

COMCOL INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR COLLECTING



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF MUSEUMS
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MUSEES
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MUSEOS

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EDITORIAL

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COMCOL is the International Committee of ICOM dedicated to deepening discussions and sharing knowledge of the practice, theory and ethics of collecting and collection development. COMCOL Newsletter provides a forum for developing the work of COMCOL and we welcome contributions from museum professionals and scholars all over the world: short essays on projects, reflections, conference/seminar reports, specific questions, notices about useful reading material, invitations to cooperate, introductions to new research or other matters. Views and opinions published in the newsletter are the views of the contributors.

COMCOL Newsletter is available at COMCOL's website:

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CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE

STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIR • Léontine Meijer-van Mensch	2
COMCOL ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND MEETING 2013	5
THE SOCIETY OF ETHNOGRAPHY AND FOLKLORE AND THE BRAZILIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE • Andréa Dias Vial	11
COLLECTING (AS) DIALOGUE? INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIVE COLLECTING AND "DIFFICULT" OBJECTS • Erica Lehrer and Lauren Ramsay	16
DOCUMENTING RECENT HISTORY IN ARGENTINA • Graziella Belloni	22
EXPLODING VIEWS • Elin Nystrand von Unge and Britta Söderqvist	27
CONTEMPORARY COLLECTING AND HOT TOPICS IN BELARUS – REPORT FROM AN ICOM-SEMINAR IN MINSK • Anna Ulfstrand	32
COLLECTIONS MOBILITY IN THE NETHERLANDS • Eva de Swaan	36

STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIR

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Léontine Meijer-van Mensch

Dear readers,

I hope you are all doing well! In this newsletter you will find – as always – very interesting essays and themes dealing with collecting and collection development. I am proud that the content of the newsletter is yet again a good read! In this statement I want to take the opportunity to tackle a very interesting Dutch initiative that has created a lot of stir

The Stichting Ontferfd Goed (Foundation of Disinherited Goods) was started in 2012 by three cultural entrepreneurs who saw opportunities in using ‘orphaned’ museum collections to generate public and government awareness of the consequences of the heavy cuts on culture and in particular on cultural heritage. The Foundation is the result of the closure of the Scription, a museum of the history of writing at Tilburg, in 2011. The Scription is one of the first Dutch museums which became victim of austerity policy at a municipal level. The Foundation takes care of the dismantling of museum collections. All objects are included in a public database and actively offered to institutions and persons that may be interested. After research in cooperation with external experts, objects of importance to the history of the Dutch heritage will be offered to museum institutions. The other objects are offered to researchers, collectors, and enthusiasts over the internet (own shop, Ebay, Marketplace, Etsy, collector websites), at fairs, and on location in Den Bosch.

The Foundation developed the concept of ‘adoption’. Objects are made available for adoption at market value. The ‘adoptive parents’

become legal owners. They are being asked to properly care for the objects and keep them available for exhibitions. For each object a certificate is issued, indicating from which collection the object originates, and containing the name and address of the new owner. The certificates are the legal framework of the afterlife of orphaned collections as virtual collections. Key to the approach of the Foundation is the notion that museums are not necessarily the only, nor the best places for the care of heritage.

When objects are not attractive for adoption, they are offered for recycling. Artists and designers are invited to use such objects as part of new work.

In May 2013 the Foundation initiated an innovative (and controversial) approach to finding an appropriate new destination for a collection of typewriters, once owned by one of the most important 20th century Dutch writers, Willem Frederik Hermans, and donated to the Scription. The aim of the Foundation was to keep the collection together. A contest was launched inviting people to propose a solution. In the end three proposals were accepted. The general public was invited to give their opinion about the proposals via Facebook and Twitter. A jury of heritage specialists – I was the chair of this jury – studied the proposals and selected a winner. The result of the contest was presented at a debate on the ethics of de-accessioning. Interestingly, the three proposals reflected the three ideal options outlined above for the destination of orphaned collection: the public sphere (a cluster of heritage institutions), the private sphere (a bookshop), and artistic re-use. The winner was the bookshop Limerick at Gent (Belgium). The jury was impressed by the sense of adventure, the passion and the ‘return’ of a musealised collection to the primary context, as part of a direct interaction between authors, publishers and readers. Since then there has been a lot of media attention and questions have been asked in the Dutch parliament. This project and the result of the contest created a lot of controversy. If you are interested, please follow the foundation’s work and the debate this

specific project has created on www.stichtingontefdgoed.nl. I hope in the next newsletter we can give you more and new information about this very thought provoking and interesting initiative! Moreover this foundation and project are very interesting examples of the (political) outcomes of issues dealing with collection mobility. The COMCOL working group on collection mobility is at the moment not so active, but I hope that we can make this important working group more lively and dynamic after Rio! Please become active in this working group if you are as intrigued as I am...

Let's keep in touch!

Léontine Meijer-van Mensch

COMCOL ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND MEETING 2013

11–17 August, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil – Cidade das Artes

THE REINTERPRETATION AND RE(USAGES) OF (OLDER) COLLECTIONS AND THEIR VALUE FOR CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

PROGRAM

SUNDAY 11 AUGUST

13:30 – 14:50 COMCOL Board Meeting

MONDAY 12 AUGUST

9:00 – 9:50 ICOM Opening Ceremony

10:10 – 11:00 ICOM Keynotes Speeches

12:10 – 13:30 Lunch

13:30 – 15:00 COMCOL SESSION I: COLLECTIONS BETWEEN DIFFERENT IDEOLOGIES

Chair: Léontine Meijer-van Mensch, The Netherlands

13:30 – 13:35 Introduction

13:35 – 15:50 Markus Walz, Germany: "Three Models for the Assessment of Older Collections"

13:50 – 14:05 Gudrun Fritsch, Germany: "Käthe Kollwitz's legacy"

14:05 – 14:20 Jian Xu, China: "A shifting Identification: From Kantofuku Museum to Lvshun Museum"

14:20 – 14:35 Jillian Carman, South Africa: "Creative Curating for today"

14:35 – 15:00 Discussion

15:00 – 15:10 Coffee Break

17:30 – 23:00 ICOM Opening Party

TUESDAY 13 AUGUST

**FOCUS ON COLLECTING: CONTEMPORARY COLLECTING FOR
REINTERPRETING (OLDER) COLLECTIONS.**

A joint day of COMCOL, ICMAH, ICME, ICR, and ICOM Korea

9:00 – 9:15 Welcome. Dr. Kim Wang Shick, Director of the National Museum of Korean Contemporary History

