned to publications which filled the extensive 'dark chapters' in modern history. This situation also affected the staff of the Historical Museum, many of whom were influenced by the democratic opposition and noticed the falsehoods contained especially in the exhibition on the Second World War.

1989 – the year of the breakthrough

The 1980s, inaugurated by the Solidarity movement, intensely increased interest in history, and not only that of the most recent past. Open political discussions strongly involved with history, independent circles engaged in historical education and an independent publishing movement all prepared the ground for changes which in 1989 forced the authorities to make concessions.

The impact of the political transformation that occurred in Poland in the years 1989–94 was reflected in the Historical Museum of Warsaw. The political-ideological dependence upon higher authorities disappeared and the museum won greater autonomy, making it possible to restore social trust. One of its first undertakings was a series of displays depicting those events in the city's history that had previously been ignored. The material gathered was subsequently used for completing the permanent exhibition. The centre of attention was now focused on modern history, including the Polish-Bolshevik war and its key moment – the battle of Warsaw (1920); plans of Soviet aggression against Poland in 1939 were added in the hall featuring the defence of Warsaw in September 1939, and the presentation of the pre-war and war-time activity of the communists has been reduced to its actual dimensions. For the first time the representatives of all political orientations of the Polish war-time underground state have been shown on a true scale. Events from the post-war history of Warsaw, never exhibited before, are now on display; they include the so-called struggle for power waged in 1944–48 and the political trials held during the Stalinist years and later, and end with the work of the underground opposition and the emergence of the 'Solidarity' trade union, as well as the consequences of the martial-law period.

The near future confronts the staff of the Historical Museum with new tasks and challenges. The present-day political atmosphere is particularly conducive to a possible systematization of our view of Warsaw during the last decades (including the war years). This purpose is served by the recently accessible archives and the use of new exhibits on display. The most important task, however, will be to determine the essence of contemporary Warsaw and to prepare a method that will enable us to obtain assorted answers concerning the relations between a complicated past and modern times, captured in a museum exhibition. ■

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The imaginary city

Brigitte Scenczi

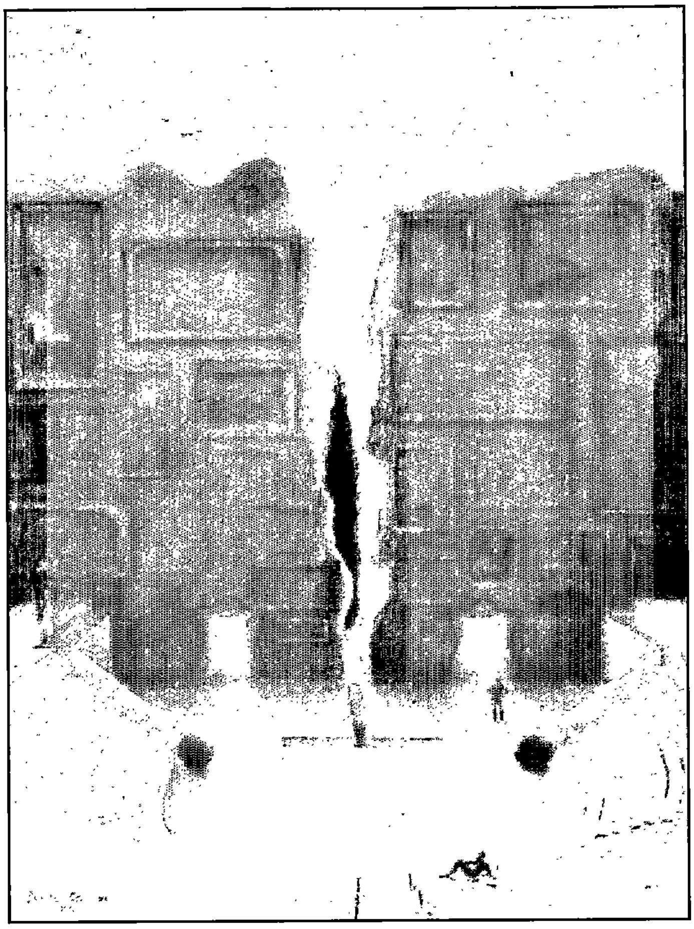

Photo by courtesy of the author

Above: Museo teatro, *by Brigitte Scenczi, acrylic on canvas, 1986.*

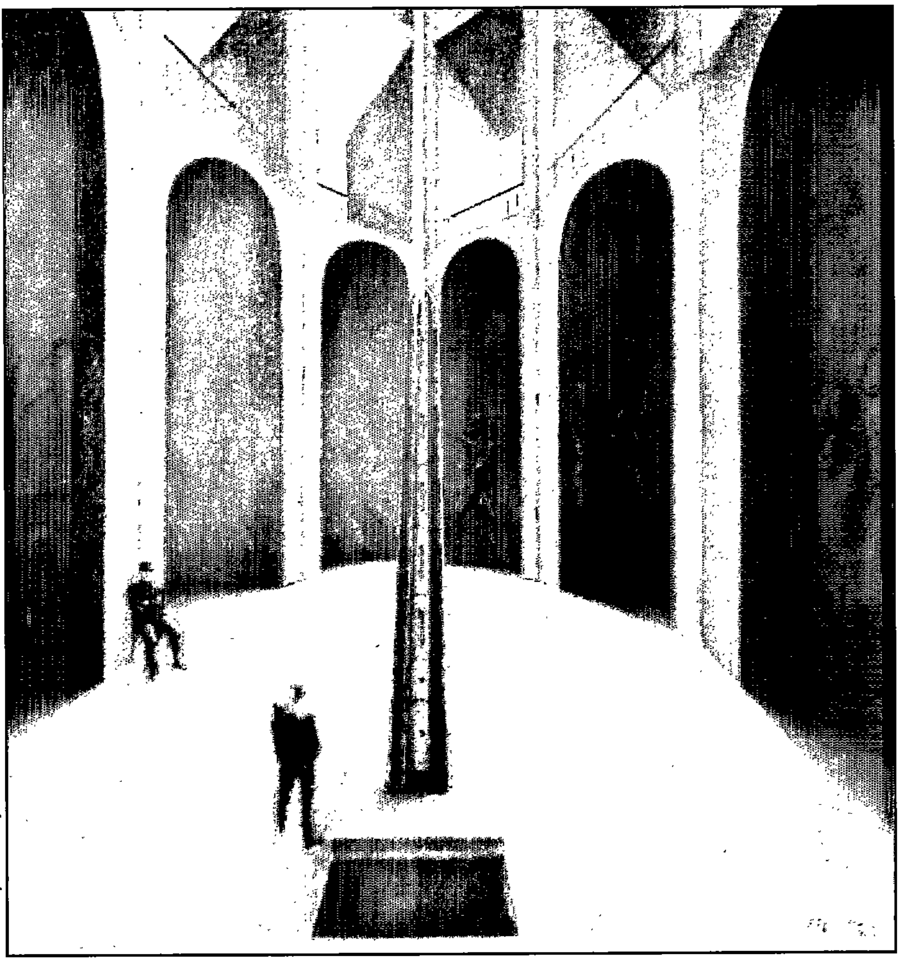

Photo by courtesy of the author

In 1985/86, Juan-Antonio Mañas and I created a series of paintings on the theme of an imaginary city which would resemble an enormous museum built on three levels and linked by a network of corridors and more-or-less secret passages. Works of art from all times and places would be theatrically presented according to criteria totally different from those generally accepted in museums. Some would be heaped in piles, others, on the contrary, would be set out in an immense space, thus acquiring the density of a precious jewel. The purpose of such a stage setting? To arrive at knowledge through aesthetic emotion. In fact, this city-as-museum would seek to be a mirror reflecting our feelings at the point where past, present and future merge in a space that would be the theatre of memory. ■

Left: Le départ, *by Brigitte Scenczi, acrylic on canvas, 1986.*

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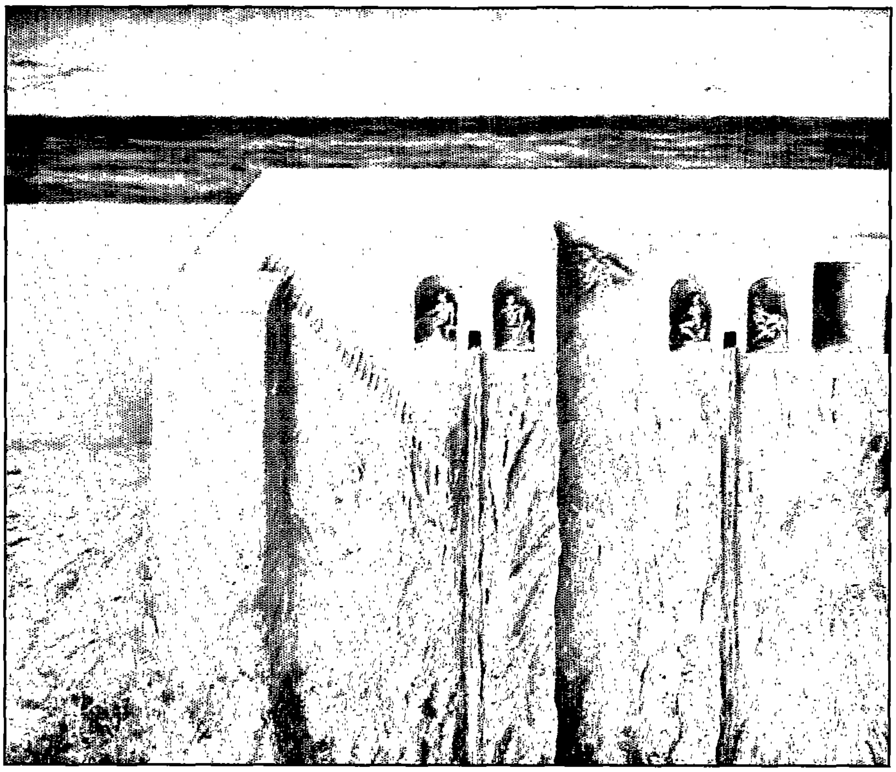


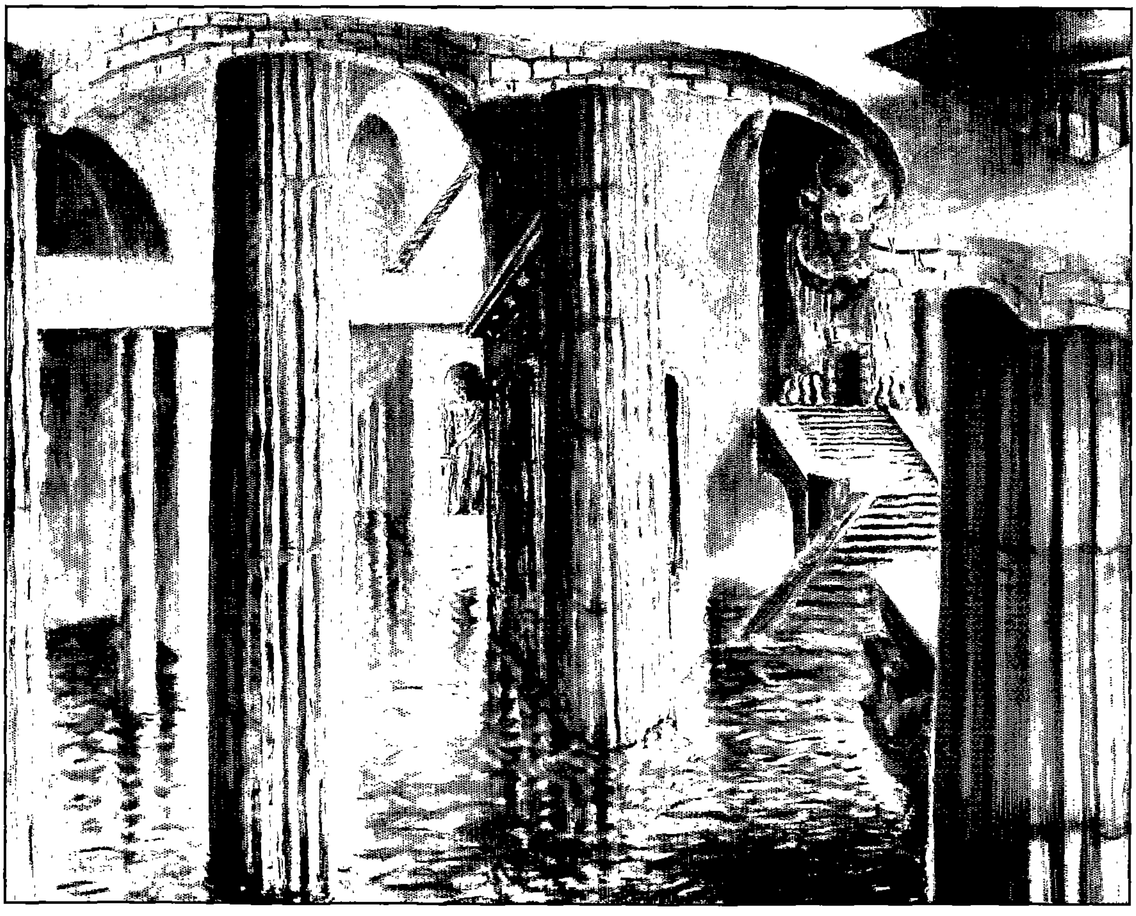
Note

Brigitte Scenczi was born in Budapest in 1943; Juan-Antonio Mañas was born in Madrid in 1946. Their works have been exhibited since 1977 in museums and galleries in France, Italy and Spain. – Ed.

Left: La place de Ganymedes, *by Juan-Antonio Mañas, polychrome relief on wood, 1984.*

Below: Museo subterraneo, *by Brigitte Scenczi, acrylic on canvas, 1986.*

Photo by courtesy of the author



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The city is the museum!

Anne Marie Collins

The city of Montreal has become a veritable museum thanks to the Montreal History Centre. Anne Marie Collins has been the Director of the Centre since 1990. She had previously worked in a number of museums and is involved in projects for the joint promotion of Montreal's museums.

History leaves indelible marks. In some cases the traces left by our predecessors are subtle and it takes a sharp eye to detect them, especially when they are a part of our everyday scene. The approach of the Montreal History Centre is based on the principle that the history of the city is not an exclusive possession of the museum; that the museum is just a catalyst which increases the public's awareness of the vestiges still to be found in their city.

Although situated in a city that may be regarded as young historically speaking, the Montreal History Centre is a convincing example of the new way of looking at the different strands which have gone to make up the fabric of present-day society. It is housed in what was once the fire station, a building in the Queen Anne style in the historic district of Old Montreal. It contains a permanent exhibition on the history of Montreal from 1642 to the present, set out in twelve rooms with a total area of 10,000 ft^2 (approximately 930 m^2). It is supplemented by a room for temporary exhibitions of 700 ft^2 (approximately 65 m^2). Montreal has a history of 352 years if its history is regarded as starting 'officially' with the first European settlers.

