ICOM — international council of museums Europe

ICOM EUROPE CONFERENCE – 2016

National Museums: past, present and future

Lisbon, 28 and 29 November 2016
Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian

PROGRAM

Key-speakers

Chris Whitehead, Coordinator of CoHERE Project (Critical Heritages: performing and representing identities in Europe) and Professor at Newcastle University (UK) - **Daniele Jalla**, President of ICOM Italy - **Dominique Poulot**, Member of the CulturalBase European platform and Professor at the Université de Paris 1, Panthéon-Sorbonne (France) - **Guilherme d'Oliveira Martins**, Coordinator of the Faro Convention (Council of Europe) and Administrator of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation - **Hans-Martin Hinz,** former ICOM President -
Karen Brown, Coordinator of EU-LAC MUSEUMS Project and Head of the Museum, Galleries and Collections Institute, St. Andrews University (Scotland, UK) - **Monika Hagedorn-Saupe,** Europeana Foundation Governing Board Member - **Luca Basso Peressut**, Coordinator of MELA Project (European Museums in an Age of Migration) and Professor at the Politecnico di Milano - **Peter Aronsson**, Coordinator of EUNAMUS Project (European National Museums) and Professor and Pro-rector of the Linnaeus University (Sweden) - **Verena Perko**, Curator at the Regional Museum of Kranj and Professor at the University of Ljubljana (Slovenia)

November, 28

9h30- Opening session, 10h00- Hans-Martin Hinz: "New National Museums in a globalized world – Still Memory of Nations?", 10h45- (coffee-break), 11h15- Peter Aronson: "National Museums in a Changing Europe", 12h00- Discussion, 12h30- (lunch), 14h30- Luca Basso Peressut: "Crossing Borders: Designing European Identities through Museums", 15h15- Verena Vidrih Perko: "National Museums, political regimes and social changes in Eastern Europe: from late XIX century up today", 16h00- Discussion, 16h30- (coffee-break), 17h00- National case-studies: Nina Zdravic Polic, Slovenia: National Museums and national identity sustenance; Teti Hadjinicolau, National museums, folk culture and national identity in Greece; Luís Raposo, Portugal: Holistic National Museums and national consciousness; Karen Brown, Scotland: Displaying the Nation: The Case Study of Scotland; Darko Babic, Croatia: A national museum without a nation state, a nation state without a national museum, 18h15- Discussion

November, 29

9h30- Guilherme d'Oliveira Martins: "National Museums and the *Common Heritage of Europe*", 10h15- Chris Whitehead: "National museums and the negotiation of difficult pasts", 11h00- (coffee-break), 11h30- Dominique Poulot: "National Museums: an historic critical perspective", 12h15- Discussion, 12h45- (lunch), 14h45- Daniele Jalla: "National Museums' management models: the Italian example as a pretext for critical evaluation of current European trends", 15h30- Discussion, 15h45- (coffee-break), 16h15- Panel with invited coordinators of European Projects. Coordinated by Luís Raposo, President of ICOM Europe, 17h15- Debate, 18h15- Closing session, -José Alberto Ribeiro, Chair of ICOM Portugal, -Luís Raposo, President of ICOM Europe, Suay Aksoy, President of ICOM

SOME ABSTRACTS

NATIONAL MUSEUMS: STILL MEMORY OF NATIONS?

Among key-speakers, Hans-Martin Hinz, former President of ICOM, will present an important and extremely up to date report on the evolution of National Museums around the world.

From his abstract we quote: "Be proud of belonging to your nation! This was the core educational incentive of cultural policy for the newly established National Museums in the modern countries of the late 19th and early 20th century… Since the 1970s and 1980s… new or newly conceptualized National Museums questioned burning issues and started to explain history and culture in a multi-perspective manner… In recent years… societies have at least partly changed from a "social modernity" to a "regressive modernity", a process which is accompanied by new, often nationalistic views on the nation and a growing concern about international institutions, like the EU… How do National Museums deal with this current development and what does museum-work in the service for society mean nowadays?"