SESSION I 9:15 – 10:30

**NEW FUTURES FOR OLD COLLECTIONS – COMMUNITY
INVOLVEMENT**

9:15 – 9:30 Marie-Paule Jungblut, Switzerland: "The social role of history museums today"

9:30 – 9:45 Mille Gabriel and Christian Sune Pedersen, Denmark: "New futures for old collections – Contemporary collecting and community involvement at the National Museum of Denmark"

9:45 – 10:00 Adriana Russi and Regina Abreu, Brazil: "The Kaxuyana Indigenous People and Ethnographic European Collections: Memories, Dialogue and Artifacts"

10:00 – 10:15 Åsa Stenström, Sweden: "Participative Contemporary Collecting, An Everyday Dialogue. A Practical Example"

10:15 – 10:30 Otto Lohr, Germany: Wrap up

10:30 – 11:00 Coffee Break

**SESSION II 11:00 – 12:00 NEW CONSIDERATIONS – IDENTITY
BUILDING**

11:00 – 11:15 Karen Exell, Qatar: "Contemporary collecting in Qatar: reimagining identity in a new nation state"

11:15 – 11:30 Ekaterina Teriukova, Russia: "Objects Tell Stories: Recent History Memory and A Museum Collection"

11:30 – 11:45 Irina Leifer, The Netherlands: "Museums in New Towns: identity, image and participatory culture"

11:45 – 12:00 Henrique de Freitas, Brazil (ICR): Wrap up

12:00 – 13:00 Lunch

SESSION III 13:00 – 14:15

CASE STUDY – MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY HISTORY (MUCH), SEOUL, KOREA

13:00 – 13:15 Kim, Shi-dug, Korea: "Rethinking Definition of Acquisition and Collection in the Contemporary History Museum"

13:15 – 13:30 Kook, Sung Ha, Korea: "The Discovery Center of the National Museum of Korean Contemporary History: The Exhibition of Contemporary History Collections and Visitors' Interpretations"

13:30 – 13:45 Kim, Seong-Jun, Korea: "Exhibiting Scientific and Technological Artifacts in History Museums: A Case Study at the National Museum of Korean Contemporary History and South Korea"

13:45 – 14:00 Susan Hanna, USA (ICR): Wrap up

14:00 – 14:15 Coffee Break

SESSION IV 14:15 – 15:30

OLD COLLECTIONS – NEW INTERPRETATIONS

14:15 – 14:30 Fiona Rankin-Smith and Peter Delius, South Africa: "Hamba Ngezinyawo (Going on Foot): The Worlds of Migrancy, 1800–2014"

14:30 – 14:45 Victoria Phiri, Zambia: "From the Storeroom to the Living Room: The Case of the Mbusa Emblems in the Wake of HIV/AIDS in Zambia"

14:45 – 15:00 Sylvie Dhaene, Belgium: "The House of Alijn, a traditional museum rebuilt as a creative hub among cultural heritage communities"

15:00 – 15:30 Jane Legget, New Zealand (ICR): Wrap up and Discussion

15:50 – 16:40 ICOM Keynote Speaker

18:00 – 22:00 Joint reception/ ICR Birthday Party. Museum of the Republic and Edison Carneira Museum

On Tuesday, August 13, we have the opportunity to enjoy a lovely evening in the garden shared by the Museu Edison Carneiro and the Museum of the Republic. Buses will be leaving directly from the

conference center at the Cidade das Artes to the museums.

We extend our thanks to Magaly Cabral, Director of the Museum of Republic, and Claudia Marcia Ferreira, Director of the Museu Edison Carneiro, for graciously and generously making arrangements for our joint reception.

COMCOL members are asked to register for the reception to ensure a place: leontine.meijer-vanmensch@ahk.nl. There is limited space!

Note: This reception is open only to members of the respective committees.

WEDNESDAY 14 AUGUST 9:00 – 10:35 COMCOL SESSION II: GENERATING NEW MEANING FOR COLLECTIONS

Chair: Claudia Porto

9:00 – 9:05 Introduction

9:05 – 9:20 R.V. Ramana, India: "(G)olden collection of (g)local nature"

9:20 – 9:35 Njabulo Chipangura, Zimbabwe: "Wheels of time: Living with vintage cars"

9:35 – 09:50 Eva Hult, Sweden: "Reinterpretation and re-usage of old tattoos"

9:50 – 10:05 Jacqueline Heerema, The Netherlands: "People, collections and the sea"

10:05 – 10:35 Discussion

10:35 – 10:55 Coffee Break

10:55 – 12:10 COMCOL SESSION III SUSTAINABLE RE-INTERPRETATIONS OF COLLECTIONS

Chair: Tanja Rozenbergar, Slovenia

10:55 – 11:00 Introduction

11:00 – 11:15 Miriam La Rosa. Marija Jaukovic, Riccarda Hesseling, The Netherlands: "(Re)interpretation: rebuilding or restoration?"

11:15 – 11:30 Lotta Fernstål, Sweden: "Reviving the collections: collections in museum management systems"

11:30 – 11:45 Annette Loeseke, Germany: "Reinterpreting collections through exhibition formats"

11:45 – 12:00 Carla Prat, Mexico: "The endless cycle: collections and sustainability"

12:00 – 12:30 Discussion

12:30 – 13:30 Lunch

13:30 – 13:50 Peter van Mensch, The Netherlands: First reflections

13:50 – 14:50 COMCOL Annual Meeting, incl. election of new Executive Board

14:50 – 15:10 Coffee Break

15:50 – 16:40 ICOM Keynote Speaker

THURSDAY 15 AUGUST

COMCOL DAY – WORKSHOP IN MUSEU DA MARÉ TOGETHER WITH MINOM AND IMAGINE IC

We would like to offer you an experience of Rio through the story of Museu da Mare. The aim of the workshop is sharing experiences of the different institutions and participants.

Preliminary program

10:00 – 11:00 Transport conference location to Museu da Mare

11:00 – 13:00 Welcome and tour of Museum.