The chief task of the centre is to present the history and evolution of the city both to the people of Montreal and to visitors. More particularly, it has the task of acquainting the public with the various aspects of Montreal as it really is, putting into perspective the urban, economic, architectural, social and cultural contexts of each period of history by all kinds of promotional activities.

The Montreal History Centre, which is run and financed by the City of Montreal, was founded in 1983. The arrangement of the first permanent exhibition and the complete rearrangement of the contents between 1989 and 1991 were made possible by financial help from the City of Montreal and the Ministry of Culture of Quebec. The principles that led to the founding of the centre are the basis on which all its activities rest.

A city on the move

A city is by definition a place of exchange, distribution and trade. Ever on the move, it is subject to the varied influences of the people who have lived there, leaving their mark on the architecture of its buildings and the routes followed by its streets. A product of the ambitions and labour of men and women, a city such as Montreal cannot be regarded solely in the light of important historic events. And a museum such as the Montreal History Centre cannot in itself reflect all the facets of historical reality.

This is all the more true as each district has its own history, which can in turn be broken down into more specific units. Yet it is only by drawing parallels between such microcosms of a period that we can revive the history of the city. The city is built up not only in a spatial context, but also in a temporal one. As it progresses, it transforms the surrounding landscape too.

This physical universe around us contains all the vestiges of this forgotten past. It was the wish to make visitors aware of the presence of our history in the city itself which dictated what was included in the exhibition. The Montreal History Centre is therefore the starting-point for an actual tour of the city. The themes represented in the permanent exhibition in fact lead visitors to identify with the different forms, colours and atmospheres characteristic of the city's historical periods and encourage them to explore other places or areas where various things are to be found that are connected with the centre's themes. Thus,

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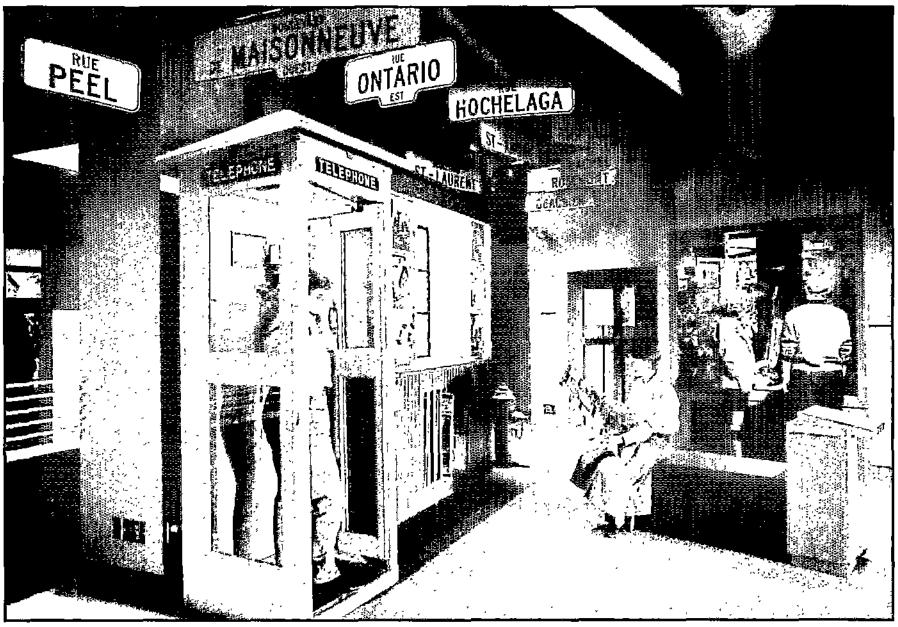

Downtown Montreal in the 1940s.

all Montreal's monuments, museums, squares and public or private buildings are things that help visitors see the development of the city in a broader context.

The main principles underlying the Montreal History Centre can therefore be summed up under three headings:

1. The centre serves as an ante-room, or an introduction, in which the significant stages in the evolution of the city are shown. Everything in the centre is directed outwards. It becomes the special means or catalyst via which visitors are sent out into the city, the real museum or field of exploration. To enable visitors to examine in detail the different aspects touched on in the permanent exhibition, the centre extends beyond its walls, opening out on to a vast network of subsidiary sites representative of the multiformity of Montreal by reason of their collections, their use of live events or their exhibitions. These sites are identified by a logo throughout the permanent exhibition.
2. It is assumed that economic factors are at the basis of the founding, expansion, consolidation, stagnation and even the passing into oblivion of urban centres. The link connecting the rooms is therefore economic and takes into consideration the related methods of production.
3. Each of the periods is presented in a composite context, or décor, in which are assembled for the purposes of interpretation themes and subthemes dealing with economic, social and cultural life. Taken up in sequences at varying intervals, these themes bring out the particular features of the periods concerned.

From ideas to reality

The permanent exhibition of the Montreal History Centre favours the approach of the historical interpretation centre, which draws on all museographical sources in order to meet the difficult challenge of presenting

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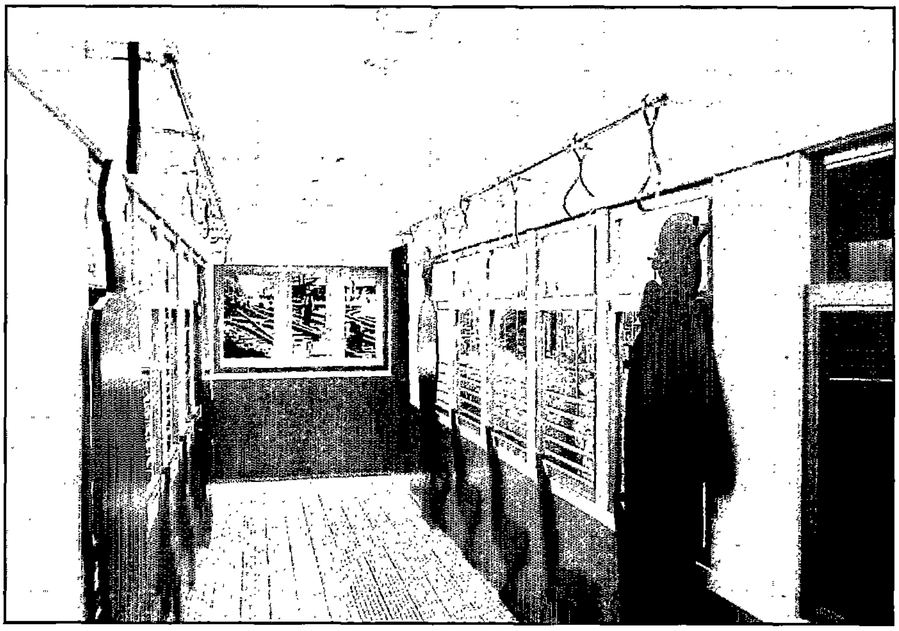

Photo by courtesy of the author

'All aboard!' – a Montreal tramcar.

in one place the myriad threads making up the past and present life of a city. As in other centres of interpretation, it is the themes which determine the museographical means preferred. The object is one means among others of serving the purpose of communication.

Right from the early stages of planning the centre, it seemed vital to make the visitor actively aware of the various aspects presented by our society at different periods. To put the contents across in an original way, a number of museographical resources are employed. Sound recordings and *trompe-l'œil* décors create an atmosphere in which the visual and textual elements can be explored, in surroundings that leave room for the play aspects of learning. From the Amerindian arrowhead to the modern telephone booth, a host of objects are displayed.

Videos, slides and interactive devices enable visitors to touch, feel and see, to recognize themselves and to ask themselves questions as they come into contact with different realities of Montreal.

Emphasizing the inside/outside relation advocated by the Montreal History Centre, the symbol representing the subsidiary sites is to be found throughout the exhibition. This symbol invites visitors to look at the city differently and to incorporate in their everyday lives a different interpretation of the wealth of the heritage, which is not at all in the keeping of the museum.

We believe that this new awareness will enable visitors to become the real guardians of Montreal's heritage, and above all its most ardent defenders. This heritage is a part of their everyday lives and this new awareness will prevent the destruction of buildings or districts (of which they are, in the final analysis the owners) or dubious renovations which spoil for ever their unique character. We all know of whole districts that have been disfigured in the interests of modernity, chiefly through ignorance of the value of the heritage they represent. The municipality can, of course, facilitate the protection of public buildings by means of regulations, but without the support of the public its edicts will remain a dead letter when it comes to private homes and improvements which are beyond its jurisdiction.

In addition to the permanent exhibition, temporary exhibitions are organized, enabling us to attain other goals:

- The more detailed treatment of subjects dealt with briefly in the permanent exhibition. Exhibitions have been held, for instance, on the alcohol industry, the work of a fireman, the alleys of Montreal, the history of tourism, and the history of the railways.

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- Attracting a new public.
- The possibility of pursuing the idea of tours of the city, each on a different theme. A series entitled 'On the Montreal Trail' enables us to use the historical research undertaken as part of our activities to work out tours of the city based on historical themes rather than any geographical boundaries. This again en-ables us to make the people of Montreal aware of the heritage existing in their immediate surroundings.

To this end we publish a history newsletter *Montréal Clic* six times a year. As it deals with different subjects, it enables us to explore other fields. We have also set up a series of photo-spotting competitions covering the city, 'Montreal by eye'. The aim of these competitions is to make the people of Montreal aware of aspects of the urban heritage existing in their immediate vicinity. What is more, it is a way of building up interesting archives on different subjects. The first three competitions in the series focused on advertising painted on the walls of city buildings, public clocks and residential stained glass.

In addition, we participate with other bodies in various projects for the spread of historical knowledge: postcards of historic buildings, miniatures of façades of workers' homes, publications or expertise for temporary exhibitions organized with historical societies.

A documentation centre specializing in the history of Montreal is being set up. Established on the basis of documents relating to research undertaken as part of the Montreal History Centre's promotional activities, it is open to researchers and students.

Finally, the centre has built up a collection of over 800 artefacts, of which it is the owner and which it manages and preserves. This collection is added to by means of gifts and purchases as the years go by. Another hundred or so artefacts have been lent on a long-term basis by other museums. This collection, acquired within the framework of the permanent exhibition, is not representative of the evolution of Montreal.

However, since the chief aim of the Montreal History Centre is to spread a knowledge of history, we do not think it relevant ➧

Photo by courtesy of the author

A commercial street in Old Montreal in the nineteenth century.

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Photo by courtesy of the author

Industrialization at the dawn of the twentieth century.

for it to possess a collection of its own that is representative of every period and every aspect of the history and evolution of Montreal. What is more, we want to remain flexible in our choice of temporary exhibitions, since objects are selected with reference to the themes to be highlighted and not on the basis of the objects in our possession.

The city has its museum

Through its role in spreading historical information, educating the public to a new awareness of the historical character of their environment, going beyond the precincts of the institution and mingling with the people where they live, work, move about or seek entertainment, and lastly collaborating with other environmental bodies participating in the carrying out and promotion of projects to enhance the heritage of the past and the heritage in the making, the Montreal History Centre is thus at the heart of all concerns relating to the conservation and enhancement of the urban heritage. We consider that we shall only be able to meet all these challenges if we provide our institution with the means of being flexible, adapting quickly, remaining critical, and above all being receptive to other realities, past and present.

The original feature of the Montreal History Centre is therefore its approach that draws attention to specific questions. By giving the traditional historical presentation a topical flavour in order to restore its relevance, the centre is enabling present and future generations to leave the beaten track and lay a foundation for a living and original understanding of the heritage and of history.

By reason of the way it is organized, its aims and its purposes, the centre is one of those new types of cultural facility which fit, with their doors wide open, into the reality of which they are part and parcel. In this respect the Montreal History Centre is playing a pioneer role and its mandate allows it to continue to explore new paths which will become the avenues of the future. ■

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Museums in Hungary: special privileges versus the community

Géza Buzinkay

Museums in Hungary have little experience in catering to the needs of a non-specialist public. Although ethnographic and archaeological collections abound, few museums exist that tell the story of the local community. The Budapest History Museum is now striving to throw off the weight of entrenched traditions and attitudes and to transform itself into a genuine public-service institution. Géza Buzinkay casts a lucid eye on its past and finds reason for optimism in the future. He has been director of the museum since 1992 and is a research fellow at the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Americans, sometimes even American museologists, tend to find European museums boring. Not because of the exhibited objects as such, but because of the way they are presented. That means everything from the look of the exhibits to the appearance of the museum buildings. Professional museum people like to dispute the justification for such sentiment on the part of their American visitors, and I have to admit they do have a point. But I also know that Americans have a point, and that the farther east in Europe they penetrate the more warranted their point becomes.

A few years ago, when a professor – not an American but a Hungarian – learned that I had taken charge of the Budapest History Museum he turned to me and said, 'Tell me, do people still go there once each leap year?' Not exactly. The museum has an average of 100,000 visitors a year. But if one looks at the number of visitors who come back a second time, the professor, too, had a point.

I am concerned about history museums in Hungary, that is, museums dealing with city or local history. Of course, the designation 'history museum' refers to a number of collections on the subject. In the Hungarian capital there is the Budapest History Museum, and each of the country's nineteen counties has its own museum network, with a larger central museum and local history and memorial collections in other towns.

The fact that historians are not among those professionals who generally establish museums has left a stamp on history museums. In fact, only a small portion of museologists are historians by training even today, and a significant number of the staff of history museums are archaeologists. There is hardly a community in Hungary that does not boast an ethnographic exhibition of some kind and almost all county seats have archaeological displays. At the same time more than half of the county seats have no permanent city history exhibit, and only three enjoy fully fledged exhibitions comprising the history of the city.

This lack of consideration of the demands of local citizens, schools and tourists is a direct consequence of the fact that communities do not consider the local museum their own. The museum, which should serve as a cultural attraction, the major source of local pride for a community's citizens and educational institutions, is looked on rather as an inconvenience, an added cost in the budget, an impersonal establishment that speaks neither about nor to its constituency. The recent political changes that have transformed Hungary may perhaps loosen up entrenched traditions and turn museums from almost closed research dens into public-service institutions in the true sense of the term. I am afraid that this change will demand sacrifices.

A public ignored

The emphasis on catering to academics and scholars rather than to the community may be explained by the ideological and power structure that sought to establish communism in Eastern Europe. While there were constant references to the needs of society, these needs were defined by Communist Party functionaries. Society had to be educated. What was to be taught and how was also set down by the Party.