NATIONAL MUSEUMS IN A CHANGING EUROPE

"What is a national museum and how do they interact with the making of nations and states?" questions Peter, to answer that it will be the "contribution in negotiating national

identity is a decisive part of creating a cultural constitution working as a decisive counterpart to the political constitution of the nation".

He also adds that "the political and public process of imagining, discussing, establishing and reforming the institution on the political arena is as much a part of its production of meaning as the actual collecting, exhibiting and visiting experience. Hence the museum needs to be understood as a cultural process of negotiating different logics and historical change. This complex work can be pursued with more or less success. Examples will be given where the spiral of societal trust is positiv and where museums seems not to be able contribute. Failure has potentially disastrous consequences for states and nations leading to disintegration and even civil war."

The all argument is mainly based on the findings of

the EUNAMUS, a research programme funded and supported by the European Commission between 2010 and 2013, on "Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen", where 37 European national situations have been studied and compared.

Publications are available Open Access on www.eunamus.eu and in Peter Aronsson and Gabriella Elgenius, (eds.) (2015) National Museums and Nation-building in Europe 1750-2010. Mobilization and legitimacy, continuity and change, London: Routledge.

NATIONAL MUSEUMS AND *THE COMMON HERITAGE OF EUROPE*

Guilherme d'Oliveira Martins, chair of the Faro Convention drafting group, refers in his presentation to the importance of this document "recognize the 'value' for society of the historical heritage and culture viewed as dynamic realities, the outcome of a fruitful interchange between the human creation handed down to us and handed down by us to our descendants." He also adds that "the values in question are not ideal objects. Cultural phenomena partake of this quality and cannot be fenced into 'static models' or 'closed precincts" but must merge with the horizon of 'historical experience'".

One of the basic concepts lying behind this Convention is the one of "common heritage of Europe", conceived as "an active agent of an open citizenship": "Thus the "value" is evident in the "horizon of historical experience", outside any abstract conception. Common heritage, then, is at the crossroads of several affiliations, where remembrance, legacy and creation intersect. So it is understandable to have adopted machinery for mentoring and assessing co-operation among signatory states. A common database and a resource center will help government departments towards efficiency and reliance on good practices."

"The convention goes further than other legal and political instruments and further than the other conventions since the text also purports to guard against misuse of the heritage and the risks of debasement due to misinterpretation as a "source of conflicts" (we all remember the examples of the Mostar bridge and Dubrovnik). The culture of peace and respect for differences compels a fresh understanding of the cultural heritage as a factor of proximity, comprehension and dialogue."

...AND WHAT ABOUT EASTERN EUROPE ? NATIONAL MUSEUMS, POLITICAL REGIMES AND SOCIAL CHANGES, FROM LATE XIX CENTURY UP TODAY

Under a quotation of Kenneth Hudson, "imitation is often the most potent form of revenge", Verena Perko, archaeologist and museologist, museum curator in the Regional Museum of Gorenjska, Kranj, and professor at the University of Ljubljana, will address one of the most complex theme in the ICOM Europe Conference: "NATIONAL MUSEUMS, POLITICAL REGIMES AND SOCIAL CHANGES IN EASTERN EUROPE: FROM LATE XIX CENTURY UP TODAY."

Back to late XIX and early XX centuries, she notes that "the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire stimulated the emergence of new states in Eastern Europe, where the main regional museums were given the status of national museums. Their national missions were proportional to the political status of a specific national group in a newly-formed state." Later on, "after World War II, the national museums (as well as all the others) in the Eastern European communistic countries were promoting topics that supported the Communist revolution and the Marxist ideology." At that period, "despite the criticism, the museums of Eastern Europe were important bearers of the education and identity processes. They led many important international and national research and exhibition projects, and some of them played a unique role in the development of museological disciplines (Brno, Zagreb, Dresden, Moscow, etc.)."