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 16:30 Short presentations organisers – panel discussion on propositions

Location and Host Museu da Maré

The Museu da Maré is the first museum to be established in a favela (slum) in Rio de Janeiro. It is a grassroots initiative that connects the memories of neighbourhood participants with a philosophy of intense social activism. This museum organically adapts itself to the social demands of the favela inhabitants and other relevant stakeholders. Particularly interesting are the new ways in which the museum uses exhibitions and collections to foster a symbiotic relationship with the local community.

Costs

The fee includes guided tour, transport, tea/coffee and lunch.

Standard fee • euro 35

Students fee • euro 25

It is obligatory to register for this workshop:

leontine.meijer-vanmensch@ahk.nl

FRIDAY, 16 AUGUST ICOM Excursion Day

SATURDAY, 17 AUGUST **9:00 – 12:00** ICOM General Assembly
12:00 – 12:30 ICOM Closing Ceremony
12:30 – 14:00 Lunch
19:00 – 23:00 ICOM Farewell Reception

THE SOCIETY OF ETHNOGRAPHY AND FOLKLORE AND THE BRAZILIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE

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Andréa Dias Vial

In 1998 the Brazilian Federal Constitution expanded the notion of cultural heritage and officially recognized the existence of tangible and intangible heritage. It also established other forms of preservation, more appropriate for new categories such as: knowledge, skills and capabilities, celebrations, forms of performing arts, music, and social environments such as markets, fairs and sanctuaries with their respective collective cultural practices. Since then, twenty-five national registers have been made, in order to enhance and preserve references of the different groups that comprise the Brazilian society.

For this newsletter I would like to introduce the pioneering initiatives of Mário de Andrade in identifying the importance of recording cultural manifestations that are currently gathered under the name intangible heritage.

From 1935 to 1938 Mário de Andrade was the director of the Department of Culture of the city of São Paulo, and his management was marked by a consistent performance in the of identification and registration of cultural events. The need for experts to conduct field work led the Department of Culture to sponsor an Ethnography Course, taught by Dina Lévi-Strauss, a professor at the University of

Paris, agregée researcher and assistant at the Musée de L'Homme. She went along with her husband, Claude Lévi-Strauss, who had recently been hired as a professor of Sociology at the Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities, University of São Paulo (USP).

The actions of the Department of Culture of São Paulo and the importance of Mário de Andrade's work have been extensively studied and debated in the Brazil. Here I'll mention the training activities for researchers and fieldworkers created by Mário de Andrade during his tenure at the Department of Culture of São Paulo and the role of the Society of Ethnography and Folklore in developing ethnographic collections.

The interwar period was an important time for the creation and study of ethnographic collections in Brazil, being the time of professionalization and institutionalization of the social sciences in the country. In the 1930s the University of São Paulo and the School of Sociology and Politics were created and associations of social scientists appeared. In addition, among many discussions on cultural heritage and its preservation surfaced, the Serviço do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional – SPHAN (National Historical and Artistic Heritage Office) was created in 1937. It was different in many aspects, but was preceded by a project presented by Mário de Andrade for the creation of the Serviço de Patrimônio Artístico Nacional (SPAN). Among SPAN's activities, some were designed to point out the importance of recording new fields of interest and research as forms, sounds, dances, and popular habits, among others, requiring a new organization of museums and their collections, proposing to break with dominant models and practices.

The researches and work made by the Society of Ethnography and Folklore (SEF) members show similarities with what had been proposed for the Mário de Andrade project for SPAN, and were also innovative in the understanding of cultural heritage.

The precariousness of the data collected at that time was what most concerned the director of the Department of Culture, as he

had said at the inaugural class, mentioning the need and urgency to collect material with a scientific purpose because of the possibility of the destruction of the „customs and cultural foundations of our people”, facing progress and internationalism. The Ethography course lasted for six months, and had an unexpected influx of scholars, and the registration of researchers was closed only three days after opening, because it already had 54 enrolled.

The theme of Physical Anthropology defined what should be observed and how this observation should be accomplished with the use of the necessary equipment, which in addition to the measuring equipment, included photography and film records whenever it was possible. Besides observation, the quality of the registered team was a concern and to achieve high standards classes also addressed the creation of templates for recording anthropometric data, the creation of collections, measurements of bones and the observation of body postures such as walking, posture, sleep, among others.

The theme of Cultural Anthropology were subdivided into six modules: Sociology, Folklore, Material Culture, Language and Linguistics, Archaeology and Practical Instructions for Documentation. The program presented general principles of research, sociological surveys of the primitive peoples, which included genealogical methods, the terminology used for the definition of social organizations, aspects of birth, life and death of the individual, understood as historical studies of the individual, and dreams and drawings, gathered into the category of the psychological collections. The classes devoted to Folklore addressed topics dedicated to music, dance, games, stories and legends, methods of measurement such as weight, time, distance, among others, through representations of nature, the seasons, the weather, the calendar, the popular astronomy, topography, popular folk botany and zoology, medicine, hygiene, medical treatments, collections of remedies and finally beliefs, superstitions and magic.

The topic related to Material Culture presented general guidelines for the creation of collections, choice of objects, prejudice against

styles, the rarity, the specific study of the object and its practice, technology, social monuments and instructions for registration, numbering, packaging and preservation.

The topic related to Language and Linguistics emphasized observation and rating of emotional expression, gestures and signs; spoken language, its general rules and phonetic writing.

A lecture on Archeology dealt brief instructions for excavations; measurements to be taken in the event of accidental discovery, and preservation methods for objects and bones.

These classes were based on solid theoretical discussions about the methodologies and conceptual boundaries of ethnology, ethnography, the disciplines of history and definition of culture within widely debated theories in this period.

The Society of Ethnography and Folklore (SEF) was founded just after the end of the Course of Ethnography, and during its first meeting, SEF members were invited by Dina Lévi-Strauss to the International Folklore Congress that would meet in Paris in June 1937. The members accepted and decided to elaborate Maps representing the distribution in the State of São Paulo of the following subjects: food taboos, folk dances and popular medicine. Due to the limited time available for research and development, they worked with questionnaires distributed in the capital and in the interior, for individuals, teachers, institutions and local authorities.

Nicanor Miranda represented the Department of Culture at the Congr s International du Folklore in Paris and as a member of SEF he presented the Folklore Maps. He made a detailed analysis of the entire process from the preparation of questionnaires, meetings, contact with correspondents, the work's methodology, number of questionnaires produced and data's tabulation.