Facts and statistics were compiled only to prove the state's effectiveness. Data concerning, for example, the number of visitors to an exhibition during a specified

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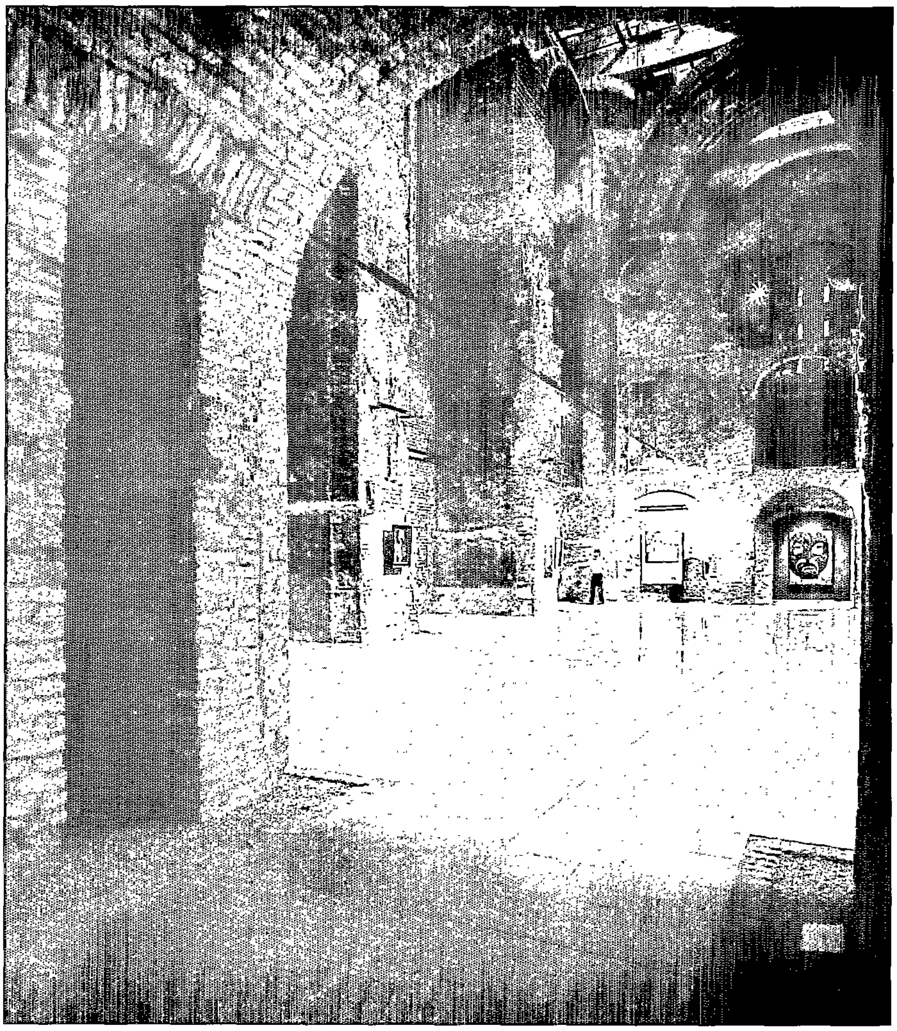

Photo by courtesy of the author

As part of the Kiscell Museum, the former Baroque church was refurbished as an exhibition hall and is also used for concerts and theatrical performances.

period and the kinds of student activities offered, were compiled for the state leadership. The public had no say in them and never even knew that the statistics spoke of ever bigger success and an ever growing attendance at museum programmes. Multipliers came into fashion which enhanced the measured results and reality gradually gave way to a reflection of demand on the part of the leadership. The demand was served to the public as fact.

The needs of society, as consumer and arbiter of museum output, were replaced by those of professionals traditionally working in museums, namely archaeologists, art historians and ethnographers, who were unwilling to put up with 'outsiders' as long as there was no pressure to do so. Although society's needs are now becoming more articulate, it remains difficult to change the entrenched attitudes of museum people. To an archaeologist it is important that other archaeologists recognize his merits; an art historian stages exhibitions for other art historians. The results may be exhibits with titles that no one can understand, because they are really only three-dimensional professional treatises. Simple visitors are denied explanations on what they came to see.

A few years ago the Budapest History Museum was nothing more than a name, an institution without a face. Only its Museum of Aquincum with a permanent archaeological display operated according to its intended function. It is a historical park showing the Roman ruins and artefacts unearthed there. The building housing the modern collections on city history and the picture gallery, the Kiscell Museum, was closed with the explanation that there was not enough money to paint the exhibition halls. The main division of the Budapest History Museum located in a wing of the Royal Palace of Buda showed in its underground rooms and passages more archaeological finds, namely the unearthed remains of the medieval castle. A retrospective on *Two Thousand Years of Budapest* comprising a relatively small exhibition space of 900 m^2 was shut down because it was deemed outdated, and no new concept was developed to replace it. After that, various art-and-craft shows were set up in the building for limited durations. The museologists charged with overseeing the collections opened their doors to scholars, and the archaeologists carried out excavations.

The archaeologists of the Budapest History Museum were given the privilege of being the only authority to conduct excavations in greater Budapest. In addition, in the summer of 1992 a modified Construction Act came into effect which gave the Budapest History Museum and county museums

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the legal authority over designated areas where archaeological finds may be expected. The regulation of archaeological activity thus worked against museums. Budget allocations for acquisitions, methodical restoration work, making collections available to the public, and other such museum tasks went into archaeological work when instead money should have been received from construction companies to cover archaeological excavations and thereby contribute to the enhancement of culture. Any museum that today strives to meet the requirements of a history museum and respond to the demands of the public will face opposition by closed cliques of excavation-minded archaeologists.

Also complicating the situation of museums in Hungary today is the fact that the whole range of archaeological activity, from excavation to the conservation of finds, is regulated by the 1963 Museum Act. It deals with questions of construction and the protection of historical monuments. The Museum Act also established a special excavation committee made up of professional archaeologists, scholars and university professors to issue excavation permits to specified archaeologists anywhere in the country. That means that while there are institutions whose legal obligation is to conduct excavations, and certified archaeologists to carry out this obligation, they are overruled by a handful of professionals named to a committee. The Museum Act is often used to quash any attempts to overturn entrenched traditions. Alas, the conservation of traditions has taken precedence over the conservation of artefacts.

New directions

But if this is the tunnel, there seems to be a glimmer of light in the distance. The regulation of chief museum executives began a few years ago, and now these positions can be filled only by way of open competition, paving the way for renewal at the decision-making level. In filing for a competition, applicants have to formulate their concept and outline their plan on how they wish to head their prospective institutions. That means that even entrenched traditions are being looked over from time to time, and are being weighed and given a new focus. ➧

Tangible Display *showed scale models of sculptures in Budapest's public places; visitors could touch the objects and texts were also provided in Braille.*

Photo by courtesy of the author

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BONCIÁS
ITTES

Photo by courtesy of the author

Medieval Fair *was an educational programme about old trades, customs and forms of entertainment.*

I became director of the Budapest History Museum in January 1992 on the basis of a liberal programme with two key points.

One was that the museum of the Hungarian capital must be a city museum exhibiting the whole of the history of Budapest with a special focus on the civilization its citizens had produced, and merely indicating that it was also at times the royal seat. A permanent display must show the real process of urbanization through the highlights of city history. (I have subsequently seen an exquisite example of a city history exhibit such as I envisage at the Museum of London.)

My second point was that the museum must make contact with society at large. Visitors, the public, the outside world – and the sponsors we wish to win – must be given a chance to have their say in what they expect of us, and we must make our plans and arrange our programmes accordingly.

Here I must add that while I would like to change the museum from a self-serving establishment of professionals into a public-service institution, I do not wish to go to the other extreme of having to cater at all costs to every whim of the public. As a public-service institution the museum must also remain a guardian of civilization, and as such it requires the co-operation of both professionals, who guide, and users, who also guide.

For this concept, which the municipal government has accepted and finances, to become reality, the lingering problems of Hungary's past must be overcome. Several decades of dictatorship have left their mark on the people's interpretation of democracy. Discipline and a sense of responsibility have disintegrated. Decisions are made at all levels and at random, and a consensus, not easily attained, may be of no consequence. Employees may not feel inclined to execute orders, and installing a sense of community is not easily achieved.

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A hastily passed Public Service Law, while seeking to ensure the rights of employees, has left executives without proper disciplinary measures.

Financing is another matter. The annual budget of a Hungarian museum is at best about a third, and may even descend to a twelfth, of the money available to similar museums in Western Europe or the United States. Budgets are poorly structured and scarce resources must be divided between two or three times as many staff members. The thus extremely low salaries none the less make up an overwhelming portion of the total budget, sometimes more than 80 per cent. Museums can, and do, turn to other sources, but the income from these is still very low. Lucrative operations are still considered 'unprofessional' for a 'scholarly' institution, and museum shops and cafés set up by executives eager to serve the needs of their public are leased to outsiders for a meagre fee.

The Budapest History Museum is at present attempting to reconsider the framework that defines a city museum in Hungary today. At the same time, it is trying to fill in the gaps left by decades of misguidance. By the end of 1995, a more than 2,000 m^2 exhibit on the history of Budapest will be in place. Two parts, or approximately half, of it are already open. The entrance hall in the central building in Buda Castle was remodelled to hold a small museum shop; additional facilities in the entrance are planned for the future. Plans have been accepted for a building in a courtyard as a temporary exhibition room and construction will begin as soon as funds become available. Advances are being made towards reshaping the internal structure of the museum by rationalizing the interaction between the different departments. Budget management is becoming more disciplined, for example by decentralizing in such a way that as many employees as possible get a sense of the financial possibilities but also have to answer for their expenditures. We are approaching external supporters and hope that they will find a museum with a relatively transparent management and sound investment. Finally, the decision has been taken that a new store and conservation complex will be set up, with the aim not only to speed up the restoration of artefacts but also to diminish the backlog of uncatalogued items.

In the light of these advancements I hope that by the turn of the millennium Budapest will have a museum that is a stimulating and enjoyable experience for its visitors, for tourists and students alike. But more than that, it shall document the past and present of a multiethnic culture to provide, through a historical perspective, a model for all the countries of a region especially sensitive to questions of ethnicity. ■

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Urban museology: an ideology for reconciliation

Amareswar Galla[1]

The city museum of the multicultural, multi-ethnic late-twentieth-century metropolis must adopt a totally new approach and assume dramatically different responsibilities towards the community, according to Amareswar Galla. His guidelines for transforming the city museum into a dynamic urban cultural centre are based on his considerable experience as a cross-cultural heritage specialist at the University of Canberra, 'the most culturally diverse city in Australia'. He is a member of the Executive Board of ICOM's Asia Pacific Organization and convener of its Cross-cultural Working Group.

Communities of diaspora from colonial and imperialist practices, the more recent large-scale international migration of workers and their families and the global refugee crisis of recent decades have posed a new dilemma for democracy. The acceleration of the twin processes of industrialization and urbanization in the post-war period has further added to the complexities of global population diversity from local, regional, national and international migration of people. Millions of immigrant citizens have settled as local residents with access to essential services and full political and civil rights in different countries across the world. In several of these countries, citizenship refers both to the formal membership of the state and to the social, economic and political rights granted to those who are members of the society. The majority of diasporic and immigrant people are residents of urban complexes, thus posing an unprecedented challenge to the processes of cultural representation for city museums.

While museum activity has had a historical metropolitan basis, the focus on city museums can often be perceived in the recent public advocacy to democratize cultural institutions and address the rich fabric of the cosmopolitan populations of urban centres. The response of several museums to the cultural diversity of their immediate cultural map has been through ethnically specific exhibitions, community-access mechanisms and support for the establishment of different neighbourhood centres of concentrated cultural activity. As we understand better the structure and continuity of urban cultural contexts, the role of city museums will become clearer and more meaningful. Meanwhile the construct of a city museum could mean many things and a complex typology is evident from different countries.[2]

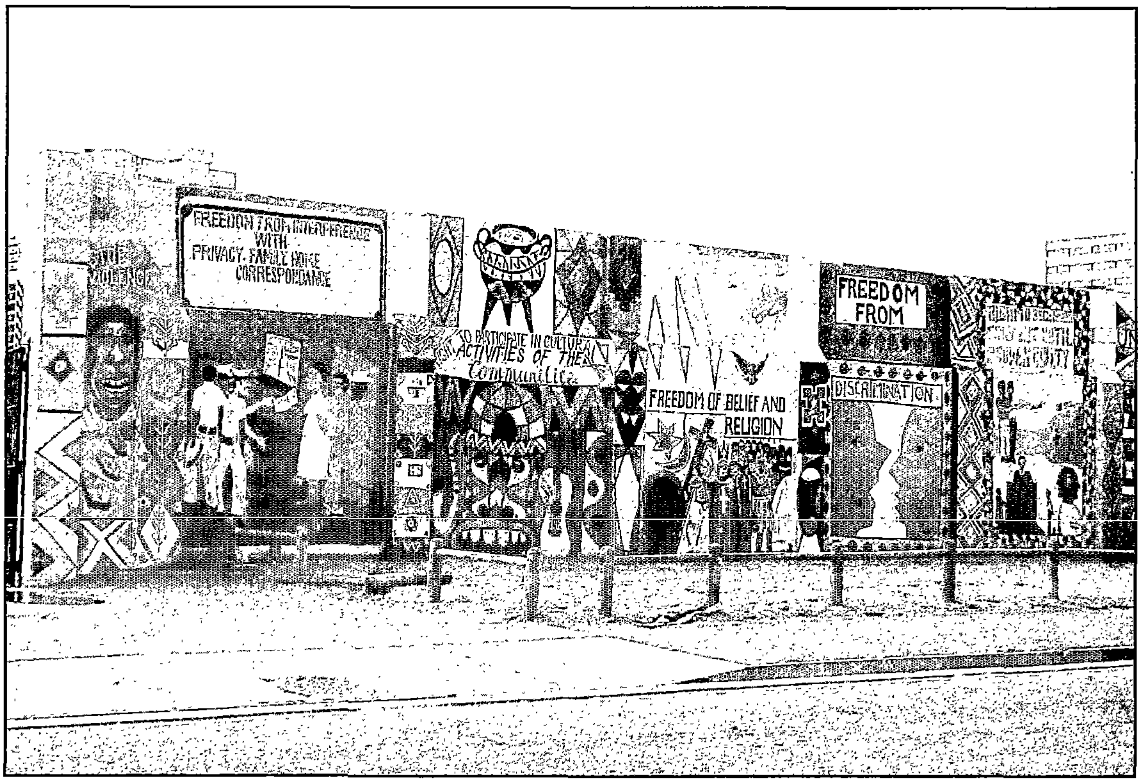
FREEDOM FROM INTERFERENCE WITH PRIVACY, FAMILY, HOME, CORRESPONDENCE
TO PARTICIPATE IN CULTURAL ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMUNITY
FREEDOM OF BELIEF AND RELIGION
FREEDOM FROM
DISCRIMINATION

Photo by courtesy of the author

The 'Human Rights Wall', a symbol of resistance under apartheid, is a famous landmark in Durban (South Africa) and an integral part of the city's museological scene.

