

## ICOFOM NEWSLETTER 30

Munich/Germany, October 2001

Dear ICOFOM Family, dear Friends,

firstly, warmest regards to you. As it is already known for many of you, I was elected new president of ICOFOM in Barcelona on July 4th, 2001. Thanks for the confidence in me. Together with the also recently elected Board I will do my best to continue the work of my predecessors in the approved way.

On this occasion particularly should be reminded of Tereza Scheiner who was the President from October 1998 to July 2001. Within these almost three years she managed a lot for ICOFOM. Her engagement didn't only come into view by making a supreme personal effort. On the one hand she rather continued and promoted the good tradition of the ICOFOM Study Series (ISS) and, on the other hand she developed attractive programs for the Annual Meetings. Particularly, she was very concerned about the scientific work of ICOFOM.

In the hope that you all spent a good summer and a restful vacation, I will now take advantage to transmit you information about ICOFOM, its plans, ideas and programmes.

### **1. ICOFOM BOARD (Elections 2001-2004 )**

Dr. Donald McMichael (Australia) was the person responsible for carrying out the Elections 2001. He did it with a high precision. Warm thanks for so much effort! Thanks also to Prof. Dr. Vinos Sofka who assisted him competently.

The results of the elections are very pleasantly because almost all continents - missing regrettably Africa - are represented. In addition, there are a couple of new faces and the younger generation is also personified in the Board.

ICOFOM is a Committee which puts great value on both working scientifically and including the bases, intentions and ways of working of his "founding fathers" in the current development processes. Therefore it already considered André Devallées (France) now also being in office as "Honorary Chairman" - as Vinos Sofka (Sweden/Czech Republic) since years. André is dealing with an extensive scientific project for ICOFOM: A „Thesaurus“ which will represent all important ideas of Museology in several languages.

Vinos as a professor is holding the UNESCO-Chair for Museology and the World Heritage at Masaryk University Brno/Czech Republic. He advises some museum teams with regard to the development of the earlier Gulag camps in Siberia into memorial places of democratic character.

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## 2. Report Barcelona

Dr. Silvia Ventosa Muñoz, Museum of Artes Decorativos invested much time in the preparation of the meetings of ICOFOM before and on the course of the ICOFOM Annual Meeting (July 2 to July 4, 2001).

In regard to the topic of the 19th General Conference of ICOM: "Managing Change: Museums Facing Economic and Social Challenges", ICOFOM emphasised for its corresponding work in the Committee "Museology, Social and Economic Development". To be able to discuss this topic on a scientifically high standard ICOFOM Study Series No. 33 (Pre-print) was prepared in the approved way. The "Call for papers", in March 2001 found a good echo and was successful. Up to the dead-line numerous contributions from different countries had accumulated. The issue was published once again in Munich. It is 162 pages long. The volume is representing the topic from the different angles of ICOFOM members from all continents.

The specific program for the ICOFOM-meeting was organised by the Board still being in office on the evening of June 29th, 2001. The official opening of the Committee's events took place in the form of a plenary session on July 2, 2001. It was followed by four symposia that specified the topic: "Museology, Social and Economic Development", and managed by members of the Board from various countries, and additionally supported by voting-members.

In the first formal meeting a lecture and analysis was given by the "summarisers" on articles in the Study Series worded in English, French and Spanish. Those created the starting point for further discussion.

Not only the great numbers of the audience rather particularly the competent, lively and many-sided discussion enabled the difficult topic to become clear.

According to conclusion of the fourth session the results of the symposia were summarised again and presented to the plenary assembly by some Board - and Voting members.

Joint meetings took place in the morning of July 4, 2001. On this occasion ICOFOM co-operated with INTERCOM and ICTOP. ICOFOM was represented on three panel-discussions by Martin Schärer/Switzerland and Hildegard Vieregg/Germany as „respondents“ and by Ivo Maroevic/Croatia as keynote-speaker. Beyond this, ICOFOM also participated in the "Market of Ideas" with a contribution to the topic "Social Challenges and Ethical Requirements" (Hildegard Vieregg/Germany).