The Society of Ethnography and Folklore established contacts within the state of São Paulo and abroad. Dina Lévi-Strauss contacted the Museo Nazionale di Antropologia ed Etnologia requesting records and anthropometric models, and proposed an Exchange

programme between the Musées Royaux's (Belgium) and the Department of Culture and requested information on the methodology of working with folklore.

After the dismissal of Mário de Andrade and his move to Rio de Janeiro, the Society still survived, but members declined in number until it was closed down. There is a letter from Dina Lévi-Strauss to Mário de Andrade informing him of details of the intense activities of the Society, but it also recounts the difficulty of maintaining the same commitment and dedication of all, after his departure for Rio.

The Society of Ethnography and Folklore, the Course of Ethnography, Ethnographic Expeditions to the Northern Sierra, the project for SPAN, are some examples of the commitment and effort of Mário de Andrade during the period he was Director of the Department of Culture, for the structuring of ethnography and the creation of collections to preserve what was understood as „Brazilian Cultural Heritage.”

COLLECTING (AS) DIALOGUE? INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIVE COLLECTING AND “DIFFICULT” OBJECTS

Erica Lehrer and Lauren Ramsay

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“THE MUSEUM DOES NOT COLLECT OBJECTS BUT INTERACTIONS” –

LÉONTINE MEIJER-VAN MENSCH

Souvenir, Talisman, Toy: Jews for Hearth and Home (WWW.JEWISH-FIGS.PL) is an exhibit and intercultural dialogue project that seeks to understand the popularity and meanings of Polish-made figurines depicting Jews, from the perspectives of those who own, sell, make, or otherwise encounter them. Jewish figurines have a long history in Poland. Spanning mid-19th century Easter-time toys, to nostalgic memorial objects whose consumers range from foreign Jewish tourists, to today’s plasticine Jews holding shiny coins gifted by Poles to each other for luck. They have played different roles as Polish culture and society have changed, influenced by politics, economics, history, memory, stereotype, and myth.

Given Jewish history in Poland, which was both long and flourishing, but also ambivalent and ultimately tragic, Polish figurines depicting Jews fall into the category of “difficult” objects – objects that touch on loss, ignorance, prejudice, desire, and taboo (see Eva Silvén,



2010). They are perhaps more importantly objects of *dispute*, which circulate in two very different memory cultures and worlds of meaning – “Jewish” and “Polish” – which are largely mutually ignorant and often at odds. For this reason, *Souvenir, Talisman, Toy* was conceptualized as a fundamentally dialogic

Exhibit postcard.

project. Its stress on dialogue has been threefold: first, an international public can participate in the creation of our virtual collection of figurines on the web (www.jewishfigs.pl); second, other visitors to the web gallery and Facebook page can add their own comments on the objects and their owners’ descriptions of them; and third, audiences can visit a physical museum exhibit of figurines, whose interpretive texts highlight encounters between Polish and Jewish culture that manifest in the figurines’ forms, and which offers opportunities for visitor self-documentation and debate in the exhibit space.

A key question we are posing deals with what the capabilities for multi-vocality and democratization afforded by web 2.0 (for both collection and interpretation), might offer to projects dealing with painfully disputed subject matter. While many participatory projects have a mandate of empowering communities to promote their own interpretations of objects, what happens when the objects or meanings that one community promotes are deeply objectionable to another community? Our exhibition project tries to “exhibit the problem” (in Ivan Karp and Cory Kratz’s words), by creating both a virtual and a physical space where objects can be contributed and displayed so as to *highlight*, rather than downplay, their disputed nature. Individuals

who feel represented or implicated by Jewish figurines can exhibit their own varieties of them and perspectives on them, and (ideally) garner responses to these from an audience of what might be thought of as “significant others” – groups who are culturally different but relevant to each other’s self-perception. We hope a more complex understanding of each group’s experiences and perceptions will ensue.

WHY CROWD-SOURCE JEWISH FIGURINES?

Crowdsourcing refers to tapping the knowledge, reach, and abilities of the public as opposed to relying on the knowledge of a designated expert. But rather than crowdsourcing projects that help to chip away at a large-scale, pre-determined task (e.g. New York Public Library

Labs or Your Paintings Tagger), *Souvenir*, *Talisman*, *Toy* draws on forms of “new collecting” (Kok, 2009, cited in Meijer-van Mensch, 2012) to provide space for sharing, gathering and disseminating stories through dialogue. It calls on the public to define new problems and produce new meanings and knowledge



Polish Jewish figurines from the collections of Leszek Macak, Krakow, Poland and Erica Lehrer, Montreal, Canada.

about them.

Souvenir, *Talisman*, *Toy* developed around a core collection of Jewish figurines at the Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Krakow, Poland. Their collection represents one genre of Jewish figurine, known as “Emaus” toys, named for a Krakow Easter fair that stretches back to medieval times. These figurines have since the late 1960s been exhibited in what was the prevailing ethnographic style, situated within an abstract, symbolic anthropology (rather than an

historicized, politically-attentive, or personal/self-reflexive one). They are also framed by the museum's emphasis on Polish folk culture as representing an ethno-national (rather than civic, multi-cultural) understanding of the Polish nation. Jews appear in the museum almost exclusively through ethnic Polish eyes, as exotic others, in the form of toy figurines or costumes used in folk Catholic rituals, with labels saying simply "Jew."

The museum thus offers a limited, static interpretive context for the figurines, removing them from the diverse cultural and economic flows that gave rise to them, have sustained their production in novel forms and new social spheres, influenced their meanings, and made them newly significant in present day debates about Polish-Jewish relations and the boundaries of the Polish nation. It is the divergent meanings generated by these figurines that are, in essence, the missing pieces of the collection currently on display in the museum. *Souvenir, Talisman, Toy* attempts to leverage the public's participation in documenting, sharing, and discussing Polish Jewish figurines to produce a collection and exhibition of figurine *meanings* that would expand public understanding of the social, emotional, and political power of the figurines in the museum's collection. It would do so by bringing the voices of people who live with the existence of Jewish figurines – central among these being the voices of real Jews – into the framework of their display. Three domains for collecting meanings and objects seemed particularly relevant:

- 1) The post-1989 opening up of Poland drew many foreign Jewish tourists who trace their roots here. For them the figurines are often read as caricatures. While some Jews find them harmlessly nostalgic, given the force of still-living Holocaust memory (and particularly new scholarship revealing Polish complicity in persecuting Jews), they can also be offensive or extremely painful. Yet this viewpoint is alien, and generally surprising and confusing, to non-Jewish Poles.