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City museums are not only about the genesis of urban centres dealing with the history and development of the particular urban context but also the process of urbanism covering the organic evolution and continuation of the urban centre itself. The latter includes community health and housing, transport and communication systems, places of work and employment, the dialectic of dominant and subaltern cultural ideologies and so on. Social justice issues focusing on the erosion of cultural self-esteem leading to the breakdown of well-being, alienation and the use of drugs pose new challenges for city museums. In several ways, the city museum is a critical mechanism for the exploration and articulation of the sense of shared and contested meanings of urban cultural borders and subaltern histories. City museums need to reflect on notions of hegemonic cultural discourse and establish their role in exploring dominance, dissent, protest and change in populations where the cultural borders can be perceived through race, ethnicity, colour, gender, age, faith, regionalism, language and sexual orientation.

City museums should take a community-grounded approach beyond the binary and stereotyped perceptions of cultural maintenance as static and cultural development as dynamic. They should focus on the centrality of cultural institutions to the individual and community sense of self-esteem and identity. There is a range of activities that are subsumed into such an approach. It embraces (a) the contemporary arts movement, including adaptations of classical forms of dance and opera as integral parts of our living and dynamic heritage; (b) festivals and events of significance; (c) preservation, continuation and management of cultural heritage; (d) the voices, values and traditions of communities; and (e) the wider environment within which we must develop sustainable cultural systems.[3]

A working definition for city museums

As the discourse of urban museology is relatively new and emerging and as the commitment of many governments to multicultural agendas has become axiomatic, it is useful to develop a working definition to deal with the convergence of discourse of museology and inclusivity. The ICOM definition of the museum can be adapted tentatively for this purpose:

> A city museum is a non profit-making, dynamic and evolving permanent institution or cultural mechanism in the service of the urban society and its development, and open to the public, which co-ordinates, acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education, reconciliation of communities and enjoyment, the tangible and intangible, movable and immovable heritage evidence of diverse peoples and their environment.
>
> City museums are centres of co-ordinated activity for the cultural representation of the urban populations through: (a) celebrating the shared identity, sense of place and self-esteem of diverse peoples; (b) providing the focus and resources for community cultural development activities relating to the natural and cultural heritage of the urban centre and the surrounding region; and (c) establishing a centre of co-ordination for the preservation, presentation, continuation and management of artistic, cultural and heritage endeavours of all peoples.

City museums are an integral part of the broader cultural industry and economics of metropolitan environments. Heritage consciousness and the construction and

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deconstruction of urban borderlands are being debated in the centres of power and opinion of the cultural industry. There are several projects and exhibitions on cultural encounters, integration, dissent and resistance characterizing borderlife. A whole range of projects in several countries has been focusing on ethno-specific cultural expression and historical experiences. It is within this context of contemporary arts and cultural movement that city museums should attempt to represent the knowledge, experiences and practices of a range of communities that contribute to the human dimension of the city as a whole. The city museum as a cultural centre can provide opportunities for critical and intellectual exchange among all participants who represent the different cultural communities of the urban landscape and thus facilitate the exploration of diversity and vitality of expression and heritage consciousness along the border. Such interactive approaches will replace the older forms of expressing selective memory with engaging forms reflecting the collective memory of different cultural communities and articulating their sense of individual and shared space.

City museums, or more appropriately urban cultural and heritage centres of integrated cultural development based on holistic approaches to arts, culture, heritage, festivals and special events, can be systematically developed through cultural planning approaches. Such approaches are complex and assume that the engagement of the urban communities through the city museum is an ongoing process. City museums in post-colonial societies offer exciting opportunities for the democratization of the museum construct. However, the development of integrated and inclusive approaches by new or existing city museums should be considered within frameworks for best practice. The following guidelines could be useful. They are based on research that informs the foundation of the cultural and heritage centre or city museum for Canberra, the most culturally diverse city in Australia.[4]

Participation as community cultural enrichment

In negotiating the representation, presentation and interpretation of natural and cultural heritage values within the context of the development of the city and its historical and contemporary contexts, city museums are in a unique position to develop fresh approaches to audience enhancement and community empowerment through effective participation. They also provide a unique opportunity to bring together diverse communities and the different sectors of the cultural industry. The focus needs to be more specifically on integrated community cultural development. The recent trend towards systematic cultural mapping and planning approaches paves the way for a more balanced development which also takes into consideration a range of economic and social parameters.

An inclusive city museum should welcome and enable broad audience participation by being accessible, versatile and resourceful through:

Participatory practices that are developed and negotiated through extensive community engagement using both formal and informal communication and consultation mechanisms accessible to the total urban community.

Ensuring community ownership and involvement in the decision-making, management and activities of the city museum.

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Promoting a sense of community pride and involvement in the preservation, continuation and management of heritage and artistic activities.

Providing physical and intellectual spaces for activities that come out of organizations, especially projects and exhibitions generated by the community and returned to community homes.

Establishing a shared space for making the museum a focus for contested discourse that is amenable to both planned and impromptu public forums and presentations, including a performance space, as there are many ways to articulate heritage values.

The elements of co-operation and co-ordination should underpin cultural and heritage activities of city museums so that they mirror the different urban landscapes. The city museum needs to work as a facilitator for: (a) individuals and groups to look to one another and to other communities for productive relationships through co-operative projects; (b) co-operative partnerships between various government and non-government agencies for the promotion of projects and presentations; (c) close interconnection with other spaces through networking and information sharing (network with local heritage sites, museums and art galleries); (d) co-ordination between cultural and heritage groups and their activities; (e) education, publication, information and promotion activities in conjunction with the schools system, university sector and commercial agencies; and (f) co-ordination of projects on the documentary heritage in partnership with libraries and archives, so as to facilitate the writing of community histories.

City museums need to provide a pivotal facilitating role in assisting diverse communities to establish the significance and unique qualities of spaces within the urban landscape and thus put into practice the rhetoric of livable streets and better cities. They have to foster cultural mapping approaches that enable communities to explore the special meanings of the places in which they live. Partnerships between planners, community historians, artists and urban communities are crucial for the different peoples to control and represent the spaces for those who live in them. Community awareness of local history and research on particular histories and ideologies facilitated by the city museum could contribute significantly towards rethinking the urban cultural borderlands in the long term.

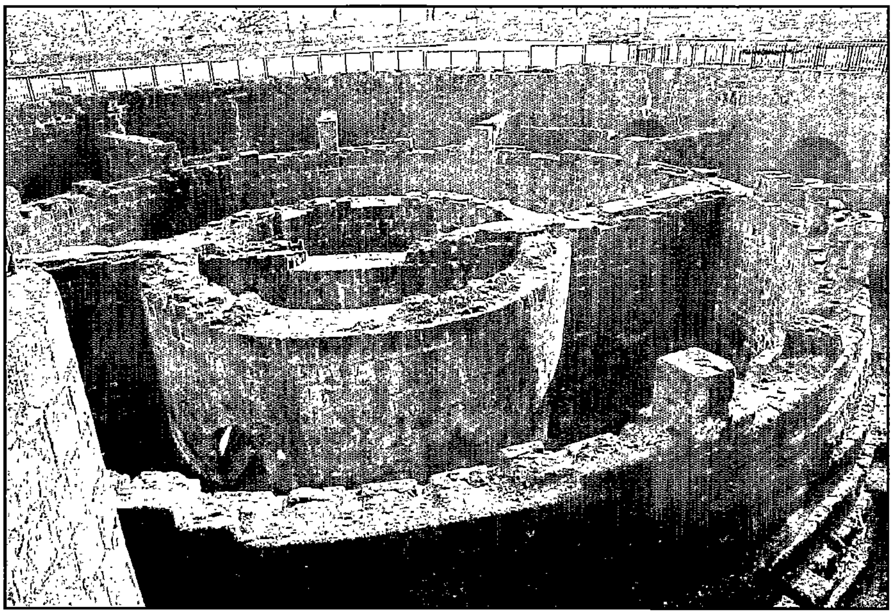

Photo by courtesy of the author

The layering of history at Intramuros, Old Manila (Philippines) challenges urban museologists to address the complexities of interpreting continuously lived-in urban landscapes.

Cultural diversity

If city museums are keen to take heritage issues seriously and work towards the legitimization of diversity, they should become forums for the exploration of the ideals of unity in diversity and diversity in unity. Sanitized approaches to cultural representa-

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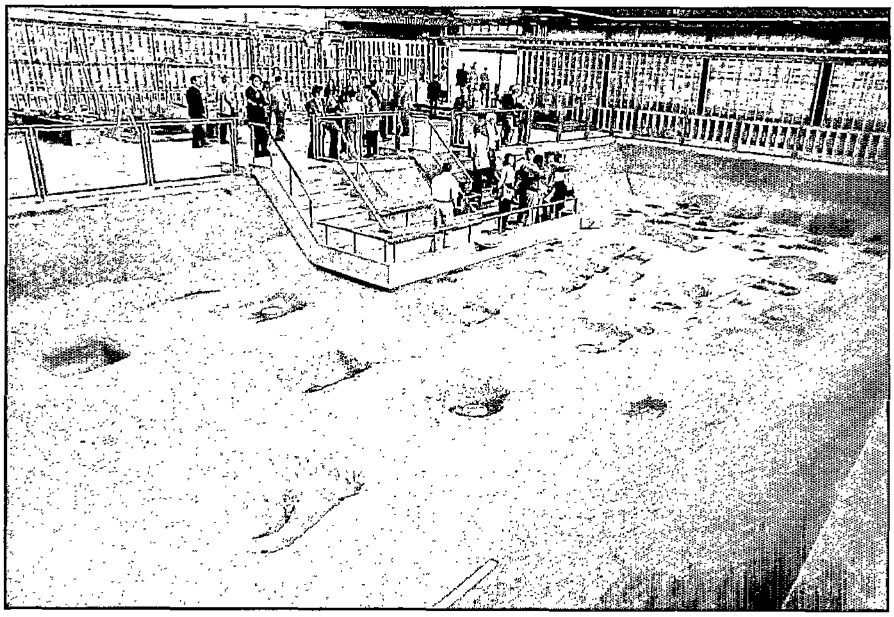
tion constructed in museum board rooms will perpetuate a hegemonic discourse that will be repressive for the majority. Museums as innovative and creative communicators can challenge the static and sterile rhetoric of the conservative and reactionary elements in multicultural societies.

Cultural and heritage processes, outcomes and management of city museums must reflect the demographic and social diversity of their population in order to promote a more inclusive and generally pluralistic public culture. In this context, the primacy of the cultural rights of indigenous people to preserve, continue and manage their own culture and heritage must be acknowledged, and multicultural approaches need to permeate all elements of cultural and heritage activity. It is ultimately the frameworks for self-empowerment and self-determination of the different stakeholders that will contribute to the development of an inclusive and community-centred urban museological discourse. City museums should: (a) highlight the cultural map of the continuing and the surrounding region; (b) promote local artists and the history of the artistic heritage and through this engender a heightened sense of community awareness of identification with the city; (c) ensure that inclusive and generally pluralistic approaches and policies and practices of access and equity permeate all elements of cultural and heritage activities; (d) reflect a strong sense of community self-esteem through effective equality of treatment by the active development of public policies and practices of access and equity, participation and negotiation based on the principle of universality in the provision of museum services; (e) present the urban genesis and the urban processes of development at different levels of operation of the urban centre (e.g. capital city, municipality); and (f) articulate the historical and contemporary cultural aspirations of the people of the urban centre.

Cultural and heritage practice should reflect inspiration, innovation and imagination, which nourish all vibrant cultural activities. They could embrace cross-art forms and cultural heritage ventures that challenge existing perceptions and practices and explore identity, meaning and how different people construct themselves as part of an urban community. City museums need to: (a) develop integrated and holistic approaches to community cultural development; (b) establish or re-establish themselves as a multipurpose facility that has the capacity to respond to and stimulate a spectrum of activities across art forms, heritage and community interests; (c) provide the opportunities for the interrelationship of the heritage and arts of the region and present the urban centre as a vibrant community; and (d) engage the broader community in exploring its sense of place through facilitating meetings, seminars, exchange of ideas, debates, interactive theatre and heritage performances.

Nara Palace, the heart of Heijo-kyo, Japan's ancient capital from 710 to 784, has been under excavation for the past forty years and is an example of the use of heritage conservation and interpretation approaches for exploring the past of an urban centre and for training a generation of urban archaeologists and museologists.



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The principle of striving for quality of experience and agreed standards of practice with due respect for diversity must be pursued in all cultural and heritage processes and practices. This objective needs to be realized through the museum's commitment to both professional and community input into its cultural development approaches. City museums should: (a) encourage recognition and appreciation of excellence of achievement and presentation from different cultural perspectives; (b) establish frameworks for the realization of quality of experience and negotiated standards of practice; (c) facilitate community history projects as mechanisms for community cultural action; and (d) engage in modelling community relations strategies and pilot projects to deal with conflicts, tensions, dissent and the role of consultation and negotiation in community cultural development.

The city museum should sustain individuals, groups and organizations with the initiatives and skills to be self-reliant in an environment that encourages diversification of funding sources. City museums must foster: (a) approaches for communities to be self-reliant in ways that will encourage the diversification of resources and funding for community cultural heritage conservation and development activities; (b) strategic cultural partnerships with community cultural centres; (c) innovative and affirmative action projects for cultural and heritage activities which do not fit into the confines of the market economy; (d) information outlets and shops that specialize in books, reports and documents and audiovisual material to include local community cultural-heritage material; (e) workshops on accessing resources from both the public and private sectors; and (f) cultural and heritage tourism which does not compromise the cultural integrity of neighbourhoods.

In conclusion, I refer to the human tendency to 'walling in and walling out' (as expressed in the poem of the same title by Robert Frost) and argue for the city museum as the mechanism for breaking down urban cultural barriers. In order to situate themselves within the imperative of relevance, city museums must reflect the history of their origins and development and the changing contexts of the urban centres. They have to reveal their past practices of cultural representation and construction of the heritage of the city so that new approaches can be explored. They should confront issues impacting on the contemporary urban populations of the world and network to exchange projects and model approaches contributing to the development of an inclusive museological discourse. ■

Notes

1. The author would like to thank Nichola Johnson, Don McMichael, Monica Barone, Matilda House, Jenny Cox, Jill Waterhouse, Kylie Winkworth and Sammy Gaskill.