"After the fall of the Berlin wall, the newly formed states went (seemingly) its own way. Many leaned on their (previously formed and expressed) national identity; others literally sank into fragmentariness and opportunism (especially those that cultivated a mono-cultural internationalism). On the one hand it could be said that national museums 'blew' into the breaths of

growing nationalisms, however, on the other, museums could be seen as walking a winding path of


conformism and utilitarianism, which they hide very well behind the walls of the almighty (objective and apolitical) science."

Today, "there is no simple answer [on the role of national institutions in these countries], since there is more than one point of view – and some are diametrically opposed." But one final optimistic remark is given: "I am very positive; our priority task is to research the multi-layered phenomenon of national museums in ex-communistic countries and to identify the agents that determined not only the role of museums, but also primarily the preservation of heritage as a value of life. In the end, every hermeneutics is thus, explicitly or implicitly, self-understanding by means of understanding others (Paul Ricoer)."

CROSSING BORDERS: DESIGNING EUROPEAN IDENTITIES THROUGH MUSEUMS

Luca Basso Peressut, professor at the Politecnico di Milano and Coordinator of the EU MeLA Project of Research - *Museums in an Age of Migrations*, aiming for "the redefinition of the museum's role in contemporaneity", calls the attention for the especial
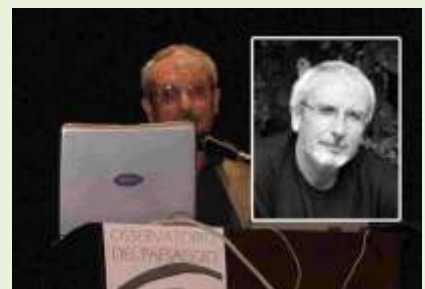
position taken in this context by "museums that focus on such themes that were born out of our post-colonial and post-industrial age, when great national narratives have given way to a variety of stories and voices". Having into consideration the all picture of "difficult" or "hot" topics, "it is necessary to develop a culture of complexity" – an "area of investigation" that museums should dealt with. Passing in review the traditional dimensions of "identity" ("nationalism", "localism", "diaspora, migration, nomadism, mobility") it is stated that "museums, as places that are 'inhabited' by their visitors, are mirrors of identity; by using the museum spaces, people manifest their presence as active subjects, and develop particular relationships with the exhibited content, and with its

relevance in their everyday activities and experiences. Museums must represent the multiplicity of today's identities."

Finally particular interest is given to "museums architecture and display spaces", perceived, as ll other domains in museums, not as separate disciplines, a framework "adopted by modernity", but as "new ways to represent identities, as well as to tell many stories, coping the inter-multi- and transcultural conditions that are affecting every area of thought and social action."

THE CHALLENGE FOR NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF ART

Under the global motto of "National Museums: an historic critical perspective", Dominique Poulot starts to point out that "the legitimacy of art does not coincide with the sovereignty of the state within national frontiers: a national museum of art is always between universalism and localism."

"This legitimacy developed beside the older antiquarian tradition, providing both an ethic and aesthetic canon, according sometimes to a quasi biology of art related to primitivism. But now the

developments of national museums are more or less directly placed in an international context that goes largely beyond a national scale and even a European one." And "in the same time, anachronistic considerations replace the sense of a linear progress of art and nation."

Having this in mind, Poulot continues by remembering that "art museums have always had complexly shifting relations with environment, buildings, and politics, because they offer a possible and ever-changing mode of appropriating sense, art and action." And finish by the evoking Timothy J. Clark, art historian, who" wrote in a meditation about Poussin and the *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* in the National Gallery: 'Paul Valéry says somewhere that a work of art is defined by the fact that it does not exhaust itself – offer up what it has to offer – on first or second or subsequent reading. Art-ness is the capacity to invite repeated response'. National museums are today faced to a similar challenge."