- 2) Visiting Jews are unaware of the figurines' complex histories, and the diverse motivations of their Polish makers and buyers

– aspects which may bind, as well as separate Poles and Jews.

Reading that a Polish carver made Jewish figurines while imprisoned in a Nazi camp as a condemnation of his captors, or hearing another say he makes figurines so the Jewish past will not be forgotten in Poland, can drastically change Jewish perceptions of the figurines, and of Poles more generally.

3) Jewish figurines are not only a product of a defunct folk tradition, but have continued and transformed into objects of contemporary Polish popular culture, as well as becoming souvenirs in the Jewish heritage tourist industry. They are sold by the hundreds in shops just outside the museum, and end up on shelves from Texas to Tel Aviv.

The project's "collecting" mandate thus involves a complex, international social field of "constituent communities," and requires gathering diverse perspectives and stories as well as the objects that catalyze them. The public acts as a research team that helps to assemble this broadly dispersed, yet popular phenomenon, and to understand its meanings. Key questions include: Who makes these figurines today? Who sells and who buys them? What do they mean to a range of Polish people, and to visiting Jews who are greeted by them in Poland? And how can we exhibit to the relevant audiences, who are connected by a shared, difficult history and this set of ambivalent objects, but who are geographically and culturally disparate?

A REDIRECTION OF GAZES

Souvenir, Talisman, Toy uses crowdsourcing and digital technology to *concentrate* a widely dispersed phenomenon whose patterned significance thus often escapes notice. Such concentration ideally highlights and defamiliarizes the mundane, everyday material world. Our first audiences have been a cadre of Polish and North American students. Using a private Facebook group, we have worked across the Atlantic to document, share, read, and discuss Jewish and other ethnic memorabilia. The ethic of the project can be summed up by

one Polish student's comment that before joining this project, "I never noticed the figurines before... and now I see them everywhere." The students' new attentiveness will be shared in their conversations with Polish and foreign visitors to the physical exhibit. In this way, we see the potential for collecting to spur new reflection about our daily environments and about different perspectives, thus creating new relationships between people, things, and each other.

We hope our audiences will ask and work through the questions mentioned above, gaining cultural, historical, and even emotional insights. These will contribute to the museum's and curator's better understanding of the objects. But perhaps more important is the way that the exhibit prompts visitors to look anew at the visual, material culture *outside* of the museum, the everyday, taken-for-granted items that help define and scaffold our senses of self and other. To use Stephen Greenblatt's terms, it is not the "wonder" of the museum objects, but the "resonance" they have with their mundane versions in the shops and homes across continents, the groups of people they purport to represent, and the very difficult histories and memories they implicate, that are newly opened for consideration.

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DOCUMENTING RECENT HISTORY IN ARGENTINA

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The memory of the crimes against humanity in Argentina during the dictatorship 1976–1983 is alive in the whole society. I shall give some examples from organizations working with research, documenting and information about this period.

INSTITUTO ESPACIO PARA LA MEMORIA

The institute “Space for Memory” was founded 2002 by the Government of Buenos Aires City in association with some NGOs for human rights. The institute has the mission to preserve and transmit the memory and history of the state-terrorism in Argentina from the beginning of the 1970s to the early 1980s, with the aim to promote a democratic system, human rights and solidarity values of life, freedom and human dignity.

The institute works with collecting and saving documents, transmitting information through exhibits, pedagogical programs, books and other printed media and building networks with other organizations with the same aim. The institute even has a mission to preserve those places where the dictatorship had concentration camps and other centers for torture and where 30 000 people disappeared.

The institute has its office at the former military school, ESMA (Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada), which was used as concentration camp during the dictatorship and is now recovered as a place for memory with a museum, archive, and offices for NGOs working for human rights.

All the preserved buildings, documents, legal processes, etc. can be seen on the institute's website www.institutomemoria.org.org.



THE BUILDINGS AT THE FORMER ESMA

The former military school ESMA is today a place for memory and for active work for human rights. The institute “Space for Memory” preserves the buildings and uses some of them (“Cuatro columnas”, “Casino de Oficiales”, “Enfermería”, “Pabellón Coy”, “Automotores”, “Imprenta”) as offices and a museum.

The former ESMA, now place for Instituto Espacio para la Memoria. Photo: Instituto Espacio para la Memoria.

The other buildings at ESMA are used by human right organizations:

- UNESCO
- Canal Encuentro (Meeting Canal)
- H.I.J.O.S. (Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia, contra el Olvido y el Silencio) (Children for Identity and Justice, against Forgetfulness and Silence)
- Casa por la Identidad, Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo (House for Identity, Grandmothers from Plaza de Mayo)
- Centro Cultural de la Memoria Haroldo Conti (Cultural Center for Memory Haroldo Conti)
- Archivo Nacional de la Memoria (National Memory Archive)
- Casa de Nuestros Hijos, Madres de Plaza de Mayo, línea fundadora (House of Our Children, Mothers from Plaza de Mayo, founders)
- Familiares de Desaparecidos y Detenidos por Razones Políticas (Relatives of the disappeared and political prisoners)
- Espacio Cultural Nuestros Hijos, Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Cultural Space Our Children, Mothers from Plaza de Mayo)

AUTOMOTORES ORLETTI

The aim of “Instituto Espacio para la Memoria” is to recover, preserve and integrate into the memory of the city the places and buildings where the dictatorship had secret centers for detention and torture.

One of those centers is “Automotores Orletti”. This place, a for-



Former secret detention center “Orletti”. Photo: Instituto Espacio para la Memoria.

mer garage, was used as secret place for detention, torture and murder from May to November 1976. During this time approximately 200 prisoners from Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil and Cuba passed through the place; only few of them survived and could give witness. During the 90s the center was again

used as garage until 2006, when the City of Buenos Aires took over the place and turned it into a center for the Historical Memory of The City. Some of the survivors returned to the place, documenting and informing.

SEARCHING FOR THE KIDNAPPED CHILDREN

At the secret detention centers young mothers gave birth and then they were murdered. The babies had their identities altered and were adopted by military families. Since then their grandmothers have been looking for them, now 30 years old, and for the bodies of their disappeared daughters and sons. Some of the grandparents have been successful, others are still searching. Here I give some examples from the work of memory in this space.