2. N. Johnson (ed.), *Reflecting Cities*, proceedings of a symposium held at the Museum of London, 1993.

3. A. Galla, *Heritage Curricula and Cultural Diversity*, p. 66, Fig. III, Canberra, Office of Multicultural Affairs, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1993.

4. *Sharing the Vision: A Framework for Cultural Development*, Cultural Council of Australian Capital Territory, May, 1993; *Cultural and Heritage Centre*, report of the Joint Committee of the Cultural and Heritage Councils, ACT, 1993 (unpublished report).

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Europe, east and west: exchanging ideas across frontiers

Miroslaw Borusiewicz and Ian Jones

Moving from a command to a market economy in Central and Eastern Europe has had a profound effect on museum life. Shrinking resources and minimal notions of customer care are but two of the hurdles to be overcome. On the invitation of the Polish Ministry of Culture and the Arts, a British consultancy firm, Chadwick Jones Associates, organized a series of seminars in Poland for museums and galleries. It turned out to be a learning experience for both parties. Miroslaw Borusiewicz is head of the culture department and curator at the Lodz City History Museum and, until recently, deputy at the Ministry of Culture and the Arts with responsibility for museums in Poland. Ian Jones is director of Chadwick Jones Associates and has worked extensively with arts and cultural organizations in Europe, Guyana and New Zealand.

Frontiers, on the ground and in the mind, are a challenge. They frustrate and they stimulate, and the world of culture would not be the same without them; there would be no national museums for a start. Frontiers are changing all over Europe in all sorts of interesting ways. In the European Union they are dissolving while at the same time the regions, e.g. Wales or Catalonia, are gaining status and dealing directly with Brussels. Further east the frontiers have multiplied. Conferences on collaboration and networking spring up everywhere as we leap across frontiers and talk about a single European cultural space. Then there is the collapse of the biggest frontier of them all, the great ideological and political divide between East and West, another great stimulus to conferences, for everybody from business people to cultural workers. The Eastern countries are presented as the lands of opportunity for investment and trade and making money, and their capitals fill with Westerners there to do business and, like us, advise on Western practice.

The first seminar organized by Chadwick Jones in Poland was arranged by Wojciech Plewako, then at the Ministry of Culture and the Arts, and held in Warsaw in March 1992. It dealt with marketing, fund-raising and sponsorship. The participants comprised staff from a variety of art galleries across Poland. The second seminar was held in March 1993 at Radziejowice. This time it was for some forty-four staff members from national and local museums and covered the same ground as the first seminar, but with the addition of a session on museum security, an important topic now in Eastern Europe. The third seminar, held at the end of 1993 in the Radziwill Palace, was about the training of museum staff and was intended as the first step towards creating a national training scheme for Poland. There is also a separate, but related activity we are actively involved in, and that is the setting up of a Centre for Museum Information and Training at Lodz. The purpose of the centre will be to help improve the quality of museum service in Poland by providing up-to-date information on all aspects of museums, and by initiating, co-ordinating and advancing training activity. It is hoped that, in due course, the centre will be able to provide a service for other countries in Eastern Europe.

The costs of the first two seminars were covered by the British Council. The third was financed by the British Foreign Office Know-How Fund, which was set up to provide advice to the former communist countries of Eastern Europe. The Ministry of Culture and the Arts also gave financial support.

The seminars have been of two or three days' duration. Those of us contributing to them from the United Kingdom have included the former director of the Welsh Arts Council, the assistant director of the Council of Museums in Wales, the former head of the Museum Training Institute and the National Museums security adviser. A detailed handbook has been produced for each seminar which enlarges on the proceedings. We try to make each handbook as practical as possible with case-studies and real-life examples, a list of foreign firms operating in Poland who could be approached for sponsorship, and a list of contacts in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

Profiting from the experience of others

The idea behind the seminars has been a simple one: profiting from the experience of others. Since the advent of the Thatcher government in 1979, museums, galleries,

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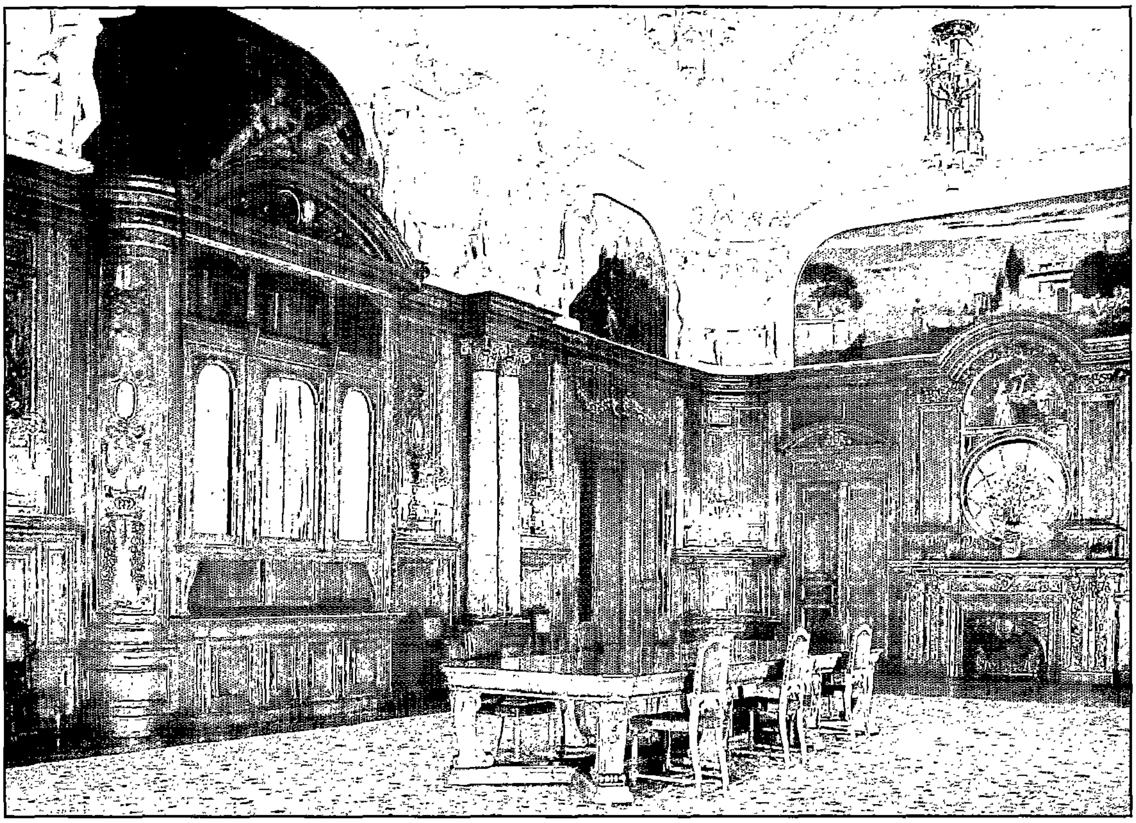

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Original 1902 furnishings of a room in the Lodz City History Museum when it was the home of the industrialist Izrael K. Poznanski.

theatres, concert halls and indeed most public institutions in the United Kingdom have been operating in a market economy where they have had no option but to be more self-sufficient and less reliant on public funding. Museums have had to learn better how to raise money, find sponsors, market themselves and set up commercial activities to narrow the gap, if they can, between their income from national or local government and their expenditure. Poland has retreated from a command to a market economy and museums are now operating in what is a dramatically new environment with resources in very short supply. Their problems are the British ones writ large.

So, what we have done is to describe the British experience of managing museums in a market economy. Our assumption is that the experience of others who have been through it all before can be worth sharing. We have talked frankly about what has gone right and what has gone wrong, successes and failures, and we have aimed to be honest about shortcomings.

We started each seminar with a brief description of British museum organization and policy-making to provide the context for an examination of the practicalities of running museums in a market economy. As many of the participants are in positions where they can influence government we drew attention to pressure points or issues we are currently debating in the United Kingdom and what seems to us good or bad models of practice at national or local level. We have been careful, though, not to suggest that the British have the right model of museum management or the right solutions; rather we describe experience and discuss what seems to work and what does not.

After this introductory session we moved on to discuss practicalities. In our second seminar, for example, we began our discussion on fund-raising by setting out what to us appeared to be three fundamental principles, then followed with a case-study of how a small museum in the south of England with limited resources set about a campaign to raise money for essential structural repairs to the building. We concluded with a list of twenty-two suggestions, which were enlarged upon in the subsequent handbook. For example, the royalties from the works of Agatha Christie are frozen in Polish banks: so, why not pressure the government to release them for cultural ventures? We suggested ways of renting out museum space for functions as a way of raising money, but we also took care to draw attention to some of the problems we have found in doing so, such as insurance, security of objects or overtime payments to security staff. When we discussed sponsorship we showed how we would set about getting sponsorship for a particular project, what approach seems to work best and what does not; at the same time we pointed out how time-consuming and frequently unrewarding chasing sponsors can be. In our session on security we described various measures we have used to deter thieves, and we talked about the work of our Museum Regional Emergency and Disaster Squads – a relatively cheap idea for our Polish colleagues to consider and something that works well and which could be imported. Polish museums are considering setting up a national system of training, so in our third seminar we had an open discussion about the British experience of setting up a training system for museum staff and we drew attention to some of the things that seem to have been done right and those that would have been, with hindsight, better avoided.

Some differences

A maritime museum, say, or an archeological museum or a film museum in one country is not likely to be radically different in aims and intentions from a similar museum in another country; they are after all in the same business. It is tempting therefore to suppose that similar problems, no matter where they occur, demand similar solutions and that ideas that work in one country can work in another. Our experience in Poland suggests that frequently they do, but sometimes, for a variety of reasons, they do not. Differences are easy to emphasize, after all a foreign country would not be 'foreign' without them. However, we did find some significant differences that we had to take into account when we shared our experience, and this led to one broad conclusion: differences in the context in which museums have to operate must be recognized if sensible advice is to be offered. Let us look at some of them.

First, resources. Polish museums, with the exception of the national showpieces like the Royal Palace in Warsaw, the wonderfully restored Radziwill Palace or Chopin's birthplace, seriously lack money. The old political and ideological barriers between West and East have been replaced sadly by economic ones and the money is not there to emulate Western practice without sometimes considerable modification. A consequence, very striking to the visitor, is the emptiness of theatres, opera houses, galleries and museums. People simply do not have the money, and the struggle for economic survival does not leave much energy or time for leisure.

Second, Poland has only recently emerged from the best part of fifty years of autocratic, centralized rule; it was effectively cut off from the West and Western practice. A frequent consequence is a conservatism of presentation in museums (with brilliant exceptions), made worse by the lack of money (sometimes one feels that a particular museum ought actually to be *in* one), and very often a reluctance to welcome visitors. In this, museums, as tourists discover, are no better than shops or hotels, where service can be a grim experience. As

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much as anything, it is a matter of attitude and to change takes time and patience. Still, fighting our way through some of the over-marketed flagship museums and galleries of the major Western cities we might feel that there are worse crimes than lack of customer care.

Third, the Second World War devastated Poland more than any other country in Europe. Few cities or villages escaped and, except for some fortunate areas, it is rare to find an old farmhouse or a medieval church still standing. It was not just the last war: God's playground, as one historian has called it, has been fought over for centuries. To the visitor driving across Poland it sometimes seems as if the past has been erased. One consequence is that the total collection of Polish museums is less than that of the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London combined.

There are, finally, quite practical differences to consider, such as differences in the fiscal laws, which affect donations to museums; in Poland tax relief on donations from individuals for example is limited to 10 per cent of annual income irrespective of the value of the gift. Again, there is a dearth of wealthy Poles in Poland to donate money and, not surprisingly, there are few volunteers who are prepared to do jobs for no pay, though volunteering used to be a tradition before the Second World War.

Some reactions

What were the reactions to the seminars? There were perhaps three basic ones. First, 'We've heard it all before' – fortunately not too common. Second, 'Interesting, but we don't have the resources to do it at the moment', or 'It may work in Britain, but not here.' Third, 'We have been given encouragement and shown opportunities; we picked up a range of new ideas like franchising, which are worth trying.' On the whole, judging from responses from participants, most found the seminars valuable, not least because they gave them an opportunity to discuss and exchange ideas and meet together to share common problems.

A number of museums contacted us after the seminars and told us what they had done or intended to do. Many already had a good idea about what they wanted to do, but felt that the seminars helped confirm their intentions. One example of change was provided by the lively State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw, which is financed by the Ministry of Culture and the Arts. The introduction of the market economy has meant that the museum has had to look for new sources of funding. The museum is exploiting its site and rooms have been let out to an Austrian company. A trading arm has been set up to sell postcards, books, posters, souvenirs and archaeological replicas. Of course, Polish wages being what they are, the income is modest, but it is an effort worth making. An education programme has also been developed and despite the fact that school groups have to be charged a low fee it does generate some income. The museum has also started selling its expertise. At Biskupin, one of the museum's out-stations, extra income, which enables it to meet most of its running costs, is now produced by parking charges, rents from fast-food bars, souvenir kiosks and even a tourist boat on the lake surrounding the site. All this is not necessarily a product of our seminars, most of it was done before we came on the scene, but at least the museum has been able to discuss matters with us, reflect on our experience and exchange ideas with us.

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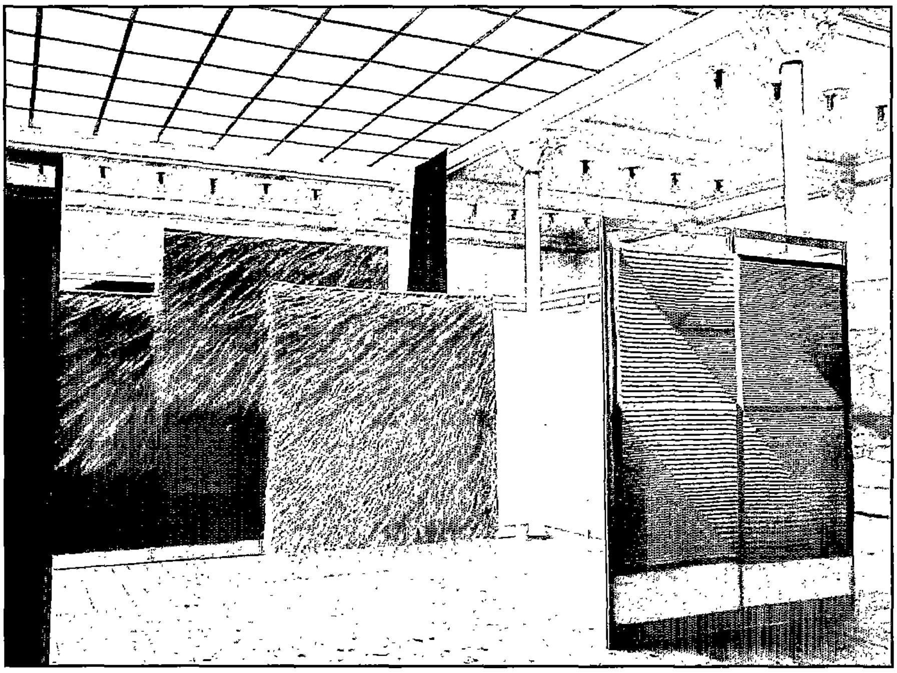

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Art gallery in the Lodz City History Museum.