The events of the ICOFOM meetings took place against the background of the elections of the new Board. As successor of Tereza Scheiner/Brazil- the former president - the former Secretary, Hildegard K. Vieregg/Germany, was elected new president. The function of Secretary is taken care of Anita Shah from Hyderabad/India. Both are going to be supported by Board members elected for the years 2001-2004: Jean Davallon (France) Ann Davis (Canada), Nelly

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Decarolis (Argentina), Jennifer Garton-Smith (Australia), Eloisa Gonçalves Costa (Brazil), An Laishun (China), François Mairesse (Belgium), Marc Alain Maure (Norway), Norma Rusconi (Argentina), Silvia Ventosa Muñoz (Spain).

Above that, Martin Schärer (Switzerland) was re-elected in the Executive Council. Warm congratulations!

The first meeting of the recently elected Board on Friday, July 6, 2001, dealt primarily with strategies and programs for the years 2001-2004 and with the concept for the final version of the ICOFOM Study Series (ISS 33) which will also contain the results of the meetings.

### **3. Programme 2001-2004**

In this concern several topics were discussed by the recently elected Board:

#### **31. Museums and the Culture of the „Native Peoples“ - below the sign of endangering concerning globalisation -**

Primarily, is to be considered the outstanding cultures on all continents which can be mentioned alone exemplary

- the African cultures, such as the Benin or Nigeria
- the Australian cultures, like the culture of the Aborigines in Central, North/East-Australia
- the South American cultures, such as the Amazon - represented by many „community museums“. The great Baroque culture in the Highlands of Minas Gerais and in Salvador da Bahia/Brazil
- the Jesuit cultures, particularly in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil and Paraguay. The cultures in Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela
- the Indian cultures, excellently represented by the region of Radjastan
- the different cultures of China, Indonesia and Japan
- finally, the cultures in Europe included its countries

#### **32. Museum and „Disneyland“**

Some months ago, the president of the National Committee of ICOM/Germany emphasised on the unique and prominent position of museums. Those play an important role in society concerning both the task of cultural education and the preservation of remembrance. Although even the museums give the audience a lot of pleasure and experience, they can't be compared with leisure- and amusement parks like „Disneyland“. Museum audiences design their visits individually, they want to learn a lot and intend increase in personal shaping. Therefore the question arises how the museum can comply with its education in a world determined by leisure-time, consumption and business interests. In this regard the museologist Jan Sas designed an interesting article to the topic „How Important Are Events for Your Museum?“ (1993), that reflected both definitions of the museum and the tolerable bounds of events.

#### **33. Museum Presentation: Original or Virtual?**

Museums are an inseparable part of the memory of mankind. During centuries they became essential elements of cultural identity and results of unique cultural performance. Beyond, museum objects are both metaphors and attestation for what has happened under the people in

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the course of the times. Arrangement of genuine objects by presentation is the museum's business and nobody else's. The aim of a creative discussion has to be connected with the interests and expectations of the visitors. Museums therefore should support the curiosity and give impulses for thinking and behaviour in the everyday world. In connection with this, the rules of Museum-Ethic play a particularly important role.

### **34. Transition Project**

#### **- co-operation with the UNESCO Chair of Museology and the World Heritage -**

Prof. Vinos Sofka is holding the „UNESCO Chair of Museology and the World Heritage“ at Masaryk University in Brno/Czech Republic. He initiated and developed the „Transition Project“ that is also most important from the point of ICOFOM. It assumes that there is both a positive cultural heritage - we usually meet in museums -, and the so-called „negative“ heritage exemplarily embodied by the former Gulag Camps in Soviet Union. In this case the dark side of history is also becoming a museological tool. The project is connected with the heritage of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from totalitarian states. In these labour camps thousands of people were exploited and worked to death - among them numerous opponents to the tyranny.

There is still some doubt whether the infamous Gulag camps in the former Soviet Union will become permanent memorials. On the other hand, it is clear that if they disappeared it would be very difficult to inform and educate people adequately. In my view memorial sites in the former Gulag camps should be treated not only as places of contemplation and mourning but also as reminders of past human atrocities. They should be preserved and transformed into places of research, intensive study and multicultural education. They should also be places of consciousness-raising where visitors can be encouraged to study the twentieth century, to trace its history and to learn to deal with political issues.