La Plata, March 6, 2013. *“Dear friends: I send you some words because I cannot attend at the inauguration of the exhibit about the*

work to look after my granddaughter Clara Anahí Mariani. As you well know, Clara Anahí was kidnapped in 1976 by agents from the civil-military dictatorship; she was then three months. Since that day, I have been searching for her. The aim of the exhibit is the hope that maybe she today can see it and perhaps in the photos of her parents meet herself (she is today the age they were when they were murdered). I want to thank all of you for this exhibition and for all who send me support and love, for all of you who can send me some facts, something you have heard or seen that can help me to find her. This work of searching is one of thousands, because of the corrupt dictators. We are still waiting for Justice and the truth we so desperately need.

Fraternal regards, Maria Isabel Chorobik de Mariani”



Elsa Pavón, president of
Asociación Anahí. Foto: Instituto
Espacio para la Memoria.

The exhibition "Searching for Clara Anahí" was shown from 6 to 31 March 2013 at Centro Cultural Recoleta in Buenos Aires. The exhibition tells how Clara Anahí was kidnapped during an attack on her parents' house. During this attack her mother was murdered (her father was murdered the following year). The exhibition shows how Clara's grandmother, 86 years old now, has been searching for her since then. The exhibition has toured since 2009 and has been organized by Asociación Anahí and Instituto Espacio para la Memoria.

The exhibition has two aims says Elsa Pavón, president of the Asociación Anahí: one is searching for Clara Anahí – maybe someone will see her and find some resemblance with her parents, maybe they can give some help to her grandmother. The other aim is to keep alive the memory of what happened in our country and remind us that 400 of the kidnapped children are still missing.



Clara Anahí Mariani with her mother 1976 (<http://proyecto-huellas.wikispaces.com/Clara+Anahi+Mariani+Teruggi>).

EXPLODING VIEWS

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An exploded view is a technical drawing of an object used to show the relationship, or order of assembly, of the object's various parts.

What would happen if, instead of portraying the mechanics of for

instance a boat engine, this tool were used to examine the museum and its different functions? In a strictly metaphorical way such a drawing might help us to blow the museum up, shake it around and consider the different pieces one by one. In the spring



Exploded view of the Swedish museum landscape. Photo
Lukas Nystrand von Unge.

of 2012 a platform was created using the equivalent Swedish phrase *Sprängskiss* to further explore the museum as a concept.

AGREE TO DISAGREE

Is there really a need to turn such an established institution as the museum upside down? For a long time both of us had a difficult time figuring museums out – why did so few museums show radical work, what held them back? These conversations were, as they often are, restricted to take place on the phone or over a coffee whenever we had time.

Today with longer working experiences we have a greater respect for the struggles of museum practices, and also a better idea of the internal logics of museums. The core functions – collecting, preserving, exhibiting and learning – are all to some extent in conflict with each other. Hence, there is a built-in tension in all museum work. Its logic can be described as based on conflict and therefore the practice is often carried out through several sets of negotiations. A key concept in any negotiation is dialogue. But a dialogue needs to be informed and museum professionals need to have the tools to carry out vital discussions. *Sprängskiss* is our contribution to this dialogue.

Our aim is to use *Sprängskiss* as a platform where we explore different viewpoints, often through text-based work, in the hope of finding creative and positive ways to develop museums as well as the museum landscape. We do it for our own enjoyment and to learn more.

MULTIDISCIPLINARY THINKING

One of us is working within the museum sphere and the other one researching it. One of us comes from the social sciences and the other has gone through art school. We met studying International Museum Studies together in the early 2000's, and since then we have been discussing museums and the museum world. Different backgrounds and different focuses have supported our different practices in many ways. However, we have found that opportunities for in-depth and multidisciplinary dialogue in the Swedish heritage sector are few.

The museum landscape of today is far wider and more diverse than many consider. For example, much outreach work in museums is today rooted in a variety of community functions. Where then does the museum end? To draw exploding views is also a way to leave the solid museum ground and engage with other fields of expertise. Turning the museum upside down and inside out requires a dialogue with professionals outside the museums' core functions.

Today, critical heritage theories are seeing a new dawn in a

growing field of research. Not only within traditional museum disciplines such as Ethnology and Culture Studies, but also among scholars of, for instance, the History of Ideas & Science, Human Geography and Economic History. However, in many ways research and practice in Swedish museums are still too separated. The possibilities for museum professionals to implement the latest research in their daily work are therefore slim. Where and when are theory and practice to intersect if forums for dialogue, debate and exchange of knowledge are so scarce?

Consequently, another aim with *Sprängskiss* is to narrow the gap between museum theory and practice. Our hope is that this platform will attract not only people working in museums but also scholars as well as artist-based practitioners outside the field.

MUSEUMS MATTER

Our first exploded view was presented last year at the Swedish Museums Association Conference. Since we strongly believe in the explosive power of the written word our first *Sprängskiss* took shape as a traditional printed newspaper. By posing the question ‘do museums matter?’ in a letter to seven very different people – researchers, museum professionals and a cultural politician – the process begun. In the end, the contributors in their own ways urged museums not to

avoid conflict, to stand up for the practice and to be aware of the role museums play in constructing history. However, it is important to note that the real outcome of the ‘explosion’ was not the actual paper, but rather the discussions, arguments and solutions that the project generated.

The *Sprängskiss* newspaper. Photo Lukas Nystrand von Unge.



POSSIBILITIES OF THE INCOMPLETE

This spring we wanted to start the other way around – with a seminar on a chosen topic. After the seminar, a number of speakers would present their thoughts in a publication on our webpage (www.sprangskiss.se).

In an essay from 1967 by the Swedish author Per Wästberg we found inspiration for the theme. The author notes how every museum collection is deemed to be incomplete and encourages museum professionals to look upon this as something positive rather than negative. The incomplete, the author concludes, is what enables us to see more than simply what is right in front of us.

Historically, the aim to create complete collections has been prominent. For instance some museum professionals talked of ‘gaps’ in the collections. Today museums aim for other forms of completion: by applying contemporary critical perspectives to historical collections another idea of totality is enforced.

However, museum collections are still and forever will be, incomplete. Instead, in the seminar we wanted to investigate the *possibilities of the incomplete*. By initiating a conversation on this topic our aim was to invoke a positive and constructive critical heritage debate.