Some reflections

What lessons have we learned from the seminars? First, differences between countries and cultures can be overemphasized, but the different contexts in which museums work cannot be overlooked. Poland lacks Western resources, and decades of living under an authoritarian regime, effectively cut off from countries outside the Warsaw Pact, have left their legacy. It makes a big difference to museum practice. Differences between West European countries of course are much less marked, but we feel the principle remains the same: take into account the context in which a museum has to operate.

Second, paternalism kills. The Poles, and other East Europeans – or Central Europeans, as most of them would prefer to be called – know what they are doing; they just need some help from those who have had longer experience of working in the market economy. We must be careful not to assume that our Polish colleagues do not know what to do. They have plenty of ideas; so do we in the West, but we also have more money and a greater experience of running museums in a market economy.

Third, the value of direct experience. Our seminars did not have hands-on experience. It is one thing to talk about marketing or fund-raising or obtaining sponsorship, it is another actually to do it or see how it is done in practice. The Educational Studies Department of Sotheby's, the London art dealers and auction house, is proposing to invite curators from museums in East European countries to spend a week in the United Kingdom visiting museums and seeing things at first hand. A combination of an initial introductory seminar in the home country on the lines of those we have organized, followed up by practical experience elsewhere, could be the model to follow. Even better, it could lead not to a one-way flow, but to mutually profitable exchanges, and be the start of regular collaboration.

This leads us to offering one final piece of advice: nothing beats collaboration and the exchange of ideas and people, no matter what countries are involved. It is a commonplace remark, but it is true. It surfaces at every East–West conference, and indeed at any conference with an international dimension, and it is perhaps the most important lesson we have learned. Offering advice is fine, but it is even better to learn from each other; the Poles, for example, can be even more ingenious at surviving on limited resources than their colleagues in the West, and in this respect they can teach us quite a lot. Ideas and people should flow in both directions. ■

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'Inflammable stuff': designing a children's exhibit at the Barbados Museum

Wendy Donawa

Creating a children's exhibit with limited material resources was the challenge facing the Barbados Museum. Wendy Donawa shows how a wealth of creative imagination transformed a corridor-like space into a gallery of discovery and delight. She is education curator at the Barbados Museum and designed the Children's Gallery exhibit and catalogue. Her writings include publications on Caribbean culture and the role of museum educators.

'Do not try to satisfy your vanity by teaching a greater number of things,' wrote Anatole France, though he was not at that time discussing exhibit design. 'Awaken people's curiosity. It is enough to open minds; do not overload them. Put there just a spark. If there is some good inflammable stuff, it will catch fire.'

This article discusses some of the 'sparks' behind the design of *Yesterday's Children*, the Barbados Museum's permanent children's exhibit. Underlying the gallery's development is the conviction that there is 'good inflammable stuff' in every child, and that it is the educator's task to discover what will ignite it.

As the exhibit developed in the face of uncertain and dwindling funding, some of our strategies may interest those colleagues, particularly in developing countries, who also feel that their aspirations will always exceed their resources.

An initial concern was accessibility, which is not merely a question of opening hours: it is the existence of programmes that are welcoming and of exhibits that are comprehensible not only to the traditional, well-educated visitor, but also to those without formal education, to families, to schoolchildren, to tourists, to visitors with disabilities. It was therefore essential that *Yesterday's Children* be physically, psychologically and intellectually accessible to our target group of 6–13 year olds, as well as to older, younger, mixed and special-needs groups.

The thematic storyline needed translating into comfortable physical and spatial terms. The gallery space was unpromising raw material, its long narrow shape (13ft 6in × 87 ft, approximately 4 m × 26.5 m) seemed to offer only an aisle-like space along which display cases would back the walls. However, even the narrow space proved workable. A focus for each exhibit was created by separate, alcove-like environments, which cut off sight-lines to other exhibits. From no point can the entire gallery, potentially confusing in its variety, be seen. Thus, wandering from exhibit to exhibit is something of an exploration and discovery for the child. The 'path' of the exhibition is at all points wide enough for a wheelchair to turn.

Accessible exhibits also need to take into account the size of the viewers, their comfort needs and interest levels. Displays were designed using a 127 cm eye-level, a comfortable viewing height for most 8–12 year olds and wheelchair users. Some components were lower, encouraging children to stoop or kneel and peek. This constant change and movement encourages children's natural animation and allows them to set their own pace. It also does away with the fidgeting and tension so prevalent in many more traditional school group activities.

Emotional and cognitive accessibility was a primary concern. The printed word, unfortunately, signals failure and humiliation for many schoolchildren. To ensure that text would be an aid and not a hindrance to comprehension, criteria for the use of text were developed.

First, text was used minimally. It was not to be used at all if the storyline could be interpreted through artefacts, graphics, charts or any other non-verbal medium. Barbados's racial demographics, for instance are presented in graph form, while some necessary but otherwise dry historical information is shown in cartoon bubbles coming from the mouths of historical figures. Second, text is large (up to 140 pt) in a clear, legible typeface, and visually interesting in its relation to

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Photo by courtesy of the author

A young visitor discovers a traditional child's toy.

the overall exhibit design. Third, all major text is written at an 8–10-year reading level. Language has been kept clear, direct and emphatic. It is used to explain or describe, not to enumerate. There is a virtual absence of names, dates and information that could tempt adults/teachers to impose rote-memory tasks.

Storylines: interpreting social history for children

Yesterday's Children interprets the social history of Barbados for children. Historical interpretation, even for adults, is a matter of endless debate and deliberation. Whose history should be interpreted? Who has a right to interpret it? What does 'objectivity' mean in a post-colonial society whose history is imbedded in the sombre annals of sugar and slavery?

Interpreting history for children brings added difficulties. The storyline (though not the underlying research) must be simplified and adapted for young people. The problem is to maintain historical integrity without merely reducing events to the picturesque or the sensational.

It was decided to keep the social history child-centred, stressing the personal, the intimate and the domestic. In particular, hands-on exhibits and the dioramas of family life were designed to encourage the kind of empathy that takes history off the dry printed page. The overall storyline leads from the pre-Columbian Amerindian culture to the changes brought about by settlement, sugar and slavery, followed by a history of transportation in Barbados. From here the young visitor enters a 'village', exploring traditional crafts, toys, school, work, and varied lifestyles that children lived.

Unlike the formal school curriculum, which requires a pupil to succeed in Form 1 in order to enter Form 2, museum programmes can foster informal, self-paced discovery learning. A 7-year-old and a graduate student can each bring individual experience and perception to an exhibit; each can leave with valid and successful insights.

This varied public has challenging implications for exhibit design. Very young children have a short attention span, little sense of historical time and no capacity for theoretical thought. They need to move around as they touch, identify, compare and learn. Older primary-school children develop a more literal and judgemental outlook; they want facts and drama. They are inveterate collectors themselves – comics, model planes, dolls, marbles – and can take an intelligent interest in the museum's collecting function. Secondary-school children are developing the capacity for

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abstract thought, and can understand historical cause and effect, and relate social contexts from past and present.

The exhibit designer needs to integrate these learning characteristics into each stage of the exhibit's development. The design of *Yesterday's Children* was organized on a hierarchy of intellectual 'nodes'.[1] Those nodes on the first level contain the basic minimum of information needed to interpret each theme. Nodes on two, three or even four subsequent levels develop the theme with increasing depth and complexity; they can lead the visitor, at selected points, to quite sophisticated insights.

An example of these information nodes can be seen in a diorama from 'Children at Work'. This diorama presents a thatched, mud-floored agricultural labourer's dwelling from the early years of this century. Inside, a small boy on a grass-stuffed mattress watches his mother by lamplight as she prepares supper on a glowing coal fire. Very young children enjoy the drama of the flickering light, and respond to the situation of the little boy near supper and bedtime. (So much so that a net has been installed across the door to stop them crawling in and climbing on the bed.) They can be led to ask and answer: What is the roof/floor/mattress made of? What is the mother cooking on? Why don't they have lights? What are the tools for?

Older primary-school children might, from the same observation, ask: How do their home and furnishings differ from ours? What is their diet like? Those with reading and arithmetic skills can read the text panel with the food prices of the times, work out a labourer's weekly budget, and understand something of the quality of early families' lives.

Photo by courtesy of the author

Mother and child in a middle-class kitchen of the 1930s.

Secondary-school children could also examine the accompanying 'Children at Work' panel, and understand child labour and living standards in the socio-economic context of the century following Emancipation.

But it is not only on varied intellectual levels that exhibits must function. Implicit in the exhibits are values intended to inculcate attitudes. Cultural respect and self-respect lead us to cherish that which makes us, and to value that which makes others, distinctive. Many colonial and post-colonial conditions have militated against the development of these attitudes, against a desire to understand the past and to link it fruitfully to the present.

For instance, a hands-on 'workshop' with traditional crafts and tools is intended to encourage children's admiration and respect for crafts now in decline. It should also counteract a widespread partiality to glossy, poorly made imports, and the accompanying disregard for manual skills.

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A positive attitude towards the importance of preserving history's material evidence is fostered, then, by the varying levels of information that shape the exhibition, and that enable children to participate and learn at their own pace.

Participation, interaction and discovery

Different mental and physical activities stimulate different parts of the brain. When the young visitor always has a choice of behaviours – to observe, to compare, to read (or not), to discuss, to stand, sit, move about – anxiety and tension are removed from the learning process, which proceeds at the child's own pace and interest level.

In *Yesterday's Children*, each of the themes employs a different instructional mode from those preceding and following it. This avoids monotony and ensures that as the child chooses a new 'environment', his or her brain shifts into another learning mode. The change is emphasized by the distinctive colour of the panels for each thematic area.

'Transportation', for instance, is one of the more structured, didactic exhibits; much of the information is sequential. But the child can move directly into the next exhibit, the hands-on craft workshop, and choose to plane wood on the carpenter's bench, or pull apart and reassemble a traditional wooden chair.

Children may choose to do the archaeological 'detective' work that will enable them to interpret the archaeological diorama for themselves. Or enjoy the ultimate hands-on history of the costume corner. Or research the large, simplified children's catalogues that accompany several of the exhibits. With some displays, children can browse through perspex-topped drawers of artefacts, a secure form of visible storage.

Text, already discussed above, is used minimally, but is designed to encourage participation. Frequent questions compel attention, and encourage observation and problem-solving. Labels often begin: 'What would you do if ...?'; 'How would you feel if ...?'

Minimal text combined with graphics and artefacts can communicate quite complex ideas. Many children have, for instance, a very vague spatial sense, and find it difficult to develop map-comprehension skills. How, for example, does a round world become a flat map? The text says: 'Think of the world like an orange. Peel it and lay it flat. Now you have a map.' Accompanying the text, models of a child's hands hold a small globe of the world and an orange. Underneath, both globe and orange have been peeled and flattened in a Mercator-like shape. The simple visual metaphor seems to have clarified the notion for many youngsters (and some teachers!).

High quality; low tech

It was clear that a children's gallery meant to last would have to be composed of sturdy, inexpensive, local materials; that any technology would have to be easily repaired or replaced locally; that zero-based budgeting was a reality. Case design was developed on a 4 x 8 ft (122 x 244 cm) module so there was minimum waste of material. Earth colours and plain or stained wood were used both because they are attractive and because they wear well under the constant friction of small hands.

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Every museum develops its own cost-cutting technologies, but here are several that worked for us and that colleagues in developing countries may find useful:

First was the earth for the archaeological diorama: inspired by the realistic epoxy 'earth' of dioramas in metropolitan museums, but unable to reproduce it, I photographed a recent dig in Barbados, and constructed a plywood frame of roughly the same dimensions. Soil from the various layers of the dig was bagged. It was sterilized (in baking pans in the oven; this took days!), and mixed into a pastry-like consistency with carpenter's white glue. This 'soil pastry' was plastered on to the plywood frame, and looks like the original dig. The occasional chip is easily and cheaply repaired. The same soil-pastry recipe was used for the earthen floor of the thatched-cottage diorama.

Second, display of the doll-and-toy collection, much of it fragile, was a problem in our high humidity. The cost of an environmentally controlled exhibit case was out of the question. Enclosed, there would be a build-up of humidity, as well as heat and ultraviolet radiation from lights; if ventilated, dust and insects would cause damage. In the end, rows of ventilation holes were drilled in the case's ceiling and base; these were covered from the inside with furnace filter. Air circulates from the base vents through the top; so far, there has been no condensation, and the humidity in the case remains the same as that of the gallery. An ultraviolet filter covers the glass, and the only lights are small spots activated by push buttons, our highest 'tech'. Children like the drama of lighting an area of the dim case, unaware that it is a cost-effective conservation measure, ensuring that delicate artefacts get minimal exposure to light.

Third, volunteers are a wonderful and unpredictable resource! They are worth the time and effort it takes to find and recruit them. Just a few of their contributions to *Yesterday's Children*: a model-maker spent months on an exquisitely detailed and accurate model of a traditional fishing boat no longer seen in Barbados; a retired military officer researched the disintegrating model plane collection and a young pilot spent his Saturday mornings repairing it; skilled seamstresses reproduced child-sized period costumes for the dress-up corner; teenagers spent two summers of research assembling the children's catalogues.

It was gratifying to finish within the gallery's modest budget. The exhibit is well utilized by the 5,000 schoolchildren who annually participate in the museum's programmes. Less expected, but equally welcome, has been the playful response of adults. Perhaps a children's environment is less constraining than the solemnity of adult galleries. Or perhaps in all of us, not just in children, there is some good inflammable stuff, awaiting just a spark. ■

Note

1. For the concept of developing storylines along thematic nodes, I am indebted to A. S. Miles et al., *The Design of Educational Exhibits*, 2nd ed, London, Unwin Hyman, 1988.