I could imagine a discussion forum to the different topics established by E-mail. This could enable to discuss both topics for the annual conferences and individual statements in the period before. Above that, I would like to promote the scientific approach/facets to Museology in an interdisciplinary and innovative way, and continuously further development of terminology. Finally, I would particularly emphasise on the responsibility of our efforts - concerning Museology and Ethics.

### **4. Discussion Forum - Comments of Board Members**

„... I thought our meetings were quite good, despite the impossibly broad topic. For our next ICOFOM meeting I greatly favour your topic number 3, Museum Presentation. Here I think we come, again, into the thorns of definition of museum, and that is not a bad thing. I think this topic also assumes a discussion of reproductions. So I see it as original/reproduction/virtual, on a continuum, with reproduction being an object or being virtual.

I also favour Vinos' idea of doing a CD of the "most important" ICOFOM papers presented since inception. This would be decided by an editorial board. If you would like, I am willing to continue editing. ...“ (Ann Davis)

„...Now that we are all back home again, I would like to tell you that I'll be happy to collaborate closely with you in what you need most. Moreover, it could be interesting to promote an even larger and closer approach between our Board and the increasing members of Latin America. Our regional branch of ICOFOM has given very good results and I think it important to take this

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point into account when preparing the international policies of our Committee. I'll be glad to receive any suggestions you consider important. Maybe it could be interesting to have an Asian and Australian branch, and an African too... What do you think about promoting this idea?  
(Nelly Decarolis, President ICOFOM LAM)

.... As promised, here are my comments on the suggested programme of ICOFOM :First, I would like to emphasise on two main points, which for me represent the ICOFOM priorities:

- museological definitions: this task should not only be undertaken by the "Thesaurus"- team, rather should be seen as the core of ICOFOM thoughts. For this reason, the definition of "museum", as it will be changed by ICOM assembly within the next three years, should be a main concern for the ICOFOM family. It would be a real shame if we would not be (more than up to now) consulted for this very important task.

- Museum ethics: I do not consider, here, ethics in the sense of deontology, but in the axiological perspective (see Deloche provocative paper of 1999). I truly believe that it is ICOFOM's (and not the Ethic's Committee, which is more practical) task to think about the values reflected by museums.

The three topics proposed should be reviewed in order to take these two priorities into consideration. It also appears to me that the topics are not, for the moment, enough "museological", and could be chosen by all committees. ...

Subject 1 could be more interesting to analyse, from a museological perspective, if we emphasize more on the concept of "native peoples": this term is very ambiguous (we are all native, and nobody is), and it would be interesting to study it, as it is so much influenced by different values. So, "museology and the concept of "native people"" could be a good topic to discuss (but I wouldn't propose it for the Latin America's conference).

Subject 2 has been very often analysed (for 15 years at least). I would prefer to broaden the concept in order to focus on the definition of museums. I think about two seminars that were organised: the ICOFOM meeting at Espoo in 1987 about the museum definition, and the general conference of ICOM in 1992 at Quebec (museums, which limits?). I think it would be very good, 10 and 15 years later, to have a seminar focusing on the "museum borders", especially in the present ICOM context.

Subject 3 could be also specified in a more museological perspective: It would be good to consider the object, of course Here, we are confronted with the problem of the "real thing" and its limits in presentation. As Cameron considered it with kinetifacts etc., a lot of real things can be - definitely - immaterial and better support to exhibit. We are again confronted to this problem with the so called "virtual revolution". So, I would suggest to emphasise on "museology and presentation: where is the real thing?"

I hope these comments will be fruitful." (François Mairesse)

## 5. Thanks to Tereza Scheiner

Let me particularly thank Tereza, who has done hard and at every time wonderful work as our President in the past three years and she took care of the whole Committee in an excellent way. To fulfil such a job one needs great idealism, individual finance resources and immense lack of

leisure time. Tereza did great work almost without any staff or office. This earns our highest respect.

I remember very well the ICOFOM Meeting 1996 in Brazil to the topic „Museology and Art“, when Tereza engaged her family and, above that, took the whole ICOFOM-Family to an exciting boat-trip to the famous colonial city of Parati/Brazil - situated South of Rio. This was one of my most impressing adventures with ICOFOM.

