

# 24th ICOFOM ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM

## 11th ICOFOM LAM REGIONAL MEETING

Cuenca, Ecuador, 23-30 October 2002

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### CUENCA MANIFESTO

#### MUSEOLOGY AND PRESENTATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: ORIGINAL / REAL OR VIRTUAL?

*On this 25th day of the month of October 2002, in the city of Cuenca, Ecuador, participants of the 11<sup>th</sup> ICOFOM LAM Regional Meeting at the Plenary Session sponsored by international and national authorities and those of the Metals Museum, venue where the meetings on the proposed topic were held, reassert the recommendations stemming from the Santiago de Chile Round Table (1972), the Caracas Declaration (1992) and the Conclusions of the successive ICOFOM LAM Regional Meetings (1992/2001). Likewise, the participants wish to thank all those who, either institutionally or individually, helped to hold this Meeting, particularly the President of the International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM) and the Director of the Metals Museum of Cuenca, Ecuador, who provided their unconditional support towards this event, which brought together the most renowned museum representatives from several countries throughout the world to discuss the subject of "Museology or presentation: original/real or virtual?". They hereby report that within the above framework, a group for reflection was set up to analyze the above topic, based on the reality of Latin American museums.*

*Finally, with the purpose of enhancing concepts and unifying criteria, the proposal is to trigger the ICOFOM LAM debate, inviting representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela to set forth their opinions on the topic of the event. Participants hereby ratify that the priority of the museums in Latin America is the permanent challenge of responding to social and educational problems in the region. Along this line of thought, they consider it necessary to seek alternatives, which entail an appropriate application of the new technologies for achieving such institutional objectives.*

There follows a summary of the opinions stated in this respect:

- although currently there is a growing trend towards the virtual, this is an extremely complex matter which can be construed in the most diverse manners;*
- to date it has not been possible to ratify or unify the many definitions about what is real and virtual in the museums of the region;*
- there is conflict between the virtual and the museum's task in treating and presenting material culture;*
- it is necessary to mainly prioritize the terminology problem and its relationship with information technology in order to define the virtual and the digital and understand what the new conceptions are all about, as well as their tools and working strategies;*
- the difficulty to obtain resources does not hinder Latin American museums from proposing, adapting and adopting new technologies;*

Likewise, the need to reflect on the existing relationship between new technologies and the reality of Latin American museums led participants to include ethical, social and managerial approaches.

In this framework, the following was considered:

- *although the new technologies do not presuppose a better quality of human and communicational relationships, they should not be considered a threat but instead a challenge that provides several options where tradition and innovation can interweave to favor the cultural diversity that characterizes Latin American identity;*
- *the guiding crux of Latin American museums is their commitment towards diversity; therefore it is important that they have the appropriate technical and/or technological conditions so that the different communities can comprehensively voice their ideas and ideals;*
- *we are witnessing the end of an era of great technological developments, which entails the need to define priorities and lines of debate within the museal environment where unsolved essential problems still persist, such as those on the conception and presentation of exhibitions;*
- *creativity is one of the features of museum professionals in Latin America who must use this capability to interpret and present, in a democratic and respectful manner, the tangible and intangible heritage so that the museums of the region can comprehensively reflect the cultural diversity of their communities;*
- *it is worth highlighting the contribution of anthropology, which respects the values of the region's ethnic groups and the mission of Latin American museology, which conveys the above-mentioned respect through exhibitions where data and information of a magical as well as a religious nature, in their sacred dimension, are appropriately handled;*
- *for over a decade, and promoted by ICOFOM LAM, a Latin American museology model is being developed to include, as from its creation, the several identity peculiarities of the region.*
- *It is necessary to continue working uninterruptedly in the systematization of the various lines of thought that underlay museological knowledge in the context of contemporary reality and the cultural features that identify Latin America and the Caribbean.*

To conclude, the participants decided to leave an open question to all those interested in answering it on the basis of profound and exhaustive reflection:

#### **What is the relationship between Mankind and the Object through Information Technology?**

It is underscored that the above ideas voiced at the Plenary Session of the 11<sup>th</sup> ICOFOM LAM Meeting -held at the Central Bank Museum of Cuenca, Ecuador on 25 October 2002, were unanimously approved.

#### **Coordination**

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#### **Participants**

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