



PRESS RELEASE

Friday, 19 June 2009

ICOM's Annual Meetings

The World Museum Community reflects on solutions to escape the economic crisis

The International Council of Museums (ICOM) met at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris from 8 to 11 June 2009. These Annual June Meetings convened museum representatives and museum professionals from all over the world. The days were marked by intensive meetings reflecting a revival of the organization, which initiated a reflection on the impact of the financial crisis on museums as well as their future.

As in previous years, 300 representatives from 155 countries met in the General Assembly in order to review the actions taken by ICOM and its members on important questions traditionally concerning the world of museums but also the organisation itself.

In 2010, ICOM will reinforce its presence in several areas of the world. First, in Asia, where two major events will be organized both in Shanghai: ICOM's presence at the Universal Exhibition from May to November 2010 followed by ICOM 2010 General Conference which will take place in November 2010, Second, in the Middle East, development was intensified this year, with the creation of the ICOM United Arab Emirates Committee. Third, the Latin American focus: during the meetings, Rio de Janeiro was elected to be the host city of ICOM 2013 General Conference.

Finally, ICOM will seek to amplify its previous activities in the fight against illicit traffic (by introducing new Red Lists of cultural property in danger in 2010), programs in the event of emergency situations and general sharing of ideas for best practices and code of ethics.

For the first time, and confirming the role of ICOM, a discussion was launched aimed at the heart of the problems for museums on the theme "What is the global economic crisis changing for museums?" Here, Jacques Attali, author and President of PlanetNet Finance as well as James Chung, forecaster and President of Reach Advisors became involved.

Jacques Attali reminded that today's crisis will be long. He envisions three trends for the future of museums: more museums for more assertive nations, new roles and new publics for museums and new technologies for museums. James Chung focused on the situation of North American museums which survives with 90% of private funding. Today, current major consequences are visible: redundancies and museums closing. Thanks to a parallel with the Japanese financial crisis in the 90's, James Chung imagines that museums will have to meet the demands of new social and economic categories. Will it be a new Golden Age for museums?

Julien Anfruns, Director General of ICOM, adds that "*The exchanges of these General Annual Meetings were intense and constructive. Thanks to this discussion of experts like Jacques Attali and James Chung, ICOM and its members profit from external visions which open new perspectives to the world museum community.*"

Press and media relations:

ICOM - Nadine AMORIM, Tel: + 33 1 47 34 9163, email: amorim@icom.museum

AGENDA - Philippe FOUCHARD, Tel: +33 1 49 95 99 06, email: pfouchard@agendacom.com

ICOM in short

Created in 1946, ICOM (International Council of Museums) is an international non-governmental organization maintaining formal relations with UNESCO and having a consultative status with the United Nations' Economic and Social Council.

ICOM is the only international organization representing museums and museum professionals.

ICOM is:

- A diplomatic arena made up of representatives from 155 nations
- A think-tank composed by 30 International Committees which represent ICOM's specialities
- Missions of international public service notably in the fight against illicit traffic and emergency programmes in case of natural disasters or armed conflicts
- An international network composed of 30 000 members
- A label for museums in terms of ethics (ICOM code of ethics)

ICOM Annual Meetings:

In accordance with its Statutes, ICOM convenes its members once a year during its General Assembly. These internal meetings aim to review the previous year and to launch major projects for the forthcoming year.

Another important event which characterises ICOM is the ICOM General Conference, held every three years, the next meetings of which will be in Shanghai 7 to 12 November 2010.

Alissandra Cummins, ICOM President

Alissandra Cummins (Barbados) was elected President of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) on October 8, 2004 in Seoul, Republic of Korea. This was the first time that ICOM has elected a female president as head. Alissandra Cummins holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree with Honours in the History of Art from the University of East Anglia, Norwich, and a Masters of Arts in Museum Studies from Leicester University, UK. She was also Assistant Director of the Barbados Museum and of the Historical Society, St Michel (Barbados) where she is Director since 1985. Alissandra Cummins is also the Head of the Barbados's Delegation to the World Heritage Committee at UNESCO.

Julien Anfruns, ICOM General Director

Julien Anfruns is the Director General of the International Council of Museums (ICOM). He is also President of the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS) which promotes the protection of cultural heritage as defined in The Hague Convention. Julien Anfruns was educated at the Institute of Political Sciences of Paris, the French National School of Administration (ENA) and the Edhec Business School. From 2002 to 2005, Julien Anfruns was in charge of Economic and Financial Affairs at the French Ministry of Culture and Communication. He then became Director of Administration, Financial and Legal Affairs at the Louvre Museum (2005-2008), where he was part of the strategic development of the Louvre both in France and abroad. He also occupied several diplomatic posts at the United Nations in New York, as well as in Finland and Estonia.