If you go to such a boat you need a leader, a Chair followed by the others. This is the ICOFOM-Crew who is willing and prepared to lead the boat in a common and co-operative way and always is taking care of the „point of the compass“.

The most important criteria is our personal and scientific effort. In this concern I would like to emphasise on the kind support of Leonardo, Terezas husband. Also Erika and André helped Tereza in a familiar way, while Leonardo guided the boat. Every member of the family caught up with her and his role and attends the members and friends of ICOFOM.

I hope that the ICOFOM boat in this ideal understanding can be guided through the further challenges, and that we guide in a communicative way and in successful teamwork through all the watercourses.

Particularly, let me also express my thanks to the members of the ICOFOM Board (1998-2001) which represented ICOFOM in their own countries and supported the activities individually.

Especially, congratulations to the recently elected Board and to our new Honorary President André Devallées. I am very pleased about ICOFOM has now got two experienced advisers. I hope ICOFOM - on its specific boat - will sail through all further situations.

In Germany we would express this desire with the following words used by sailors: „Immer Wasser unterm Kiel, glückliche Fahrt und immer frischen Wind!“

## **6. International Museum Day 2002/2003**

Let us not forget that on May 19, 2002, the International Museum Day will be celebrated again. The topic was discussed and accepted by the 62<sup>nd</sup> session of Advisory Committee on July 6, 2001 in Barcelona.

The theme for International Museum Day 2003 was also designed. It is: „Museums and Globalisation“.

## **7. ICOFOM Study Series**

ICOFOM Study Series (ISS 33): „Museology, Social and Economic Development“. ISS 33 was produced in Germany, by Hildegard Vieregg, with the help of Museums-Pädagogisches Zentrum in Munich/Germany, and with assistance of Ann Davis Calgary/Canada. The publication contains papers from authors in 12 countries in English, Spanish, French and German. Above that, two appendices represent Speeches, Reports and Results. They are dealing with both the ICOFOM Annual Meeting 2000 in Munich/Germany and Brno/Czech Republic and the ICOFOM Annual Meeting 2001 in Barcelona/Spain. If you want to receive a volume of ISS 33, place an order. Please, find the conditions in the attachment.

## **8. Annual Meeting 2002**

The Annual Meeting 2002 will take place from Oct. 19 to Oct. 24, 2002 in Cuenca/Ecuador and on Galapagos Islands. It will deal with the topic: „Museology and Presentation - original or

virtual?"(working title). Lucia Astudillo (Cuenca/Ecuador, Nelly Decarolis (Buenos Aires/Argentina and myself (Hildegard Vieregg, Munich/Germany) are going to prepare this meeting. Lucia as Director of Museo de Los Metales and Nelly as President of ICOFOM LAM are well-experienced in doing this job. As far as I'm concerned, I am dealing with questions of organisation and contents since years.

Dear ICOFOM members,

this is all for the moment. As soon as I have come to an agreement with Nelly Decarolis and Lucia Astudillo concerning partners of co-operation and program activities for our Annual Conference 2002 I will let you know by both the ICOFOM site ([www.icom.org](http://www.icom.org)) and ICOFOM news on the website of my institute ([www.mpz.bayern.de](http://www.mpz.bayern.de))

As I checked the Members-List (1563 ICOFOM members/voting and non-voting) it became clear that only about 40 to 50% announced an E-mail address to ICOM/Paris. Therefore I want to ask you a big favour: If you have a colleague who is ICOFOM member, please, ask her/him whether she/he has brought her/his E-mail address to ICOM's attention. If not, I'd be much obliged about information as soon as possible.

Best wishes and regards

Dr. Hildegard K. Vieregg  
President - ICOFOM

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*The ICOFOM NEWSLETTER is the academic referred journal for members of ICOFOM and scholars in Museology. It is published four times per year. The Newsletter keeps members and interested parties informed about what is going on in the International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM).*

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International Committee for Museology  
Herausgeberin/Editor: Dr. Hildegard Vieregg  
München/Munich 4/2001

ICOFOM ISSN .....