FOR A REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

The aim of *Sprängskiss* is wider than the exploration of issues and practices related to collecting, but collections are of course a pivotal part of any exploded view portraying the museum world. However, in our last seminar both speakers and seminar delegates raised a number of interesting points related to museum collections as well as collecting practices.

Interesting new collecting methodologies were presented and discussed in a project focused on collecting the sounds of Stockholm: what are the consequences when sound is our prime object of collecting rather than, as usually the case, a contextualizing instrument? A small museum from the suburbs gave examples of using artistic

methodologies when working with the community in order to broaden the view of our contemporary heritage. Here the collecting practice and the collections became secondary to the outreaching process, rather than, as in many museums, the other way around. We also discussed the consequences different academic backgrounds have had on the construction of Swedish national history. What are for instance the effects of ethnology's dominant role when collecting and exhibiting Swedish history from the 1500s and onwards, and that of archeologists collecting and displaying everything up until the middle ages?

More questions were raised than maybe answers given – a key result we very much looked for. The main point however was to reflect on the mechanics steering museum practices, whether collecting to fill different types of 'gaps', to secure opportunities to put contemporary stories on display or to collect for the future. Depending on the purpose, skills, and methodologies used, different outcomes will appear. We believe that the possibilities of a strong and vibrant museum world lie in their ability to turn to a more multidisciplinary and reflective practice.

CONTEMPORARY COLLECTING AND HOT TOPICS IN BELARUS – REPORT FROM AN ICOM– SEMINAR IN MINSK

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During five days in April 2013 museum colleagues from Sweden and Belarus convened in Minsk for a joint seminar on the role of museums in society and how contemporary collecting can be the point of departure for problematic and controversial issues. The intention was to use the long tradition of documenting contemporary life in Sweden to inspire the Belarusian colleagues, but of course also an opportunity for the Swedish delegation to get to know and understand more about the circumstances in which our colleagues work. The national ICOM committees in Belarus and Sweden together with the organization Heritage without Borders planned and conducted the seminar, which included lectures and workshops as well as practical work. In the evaluation the combination of theory and application was pointed out as a very productive and modern approach.

A key-person in this work was Alla Stashkevich, chair of ICOM Belarus. Alla's network and deep knowledge of the museums and their role in Belarus made the seminar possible. The seminar took place in Minsk and in Zaslavia, a small village situated an hour's drive from the capital. My Swedish colleagues, Annette Rosengren, ethnologist with a very long experience of fieldwork from Nordiska



Participants of the seminar outside The History Workshop situated in one of the few remaining buildings from The Ghetto of Minsk. Photo Anna Ulfstrand.

museet in Stockholm, Samuel Thelin, educator and producer from Malmö Museums and Stefan Bohman, chair of ICOM Sweden and director of Strindbergsmuseet, and I myself shared our respective experiences of contemporary collecting and exhibition of controversial topics according to the Hot Spot method. We also shared experiences of dealing with national heritage

as well as our ideas of how to use the ethical rules of ICOM.

The practical fieldwork was carried out in Zaslavia. The seminar participants were divided into three groups. By using methods such as interviewing, taking notes, participant observations and photography, they documented and collected contemporary Belarusian memories and experiences. One group met a middle-aged woman who like many Belarusians had been evacuated from the south of the country as a consequence of the Chernobyl disaster in 1986. The woman's story was both moving and informative. When ordered to leave her home, she was told that the evacuation was temporary and that she would be back in her home soon. This meant that she brought nothing except some clothes with her, but also that she was given no opportunity to bid farewell to her homestead in a proper way. She has never felt quite at home in her new surroundings, and like many other Belarusian Chernobyl victims she felt that she never received compensation or any other kind of recognition by the state for the impact the accident had on the rest of her life.

Another interviewee was an elderly man whose life story in many ways reflected the modern history of the Soviet Union and Belarus. He joined the partisans as a young boy and fought in "the great



A senior citizen with experience of partisan life, Soviet and post Soviet life is interviewed during fieldwork in Zaslavia. Photo Svetlana Gaiduk.

patriotic war” until the end. He was educated in Moscow and worked as an engineer until retirement, which coincided with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The new situation gave him an opportunity to use his entrepreneurial skills and start several small cooperative businesses. The man was clearly content with his life. The two different life stories evoked interesting discussions about

how personal narratives always relate to wider contexts.

The third group explored a different method aiming at a description of the village of Zaslavia in broader brushstrokes. They walked around the village, photographing and approaching people for direct talks. I was privileged to join this group. Our walk through the village became a combination of field work and walking seminar. Among issues raised was what kind of people we found easy to approach. How important are, for example, factors such as gender, age and prior understanding when collecting and documenting? Are there any risks in approaching people this way? What can we learn from such short interactions?

The last day of the seminar was devoted to a workshop on how to exhibit controversial issues. Samuel, together with his colleagues at Malmö Museum, developed the concept of Hot Spot Exhibition, that is, an exhibition focusing on a hot current social issue about which the museum has an opinion. The issue can be local, national or global. The idea is to deal with issues as they arise. The big challenge for a museum is to be ready for quick action, which is the reason why it is useful to have a manual to follow. In the workshop in Minsk the participants were guided through the steps in the manual by Samuel.



Hop Spot workshop. One of the participants presents the exhibition idea of his group.
Photo Svetlana Gaiduk.

The discussions focussed on which issues the participants considered controversial in a Belarusian context and also which would be impossible to deal with according to the political situation. This discussion, in my view, gave us in the Swedish group a lot to think about. One of the chosen issues was the Chernobyl disaster, which, I think, illustrates the advantages of connecting museum exhibi-

tions and pedagogy with contemporary collection. The group could use the very personal story of the interviewed woman and place it in a broader context. The issue is controversial in Belarus because the government plans to build new nuclear power plants and is not very interested in a discussion of the risks it might entail. Similar controversies are known from several other countries.

In conclusion, I want to stress the importance of meetings like this one and the sharing of different, or similar, experiences of museum work with people working in other countries. Dealing with contemporary issues is clearly one of the most important strategies to make museums more relevant in society. Personally, I would like to see many more international workshops where museum specialists can work together. Lectures are great, but working together in workshops and practical fieldwork provides opportunities for discussing methods, ethical complications and other issues on an equal basis.