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Learning by doing: the Science Museum of Thessaloniki

Manos Iatridis

The story of how a dedicated group of volunteers conceived, created and operated the first and only science museum in Greece is an exemplary tale of vision and perseverance. With fifteen years of continuous expansion and more than 250,000 visitors, the Science Museum of Thessaloniki is on the threshold of a new stage of development. Although quite small in comparison with the international giants such as the Exploratorium in San Francisco and other science museums in Chicago, London, Munich, Paris and Toronto, the Thessaloniki Museum has now become too large and too important for its small founders' group to support and is looking forward to a 'takeover' by a local institution with the prestige and financial backing needed to ensure its future. Likely candidates are the Municipality of Thessaloniki and the Aristoteles University. Manos Iatridis is a management and training consultant specializing in human resources development who has a long history of community and youth work. A founding member of the Science Museum, he has served since 1978 as its volunteer director.

The Science Museum of Thessaloniki is a very interesting case of how far one can go on the 'learning by doing' principle. It is also a unique case of a museum organized and successfully operated not by museum experts, but by museum visitors and fans! Indeed, among the founders of the museum and its 'operators' none had anything to do with museology.

All twenty-four of them, however, were regular and systematic visitors of museums in Greece and abroad and had formed very clear views as to what was good for visitors and what was not. Another common characteristic of the founders was that all of them had a background or strong interest in science and technology. Many of them were professionals in the educational field: three were university professors in the faculty of physics, two were secondary-education teachers of physics, and seven were engineers. The others, businessmen, lawyers or company managers, had high on their list of hobbies various aspects of science and technology. And most of them had visited the Deutches Museum and the Science Museum in London.

What got them together in the early months of 1978 was their strong desire – and determination – to add the first science museum to the almost 300 (state or private), art, historical and archaeological museums and galleries in Greece. Such a museum, they believed, was urgently needed especially by the younger generation, if they were to become aware of, understand and later help their country participate in the technological revolution that was taking place in the Western world. While every effort would be made to create a classical museum with 'hands-off' exhibits, by collecting, safeguarding and exhibiting tools, equipment and machinery characteristic of the scientific and technological heritage of the area, the museum was going to be a science information and education centre for the general public, but mainly for students aged 10 to 18, with as many 'hands-on' interactive exhibits and other learning opportunities as possible. Key topics in the numerous and long discussions were 'public understanding of science and technology', 'advancing science literacy' among the student population, even 'attracting to the scientific and technological professions more and better qualified future scientists'.

The first phase – November 1978 to June 1980

At the first general assembly, a five-member board of directors was elected, with Professor N. Economou of the University of Thessaloniki as the president and the author as the vice-president and project manager and director of the museum. Yannis Papaefstathiou, a physicist and educational adviser with a large industrial organization, was elected secretary-general of the board.

Within six months the first pilot exhibition was ready and elementary-school groups were invited to visit it, thus giving the opportunity to the museum operators to study their reactions. The exhibition was housed in a 120 m² hall made available by Tsoukalas Concern, the construction company of another founding member of the museum, in the five-storey company headquarters building on the outskirts of the city. The 150 exhibited objects, pictures and diagrams covered the fields of electricity, electronics, radio, TV and photography. No interactive exhibits were yet available, but in an adjacent lecture hall student groups would gather before or after the forty-minute visit to the exhibition, to attend slide- and film-shows and to participate in discussions, quizzes and contests.

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This phase lasted one year, with more exhibits appearing gradually in the showcases, more students visiting every month and with a greater collection of slides and 16-mm films to choose from. During this period no money at all was paid for acquiring exhibits (all were donated), no money was paid for work done (all were volunteers) and no money was paid for rent, heating, cleaning, electricity, etc. (everything was offered free).

Thus, by the summer of 1980 the realization of the objective seemed feasible. It wasn't yet big and it wasn't impressive, but the first science museum in Greece was there. The city knew it, the schools knew it, the press and radio knew it. And above all, the members and friends of the Science Museum knew they had proved their point.

This period was regarded by the eight or ten people who were actually running the museum as an intensive, practical training course on how to organize and run a museum. On a very small scale they had to handle practically all operational aspects (and problems) of a large museum with the exception of research work and fund-raising. With the experience, know-how and self-confidence gained by this time, the possibilities for expansion were very real. But this would require more space and substantial amounts of money. It was, therefore, about time for the museum operators to try their hand at fund-raising.

The second phase – June 1980 to October 1989

The second phase began with a quantum leap: the floor space of the museum increased fivefold! Tsoukalas Concern offered a whole storey of the building, plus the original 120 m^2, which were turned into an educational activities and science clubs meeting room, plus the use of the sixty-seat lecture hall, equipped with all the necessary audiovisual facilities. The offer of all this space was good for one year. To nobody's surprise, however, it was re-

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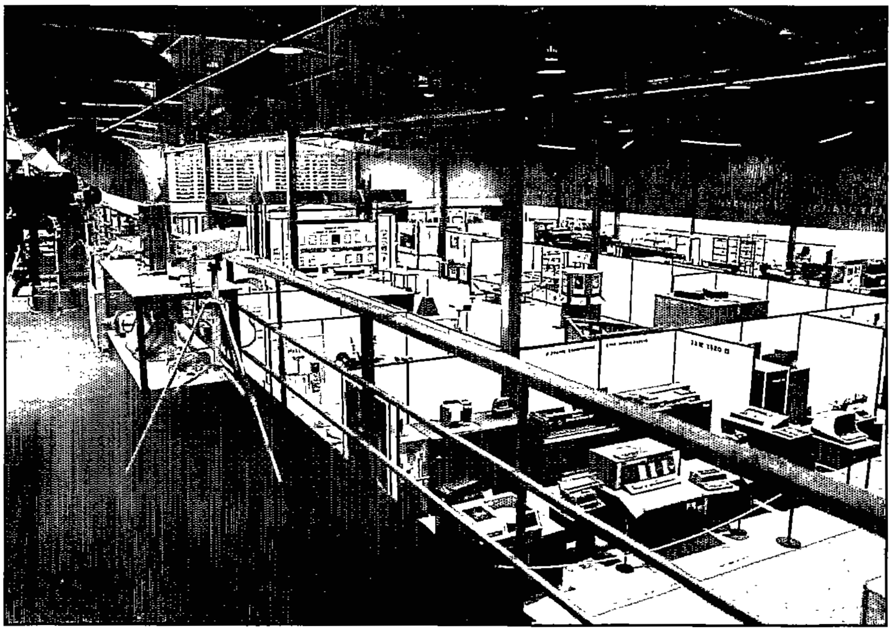

Photo by courtesy of the author

View of the Science Museum.

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newed again and again until 1989. And always on the original 1978 terms: free of charge!

In less than two years this 'huge' floor space was full of new exhibits and in full use. Partitions, stands, showcases, signs, lighting fixtures, even a number of simple interactive exhibits (based on ideas from Exploratorium's cookbook), were designed and constructed, partly by volunteers and partly by local contractors.

With the museum by now well known in the area, there was no problem in securing donations of historical value: individuals, business organizations, public utilities and even government services easily agreed to dispose of equipment or machinery that was no longer in use. In many cases the donors were even willing to cover the dismantling and transportation costs, which in several cases were beyond the museum's financial means. In this way (and this remains true until today) the museum received more than 96 per cent of its 'hands-off' technological exhibits: textile manufacturing, telecommunications and electricity production and transmission equipment, much of it going back to the 1920s and 1930s. The first microphone to be used in radio broadcasting in Greece (1928), the most powerful output tube for a medium-wave transmitter (500 kW, from the nearby VOA station), the first mainframe computer to be used in northern Greece (1964, IBM 1620 II, University of Thessaloniki), the 15-channel, 12-hour tape-recorders of the Thessaloniki airport control tower, that had served the city for twenty years. Also the largest (50,000 watts) and the smallest incandescent lamp, donated by the Public Power Corporation, and the first speaking clock to be used in the area by the telephone network. And a lot more.

In view of the short industrial history of the area, the exhibition aspect of the museum – very important in the beginning for attracting visitors – was satisfactory, both concerning the number of the exhibited items and their importance, even their uniqueness. And most of the exhibits were directly related to the recent history and development of the area. With a continuously increasing number of schools asking for an appointment to visit the museum, the management members could now focus their attention on the 'parallel activities' aspect of the museum and the need for more efficient and effective fund-raising.

Until 1985 the amount required annually for all the running expenses of the museum (services, manpower, materials and 'outreach' activities – not including the acquisition of new exhibits) had not passed the $25,000 mark. Fortunately only 30 per cent of this had to be actually paid. The rest consisted of volunteer work and free services. With no permanent or regular sources of income, the finances of the museum were covered in small measure by the membership fees and in large measure by the occasional sponsorships and donations from business enterprises, banks, the Ministries of Macedonia and Thrace, of Industry and Energy, of Culture and, last but not least, the Municipality of Thessaloniki. This meant that the board of directors had to start planning each year with total uncertainty as to how much money would be available.

Notwithstanding this uncertainty, the 'parallel activities' developed and became more than half of the museum's work: regular lectures on scientific topics by high-level speakers, annual written competitions for students, pilot science clubs for 10–13 and 14–16 year old students, seminars on the use of audiovisual aids in the classroom for secondary-school teachers, and joint

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projects with other youth or educational organizations. Efforts were made to design and construct small travelling exhibitions. The most important, *Man in Space*, was on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Sputnik, with material partly supplied by NASA, ESA and the Russian Space Agency. The moonrock sample from NASA was a tremendous success, but it had to be fetched from and returned to the safe of the United States Consulate every day!

Another important 'first' in the museum's international contacts during this period was the hosting for three months of a very interesting 200 m^2 travelling exhibition from the National Technological Museum in Prague on the subject of *Light and Energy*.

During the last years of the second phase two important milestones marked the history of the museum: first, the friends of the museum were joined by Dr Stelios Papadopoulos, ethnologist and museologist, director of the Cultural and Technological Institution of the Hellenic Industrial Development Bank and one of the very few people in Greece with a theoretical and practical background in museum organization and operation. From that moment on the board of directors could depend on professional advice and . . . criticism. The other milestone was the hiring – for the first time – of a full-time employee: a young chemist with considerable practical experience in electrical, mechanical and . . . woodwork! When two years later, a physicist with a similar wide-ranging expertise was hired, practically all maintenance and construction work could be taken care of 'in-house'.

Here it has to be mentioned that a very important factor in the successful development of the museum during these years was the opportunity of the museum director to visit and study other science or technology museums around the world. Indeed, by combining his business trips with stop-overs in carefully selected cities, he managed to visit more than twenty museums, from London to San Francisco, from Amsterdam to Toronto, from Budapest to Boston, from Copenhagen to Tunis. If all these visits were valuable and helpful for picking up new ideas and well-thought-out solutions to technical and operational problems, the learning opportunities offered on numerous occasions by the Science Museum in London and the Technical Exhibitions Centre of the Technical University in Delft (Netherlands) were in reality custom-made training programmes on a great variety of subjects concerning the organization, design and construction of exhibitions.

The third phase – October 1989 to June 1994

By the beginning of 1988 it was evident that the museum was in need of a larger and more suitable space for its activities: if at all possible, a purpose-built building. The possibility of having a piece of land donated to the museum by the central or local government was not excluded and hopefully this might be forthcoming. However, raising the funds necessary to design and build a modern museum building is another story. Under the most favourable conditions it would take at least ten years, during which the museum would lose momentum, or even disappear altogether. A much quicker solution was urgently needed, even if it meant compromising some of the requirements.

Fortunately, by this time the image of the museum as a very effective, private-initiative, non-profit, community-service institution had reached a high level among the

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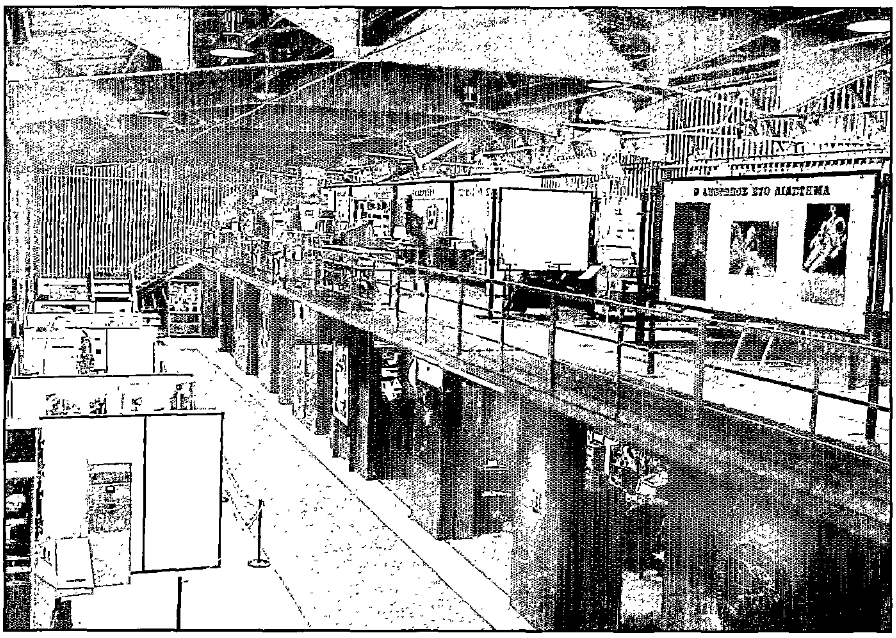

Photo by courtesy of the author

View of the Man in Space *exhibit.*

business, banking and industrial organizations. As a result, the Hellenic Industrial Development Bank, acting as a modern *deus ex machina,* agreed to make available a new 1,500 m^2 building in the industrial park of Thessaloniki, 20 km outside the city. The offer was, in principle, for ten years.

On 8 October 1989, the new 1,200 m^2 ground-floor main exhibition hall was inaugurated in the presence of many dignitaries and members and friends of the museum. With an additional 300 m^2 in a two-storey section of the building for offices, workshops and auxiliary services, space was no longer a limiting factor. Like most blessings, however, the new building had a catch: no heating facilities, which meant no visits during the four winter months, and no air-conditioning, which meant no visits during the three summer months! This would be a tremendous problem for a normally operating museum. In this case, however, the 'parallel activities' taking place outside the museum could be continued all year round. In addition, having developed into an educational centre offering discovery and learning opportunities mainly to schools, the museum could easily afford to stay closed during school holidays. As a result, the number of visitors per year went down, but the number of visitors per day, when the museum was open, definitely increased. It is easy to understand, therefore, why the fund-raising project for an integrated air-conditioning system is very high on the priority list. (Any donations for the realization of this project will be highly appreciated!)