NATIONAL MUSEUMS AND THE NEGOTIATION OF DIFFICULT PASTS

"The affective-political modes in which museums deal with difficult pasts in the European context, rather than a singular focus on 'national' museums, whose typological variety frustrates attempts to identify

common difficult memory practices" will be the departing point for Christopher Whitehead, Coordinator of CoHERE Project (Critical Heritages: performing and representing identities in Europe), Professor of Museology and Heritage Studies both at University of Newcastle and University of Oslo. He proposes himself to "address diverse museal constructions of 'national pasts'", being that "such constructions may take place in small museums as

well as the 'big nationals', or in representative exhibitions that tour in different countries."

Not only 'national' has to putted under scrutiny, but "'Difficulty' is also due a rethink, lest its content and markers become standardised commonplaces that we 'know how to deal with' through habituation. For (*the*) example, what are the risks when Holocaust memory becomes paradigmatic? Might difficult history become conventionalized, offering (at least for some) a safe cultural space to practise an identity position of ethical memory action, in contradistinction to those who deny and disavow historical responsibilities?"

Reference is then made to "the establishment of mythic closures of difficult history [which] can obscure its connections to contemporary social antagonisms that are truly 'difficult' now." And one final question remains: "How, in museums, can we deal with such problematics, and what do they tell us about European memory cultures?"

NATIONAL MUSEUMS MANAGEMENT MODELS: THE ITALIAN EXAMPLE AS A PRETEXT FOR CRITICAL EVALUATION OF EUROPEAN TRENDS

Danielle Jalla, chair of ICOM Italy up to a few weeks ago and one of the most active and respected voices inside ICOM, resumes the italian situation in "a

paradox" and "an anomaly": "The paradox is that it is the only country of the world whose national museum is abroad (in the Vatican State). The anomaly is that national museums (archaeological sites, historical monuments) are more than 400, or 9% of the total ones." He attributs this to "a very particular situation, the result of the recent formation of the national (united) state, of a state-controlled centralist policy in the management of cultural heritage and of an assimilation of everything belongs to the state to 'national'." Then he proposes to refer a set of 10 reflections, regarding, among other topics, the bases for the qualification of "national" (identity, placement, mission), the possible out of date conception of "national museums ("they represent the past and the present, but not the future, uncertain and in crisis, of a Europe just trying to achieve a Museum of the Europe"), in a opposite sense the need for a new frame, "'trans national' museums", in line with the claims of the Faro Convention (2005) for more encompassing 'heritage community' values, etc. Jalla ends by defending that "the new museums, if necessary, should assume a vision that goes beyond national, administrative, cultural boundaries of the place, or the region or the state they belong, and even the current European boundaries, to open up more and more to the world."

NATIONAL MUSEUMS, FOLK CULTURE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN GREECE

"In Greece the concept of the National Museum is charged with particular ideological significance." Says Teti Hadjinicolau, Chair of ICOM Greece, adding that "in the wake of the Greek War of Independence in 1821 and the establishment of the New Greek State, the National Museums were called upon to forge and promote a cohesive national identity. The new country had to be linked with its ancient past. As a consequence, cultural heritage as a term was ipso

facto identified with the antiquities. Their unearthing and valorization provided the Greeks with the strongest argument that would enable the determination of their cultural identity."

From then onwards a lot of things occurred. The dimension of the protected and "mythical belonging past" has been enlarged up to include byzantine antiquities, for which a museums has been created in 1914, conceived "as the second National Museum of Greece since it intended to display the evolution of the art from the 4th to the early 19th century."

To these museums, another has been added in between later, "the first folklore museum was founded

in 1918, considered as the third Greek National Museum as it was then essential to prove the unbroken continuity of Hellenism."