COLLECTIONS MOBILITY IN THE NETHERLANDS

A PROPOSAL FOR A CENTRAL LOANS COORDINATING FACILITY

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‘Art is something you share’ according to Ronald de Leeuw, former director of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (Wilt). De Leeuw is a strong proponent of collections mobility and the principle of satellite museums (Collectiewijzer). He is not alone in this opinion. All over Europe museums and related institutions are aware of the necessity to cooperate and share collections in order to remain viable for the future. The Dutch Ministry of Culture, Education and Science was actually instrumental in the promotion of collections mobility within Europe when the Netherlands presided over the European Union in 2004. However, despite this pioneering role in the European context and the current focus on collections mobility on a national level, the Dutch museums have as yet not created a genuine framework from which to operate on collections mobility.

The Dutch Board of Culture recently published its advisory report for the future of the museum system in the Netherlands, entitled ‘Ontgrenzen en verbinden’, which roughly translates to ‘de-confine and connect’. An important aspect of the board’s advice is that museums should no longer operate as separate institutions but should be part of a whole, a system.

Although the concept of the *Collectie Nederland* (the Dutch Collection, a compilation of all publicly accessible collections in the Netherlands) and the DiMCoN (the digital museum collection of the Netherlands) are a step in the right direction, giving

museums insight in each others collections and thereby enabling them to formulate more well-founded collection plans, a lot of museums have yet to contribute to this database which should eventually contain information on all objects in Dutch museums. In its report the Board of Culture suggests making the participation in DiMCoN obligatory.

An important point in the advise of the Board of Culture is the accessibility of the *Collectie Nederland* and a so-called 'generous' system of loans. Unfortunately it does not make any suggestions as to how this system of loans should practically operate.

Loan systems are sprouting up in other countries. The United States has the Museum Loan Network that among other things promotes, facilitates and funds the long-term loan of cultural heritage objects. It has a database with objects available for long-term loans. This database contains a selection of objects available from the collections of those museums participating in the project (Mairesse 66).

In 2010 the Belgian government initiated the Art & Mobility programme in cooperation with the Antwerp Museum for Fine Arts. This initiative enables all recognized museums in Belgium to borrow from the Museum for Fine Arts in Antwerp. It is a pilot project which if successful will be extended to a larger group of museums within Belgium and maybe later within Europe (Kunsten en Erfgoed).

In the Belgian initiative the key collection is considered a separate matter, not available as part of the Art & Mobility programme. Although the key collection might need a slightly different approach, since visitors expect key objects to be present in its 'home' museum, it should be available to all museums without exorbitant costs or extremely complicated arrangements.

Although the initiatives in the United States and Belgium are still quite constrained, they are a step in the right direction. In order to arrange a working system within the Netherlands the loans should be coordinated from one central facility, using a standardised policy with

loan agreements, facility reports and the joining of costs.

The Dutch Cultural Heritage Agency already owns over 100.000 works of art that are currently in museums, public buildings and Dutch embassies and it deals with the loans policy for these objects (Rijkscollectie). The same agency is also responsible for the DiMCoN and oversees the digitalisation of the *Collectie Nederland*. It seems quite natural that this organisation would be the facilitator for a central loans initiative from which loans to all registered Dutch museums can be coordinated.

In order to stimulate collections mobility the Cultural Heritage Agency already instituted an indemnity arrangement in which the government guarantees a percentage of the insured value of an exhibition or a long-term loan, thereby lowering the insurance premium to be paid by the museum. This arrangement has been in place since 1989, but has gained in popularity. It is however mainly used for big blockbuster exhibitions by the larger museums and hardly at all by the smaller provincial museums (Cultureel Erfgoed).

If all loans were arranged via the Dutch Cultural Heritage Agency this would open up the possibility of negotiating one continuous umbrella insurance with which insurance costs for both transport and exhibition would be greatly reduced. Further reduction could be obtained by indemnity or non-insurance. The remaining costs would then preferably be borne by the Cultural Heritage Agency. Alternatively a fixed moderate fee could be charged per loan.

Assuming the basic logistics are in place since the Cultural Heritage Agency loans state owned objects to third parties, the following matters are essential for this scheme to work. Only those museums that have contributed to the DiMCoN can participate in the central loans system. Although digitalisation is a long-term project a museum must participate to be eligible for loans. Furthermore the museum needs to be registered in the Dutch museum register (Museumregister). Registration in said register guarantees that certain required quality standards are met, risk inventories are in place

and regular audits are performed.

The Cultural Heritage Agency already has a loan agreement and policies in place for the state owned works under its responsibility, which could be fine-tuned for the purpose of the central loans facility. Alternatively they could make use of the standard loan agreement drawn up by NEMO. What needs to be established is how to deal with works in the key collection as well as the different conditions for short and long term loans.

Other important and costly issues are the packing and transportation of the objects on loan. If in future museums increase their cooperation by sharing storage spaces throughout the country, this would greatly reduce transportation costs. Until this is the case we'll assume that it will be possible to negotiate a reduction in transportation costs when arranged in 'bulk'. That still leaves the problem of packaging. More often than not objects require crates to be made especially for them, a costly matter. Ideally someone would invent flexible crates such as, for example, a kind of non-invasive foam shape according to the objects they contain. While waiting for this invention, costs unfortunately have to be borne by the museums themselves.

Leaving the responsibility for collections mobility with individual museums seems complicated. Although the museums realise that something has to be done, they don't undertake any genuine action in this direction. On behalf of both the NVM (the Dutch Museums Association) and the Association for State subsidised Museums in the Netherlands, the advisory committee Asscher-Vonk was asked to investigate the use of collections in order to strengthen the Dutch museum system. The committee, which consisted mainly of directors from the major Dutch museums, presented its report *Musea voor Morgen* (Museums for Tomorrow) in September 2012. The report contained exactly two sentences on collections mobility, one stating that 'in order to facilitate collections mobility museums will as much as possible ease the demands for loans and costs (handling fee)', the

other a reference to the website Lending for Europe and its existing framework (p. 27, 49). Two sentences in a report with a reference to the European initiative do not convey a sense of urgency.

Moving the responsibility to the Cultural Heritage Agency would solve several problems. There would be one facilitating institution, a fair loans policy, fixed fees and conditions, centralized quality control and lower costs for the museums.

Although the government should stay away from collections policy, it can stimulate collections mobility through the institution of a central loans coordinating facility. Museums have other more pressing problems to keep them occupied right now. Collections mobility, however important, is not at the top of their list. The shift of loan related activities to the Cultural Heritage Agency might be seen as state meddling, it might however also be seen as a practical solution.

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