For all questions concerning the world museums community and for interviews with ICOM's Director General, please contact the press office:

Nadine AMORIM - Tel. + 33 1 47 34 91 63 - amorim@icom.museum

SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION
« WHAT THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS IS CHANGING FOR MUSEUMS »
Tuesday, June 9 2009 – UNESCO, Paris

Moderator: Alan Riding, former European Cultural correspondent for The New York Times.

Keynote speakers:

Jacques Attali – Author and President of PlaNet Finance.

James Chung – Consultant, President of Reach Advisors.

Introduction by Alan Riding:

Is the crisis a catastrophe for museums? There is no more funding; this is the end of a Golden Age of ambitious buildings made by famous architects; this is the end of blockbuster shows. The situation with negative impacts is amplified by structural changes (internet, new behaviours for the young population, etc.). But the current crisis offers new opportunities for museums as well, refocusing on their initial inspirational and “spiritual” role.

Intervention of Jacques Attali:

History tells us that the decline in private wealth brings about the birth of the development public wealth. The development of museums is linked to two phenomena: promotion of a national identity and development of culture in fading economies and powers. Today’s crisis will be long.

The crisis is American, this nation is living a major bankruptcy of its economy with a destabilised banking system, private fortunes endangered and a breathtaking national debt. The consequences for museums are a major drop in private sponsorship, a state unable to finance museums (budget deficit) and new priorities for private sponsorship (individual or corporate): more investments for environmental and social projects, less investments for sport and culture.

The crisis is the consequence of a major paradox with an increasingly global economy and the absence of global regulation of the exchanges, provoking national and individual protectionism. The end of the crisis necessitates governance on a global scale. Museums must learn to think on a global scale, as ICOM does.

The crisis is the result of an historical trend over the long run with a shift in the geographical spheres of growth.

Growth has always been based on four prerequisites: growth of population, development of innovation, development of the banking system, political stability and order. Today, the growth is met more and more in Asia, India, Brazil and in Africa rather than in Western economies.

General consequences of the current crisis for museums:

Trend 1: More museums for more assertive nations

New nations develop new museums. New elites, new middle classes, new financing capabilities, new ambitions and the will for promoting national identities appear.

Trend 2: New roles and new publics for museums

New collective and individual identities intensify the development of ideas and exchanges. New populations for museums will grow, for example healthy senior age categories (aged more than 65/75 years old).

Trend 3 New technologies for museums

The Green Architecture: museums will have to adjust to these new trends and be at the forefront in the defence of the environment (carbon assessment, transportation rules for cultural goods, use of energy in buildings, etc.).

New consumption models appear in museums: internet, RFID, 3D, holograms, virtual visits, shops, etc.

The current crisis brings new challenges for the museums such as ecology, free access to culture and commitment for visitors for greater meaning. Does tomorrow's museum mean a return to the "living museum" of the 19th century: a place for creativity and expression, a workshop, a space for live events and social networking? The crisis will end one day, but museums will remain real whatever happens.

Intervention of James Chung:

In the current context of crisis where one can witness the disappearance of the biggest companies in the world, which trends can change the way museums are functioning?

Situation of North American museums.

There is a drastic drop in private funding for museums (90% of funding). But some positive aspects are brought by the crisis, among which is the increase of the number of local visitors and subscriptions. Some museums are more resilient than others: museums for children are more resistant than great art and history museums.

Current major consequences are visible with redundancies in museums. Very few museums, if any, are thinking about how the crisis can play a role in museum management. Will we see some museums closing in 2010?

How can we foresee the consequences of the current crisis?

Lessons of the Japanese financial crisis in the 90's can only be partially transposed to the American situation. The role played by private investment is very different.

New roles to be found for museums in order for them to secure their funding.

For example, responding to the demands of new social and economic categories (and not only the 1% of the population which commands 25% of the national resources in the USA, and has been the most important source of funding their so far).

Women's demographic part in the American society repositions them at a higher educational level and of stronger income: will they be the instrument of a new growth for museums?

Will the retired and baby boomers in the Western World (1/5 part of the population in the USA to a 1/3 part of the population in Italy, Germany and Japan) help to finance museums by their new leisure-oriented way of life or will the burden of their pensions endanger public funding for museums?

Towards a new Golden Age for museums?

Yes, if museums adapt to new demands and behaviours (women, young people, senior visitors etc.)
Must museums adapt and reinvent themselves in order to serve, in a more creative and efficient way, new requests from new publics?

Yes, if museums understand what brings visitors to them in the current crisis. Visitors who are more citizens driven by their search for meaning than consumers eager to find status and luxury.