The third phase has seen a number of new and very successful parallel activities. For two years a Starlab, a Boston-made portable planetarium, made available to the museum by a publishing firm as a publicity venture, was taken to schools in Thessaloniki and nearby cities. In a total of 530 shows, 17,000 students had the opportunity to attend a forty-minute astronomy and space adventure. In 1991, with financial support from the Municipality of Thessaloniki, an 800 m^2 exploratorium-type science park, understandably named Eureka, was organized and run in a pavilion in the centre of the city. During the forty-six days that the park was open, 34,000 students and adults visited it. Most of the thirty-seven interactive exhibits were designed and constructed by museum personnel. A number of these exhibits now constitute the 200 m^2 permanent Eureka science park in the museum building. Another development worth mentioning is the interest of third parties in having a professionally designed exhibition stand built within the museum. Such stands have already been put up by the Telecommunications Organization and the Friends of the Railways Association. Several more are in preparation.

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No presentation of the museum would be complete without mentioning two very important historical exhibitions, researched and constructed by grants from the Hellenic Industrial Development Bank in 1988 and originally exhibited in the French Institution gallery in 1990. They have to do with the industrial development of Thessaloniki from 1870 to 1912 and from 1912 to 1940. Each occupies about 80 m^2 and presents original documents, charts, maps and photographs. With the focus on industrial production, the exhibitions cover many aspects of the city's infrastructure: roads, railways, shipping, banks, the city water-supply system and international trade.

As this article is being written (early 1994) the museum is busy running a very successful exhibition in one of the pavilions of the International Trade Fair in Thessaloniki. It is the travelling environmental exhibition *The Earth, Which Earth?* of the Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie at La Villette, Paris, which was brought to Greece thanks to the co-operation and financial support of the French Institute. The impressive French presentation, which includes many interactive exhibits, has been enriched with contributions from the University of Thessaloniki and the Greek Bioptope and Wetlands Centre. On the basis of current attendance, it is estimated that by 26 February 1995, when the exhibition closes, more than 25,000 people will have visited it.

The fourth phase

The enthusiasm, the vision and the determination behind the idea of the museum is still present in the hearts and minds of the people who started the project back in the 1970s and in those who joined them on the way. It may be even more vigorous today, because the dream has become a dynamic and well-recognized reality, offering a variety of services to the younger generation of the city and the area around it.

The board of directors realize that the museum has become too large and too important, with an annual budget that surpasses the fund-raising ability of a small group of individuals, whatever their enthusiasm and determination. They understand that the museum cannot depend any longer on the devotion, ingenuity and hard work of two full-time employees, assisted as they are by 3,000 to 4,000 hours per year of valuable volunteer work. The same is true about the responsibility for future planning and development. Already by 1990 the museum should have had a minimum permanent staff of five, two of them with previous experience in museum work.

A hopeful sign is that the Ministry of Culture has promised that the museum will be granted a permanent status in its activities and budget and this will ease the pressure, while a local government organization, or an educational institution with real interest in the mission of the museum and the means to support it comfortably, may take over from the founding members.

It is very hard to give your child up for adoption. Especially when it was yours to guide and to shape for sixteen full years. The interests of the child, however, and the need to secure the means for its future development, well into the next century, are much more important. When this transfer of responsibility takes place, the present board of directors and the members of the museum will re-group into an association of 'The Friends of the Thessaloniki Science Museum', and will offer their volunteer services to the new management. ■

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Illicit traffic

UNESCO sounds alarm concerning stolen Afghan cultural goods

War and pillaging are devastating Afghanistan's cultural heritage. Looters have plundered the National Museum in Kabul. The museum in Jellalabad has been destroyed and some of its artefacts have been sold in the West. The art market may be profiting from this ransacking.

Afghanistan has been subject to conflict since 1980, most recently by factional fighting. Last November, several rockets hit the National Museum in Kabul, the Afghan capital. These explosives pulverized the pottery collection, and smashed the roof, top floor and most of the building's doors and windows.

A month later, UNESCO and the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan (UNOCHA) began reinforcing the building to prevent additional damage. But this did not prevent massive looting of the museum collections, which are among the finest in the region. The numistmatic collections have completely disappeared.

UNESCO received specific information on the plundering of Afghanistan's cultural heritage in January 1994. It is known that at least one item from the Jellalabad museum's collection has been offered for sale on the international art market.

To prevent further pillaging, UNESCO's Director-General, Federico Mayor, has alerted collectors and dealers to be especially cautious when considering the acquisition of cultural objects which might have originated in Afghanistan. 'This country has an extraordinarily rich cultural heritage,' Mr Mayor said. 'But years of fighting have led not only to destruction and severe damage, but also to the looting of museums and archaeological sites. I appeal to all those handling or acquiring objects which may have come from Afghanistan to scrupulously respect the interests of the Afghan people by avoiding the acquisition of objects which have been stolen from them.'

An inventory of the Kabul Museum exists. Descriptions of the objects have been published in a large number of reviews and books. Anyone offered a cultural artefact which might have come from Afghanistan should please write to the International Standards Section, Division of Physical Heritage, UNESCO, 1 rue Miollis, 75732 Paris Cedex 15 (France).

Professional news

Museum management courses

'Planning for Tomorrow' is the theme of the 1995 Museum Management Program at the University of Colorado, to be held from 25 to 29 June. A mid-career course for museum directors and other senior administrators, it will cover such topics as long-range planning, managing change, planning for expansion, organizational structures and personnel management, developing collections, public programming policies and strategies, exhibit concept development, marketing the museum experience, using new high-resolution media and ethical questions.

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Fax: (1.303) 443-8586

The main aspects of museum operations, emphasizing the effective functioning of the overall system, are covered in the sixth course on museum management to be held in English at the Deutsches Museum in Munich from 25 to 30 June 1995. The programme covers financial affairs, museum architecture, exhibit design and production, collections management, conservation, writing and editing labels, publications and security.

For further information:
Abt. Bildung,
Deutsches Museum,
D-80538 München (Germany).
Tel: (49.89) 217.9294
Fax: (49.89) 217.9324

Catering for the handicapped

Making museums more welcoming for handicapped visitors has been the theme of recent efforts undertaken by the French section of Handicap International. A 1994 symposium 'Au Bonheur des Enfants' focused on the specific problems of designing activities for handicapped youth and has resulted in the publication of a manual for museum administrators. A 1995 symposium 'Créer, Recréer le Musée' will explore ways of encouraging the participation of the handicapped in all aspects of museum life and will lay the groundwork for an international network to exchange information on this subject.

For further information:
Françoise Dufreney,
Handicap International/ERAC,
Programme France/Actions Musées,
14, avenue Berthelot,
69361 Lyon Cedex 07 (France).

Second international conference of Peace Museums

The Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution in Schlaining will host the second international conference of peace museums from 16 to 20 August 1995. The first such conference, held at the University of Bradford (United Kingdom), resulted in the establishment of an international network of peace museums and a bi-annual newsletter. The conference is open to all interested parties.

For further information:
Dr Peter van den Dungen,
Department of Peace Studies,
University of Bradford,
Bradford, West Yorkshire BD7 1DP
(United Kingdom).
Tel: (44.274) 385235
Fax: (44.274) 385240.

New publications

Looting in Africa. One Hundred Missing Objects. A publication of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), Paris, 1994, 144 pp. (ISBN 92-9012-017-7). Bilingual: English/French. Available from ICOM, UNESCO, 1, rue Miollis, 75732 Paris Cedex 15 (France).

After the results achieved by the publication in 1993 of *Looting in Angkor. One Hundred Missing Objects* (see *Museum International*, No. 182), ICOM has considered it a priority to issue similar catalogues for other parts of the world to alert museum professionals and the public to the continued traffic in works of art stolen from public collections and archaeological sites. The spectacular growth of interest in Africa's heritage and, more particularly, in the masks, relics and statuettes that are in ever greater demand, have led to a situation where the combination of unscrupulous dealers and local rural poverty has opened the door to widespread smuggling. This publication is part of a series of measures taken by

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African museum professionals within ICOM's programme, AFRICOM, and includes excerpts from national legislation alongside the descriptions of looted objects which testify to the illegality of such acts.

Environmental Management: Guidelines for Museums and Galleries, by May Cassar. Published by Routledge and the Museums & Galleries Commission, 16 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AA (United Kingdom), 1994.

Focusing on the conservation needs of collections, this publication highlights both the role of the building and the organization in creating cost-effective and sustainable museum environments. The author takes a pragmatic view of the requirements of collections housed in historic buildings, the buildings themselves and those who visit and work in them, and recommends a control strategy which balances the needs of all three. She is a Fellow of the International Institute of Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works and is Environmental Adviser at the Conservation Unit of the Museums and Galleries Commission.

Analyses et conservation d'œuvres d'art monumentales. Published by EPFL, Département des Matériaux, Laboratoire de Conservation de la Pierre, MX-G Ecublens, CH-1015 Lausanne (Switzerland), 1994, 152 pp.

A compilation of conference papers presented in 1992 on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Stone Conservation Laboratory of the Federal Polytechnic School of Lausanne, the book is intended for restorers of wall paintings, conservation chemists, architects, archaeologists and art historians. Taking into consideration the most sophisticated analytical methods used today, it points out the need to continue fostering scientific research in the field of conservation as a vital prerequisite to the safeguarding of our cultural heritage.

Museological Review, twice-yearly journal edited and compiled by the research students of the Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, 105 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7LG (United Kingdom). Price per copy: £6.

Launched in 1994, the journal aims to provide information on current research and trends in museum studies and to serve as an international forum for museum studies students and practising professionals to keep them abreast of innovations and new thinking on museum and related matters.

Design Quarterly (DQ), journal published by MIT Press Journals, 55 Hayward Street, Cambridge, Mass. (United States). Subscription rates: $30 for individuals, $75 for institutions; price per copy $10 for individuals and $20 for institutions.

Formerly the journal of the Walker Art Center of Minneapolis, published as *Everyday Art Quarterly: A Guide to Well Designed Products*, the magazine has, since 1946, helped build professional and public awareness and appreciation of design. Whether on architecture, product design or graphic design developments, each issue probes a single topic in depth, with concise essays and plentiful illustrations. The first issue of *DQ* (No. 160) records the development of 'The Poetry Garden', a permanent environmental work which is the courtyard of the headquarters of the Lannan Foundation, an arts organization in Los Angeles.

museum
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Correspondence

Questions concerning editorial matters:
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Fax: (33.1) 42.73.04.01

Museum International (English edition) is published four times a year in January, March, June and September by Blackwell Publishers, 108 Cowley Road, Oxford, OX4 1JF (UK) and 238 Main Street, Cambridge, MA 02142 (USA).

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Copies of articles that have appeared in this journal can be obtained from the Institute for Scientific Information, (Att. of Publication Processing), 3501 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104 (USA).

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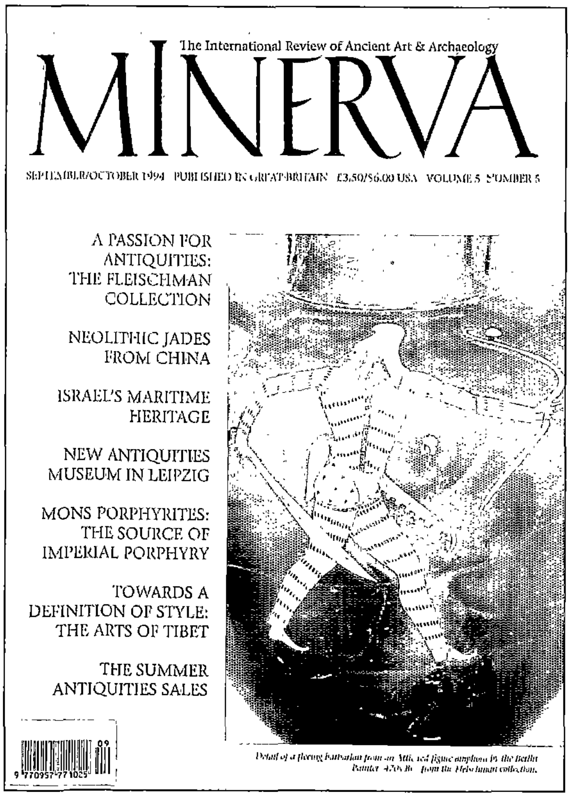

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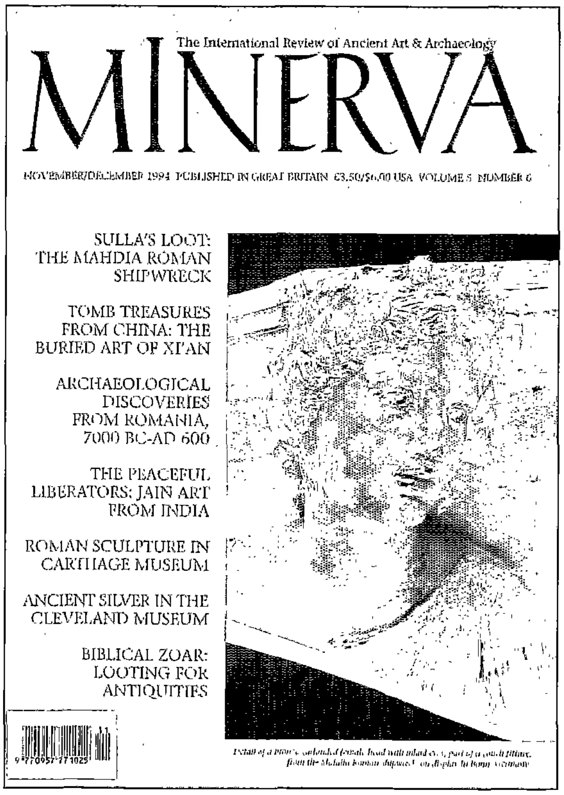

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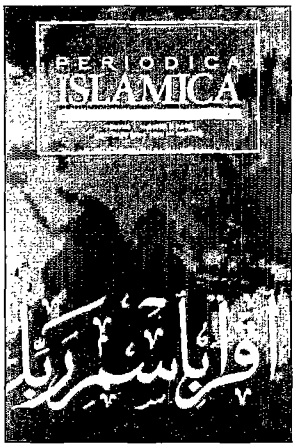

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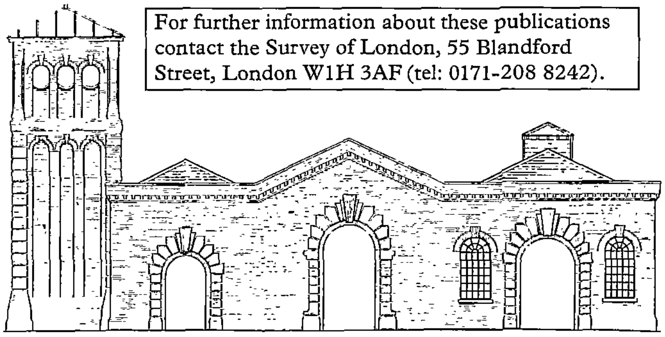

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