"After World War II and the social changes that took place in Greece, a growing tendency for the formation and establishment of folklore collections and museums becomes apparent. It was motivated, amongst other reasons, by nostalgia for the past, whereas simultaneously emphasis was laid on the need to safeguard tradition as the authentic national identity. Also during the postwar period a new shift towards antiquity symbolized the spiritual revival in the country. In the 21st century the promotion of the entrenched national narrative was further accentuated by the New Acropolis Museum which was inaugurated in 2009."

NATIONAL MUSEUMS GENERATING THE AWARENESS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY . A CASE STUDY: NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF SLOVENIA

Nina Zdravic Polic, former chair of ICOM Slovene National Committee and ICOM SEE Subregional Alliance, proposes to refer "the role of national museums in shaping the public's understanding of their national past and in defining a nation's identity and consciousness", having the Slovene case as an

example. "This much discussed and analysed topic – she adds -is to be explored in the first part of this debate through a brief explanation of some analytical views on the concept/phenomena of ethnic/national identity, especially on its manifestations. Characteristic are different views of scholars on the implications of national identity." Then the particular situation of the National Museums of Slovenia will be addressed, pointing out that "the tradition of the oldest museums in Slovenia goes back to the beginning of the 19th century". Finally it is noticed that "today, Slovenia has thirteen national museum that have been founded by the Government of Slovenia in view of the particular nature of their collections of national importance and their activities offering discursive building of identity *in*

NATIONAL MUSEUMS IN CROATIA: ASPIRATIONS FOR THE CREATION OF A NATIONAL NARRATIVE

For Darko Babik, Chair of ICOM Croatia, "The question of national museums and the narratives they present largely depends on the geo-political situation of individual countries throughout their history. While some European countries developed national museums concurrently with the formation of their nation-states, these two developments in Croatia went in somewhat different directions." Hel also adds that

"taking into account intricate relationships between politics, history and museums in Croatia the paper aims to shows how the aspirations for the creation of a national narrative which would reflect a homogenous image of the Croatian people through a museum have always been a step away from achievement. With Croatia's entry into the EU all these issues become twice as interesting."

PORTUGAL: HOLISTIC NATIONAL MUSEUMS AND NATIONAL CONS-CIOUSNESS

"Portugal is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, nation-country in Europe. Language, nation, territory… were virtually the same since the XII century." Says Luís Raposo, former chair of ICOM Portugal and current President of ICOM Europe, adding that "there is no need for state institutions to teach or to reinforce it." In the XIX century, however, impressive events putted in cause the Portuguese "self-confidence and faith in future". The end of the century was especially dramatic: "an Ultimatum from Britain (also linked to colonial policies) in 1890, being bankruptcy declared in 1892."

"It was in this extremely nationalistic momentum that the already existent quest for an holistic National Museum gained enough political favour as to be putted forward" However, "the momentum passed" and the quest for a holistic National Museum never returned back again.

"Today, there are eleven National Museums in Portugal. They are disciplinarily or thematic oriented, being the classification merely administrative, most of them are located in the capital, Lisbon, only a few (three) are located north of Lisbon (Coimbra, Viseu and Porto) and no one exists south of Lisbon."

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SCOTLAND: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

Karen Brown, co-coordinator of the EULAC MUSEUMS project and member of the Board of ICOM Europe, refers that her "presentation concerns the history of the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh (NMS)". It was established in the nineteenth century as the Industrial Museum of Scotland (1854), and subsequently becoming the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art (1864), through to the National Museum of Scotland as we know it (2006), as an amalgamation of the Royal

Scottish Museum and the adjacent Museum of Scotland in Chambers Street. From its conception, the museum was designed to foster Victorian ideals of education, and its architecture was inspired by London's Crystal Palace of 1851. Taking its cue from the Victorian idea of a "nation on show" in Universal Exhibitions. The presentation "will focus on questions of national identity, considering how NMS has represented in the past and continues to present Scotland's place as a Nation to their national museum communities, and to the wider world."