

What does 'museum' stand for ?

Thursday 26 November 2020 | 6 pm / 9 pm

on digital platform

Museum is not a protected designation. That of "Musée de France" makes it possible to draw up common objective characteristics (collections, inventory, not-for-profit status, reception of the public, etc.) and to list the museums that meet these requirements. However, there are many institutions that would justify this designation and do not ask for it. And others that do not meet the criteria but are called "museums" because it is serious and attracts visitors, proof that museum is a desirable term, even if sometimes it is also found to be "dusty".

What does 'museum' stand for ?

Current events invite us to ask this question. We should say many events, as our professional world is under the spotlight at the moment:

- the "new" definition of museums which is being debated within ICOM, reworked by an *ad hoc* committee. We remember the astonishment caused a year ago by the terms proposed to redefine a museum and those relegated to second place: collections, education, pleasure... ;
- the "decolonisation" of museums is the subject of numerous academic works and has also become one of the central themes of the international ICOM, in connection with the "new definition", preceded by a report which states that: "*Western museums were only created to shelter colonial looting*" (thanks to Krzysztof Pomian for recalling the chronology of the history of museums from the first volume, just published, of his monumental work *The Museum, a world history*);
- the *Restitutions*, which are being studied this autumn by deputies and senators, around a bill allowing the return of 26 objects resulting from the war in Benin and Senegal. Beyond the respect of a presidential commitment, the rich reflection conducted on the occasion of this parliamentary debate raises fundamental questions concerning the provenance of collections, their conservation, professional relations with the countries of origin, the stakes of cultural diplomacy, the meaning of French law and in particular the inalienability and imprescriptibility of public collections, etc.;
- the *Black Lives Matter* movement and following it, the "unbolting" of statues witnessing slavery and colonization or the unsealing of a funerary object at the musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac.

What does 'museum' stand for at the time of the Covid-19? After two decades of efforts to attract the greatest number of visitors, what has become of the "democratisation" of access for all in the face of the rules of distancing?

What does 'museum' stand for when the concept of universality is being called into question in a large part of the museum world?

What does 'museum' stand for in the digital age, when the museum comes to you on a screen?

What does 'museum' stand for in the age of globalisation? The Louvre in Abu Dhabi, the Pompidou Centre in Shanghai, ... the name of the museum is a brand name and the museum moves at the very moment when we ask ourselves: is the place of an object where the greatest number of visitors see it? Where it is best preserved? Where does it come from?

At ICOM France, what strikes us at the heart of these debates is the very keen desire of professionals to be actors in the transformations at work and, in particular, to work on sensitive subjects. Whether we speak of "reserves" or the "provenance" of collections, we hear of people in charge who aspire to be able to work on these objects, to document them, to show them, to tell their stories, to contribute in this way to the writing of a shared history.

This is the challenge of an evening "ethics" debate, organised in close collaboration with the INP, to highlight these skills and to invite them to be mobilised.

Openings

- **Charles Personnaz**, Director of the National Heritage Institute (INP)
- **Juliette Raoul-Duval**, President of ICOM France

Speakers

- **Nathalie Bondil**, Vice-Chair of the Canada Council for the Arts
- **Bruno Brulon-Soares**, President of ICOFOM
- **Luc Eekhout**, director of Stichting Kasteel Heeswijk - former president of ICOM Netherlands
- **Ariane James-Sarazin**, Deputy Director of the Army Museum
- **Emmanuel Kasarhérou**, President of the musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac
- **Charles Personnaz**, Director of the National Heritage Institute (INP)
- **Yannick Lintz**, Director of the Department of Islamic Arts, Louvre museum

Closing by Christian Hottin, Head of studies of INP

Debate moderated by **Juliette Raoul-Duval** and **Hélène Vassal**

The session will be held in French, English and Spanish

Join the meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89664935894?pwd=RGxURXI5a3V1UzNSTWVKUTEwY2NtQT09>

Meeting ID : 896 6493 5894

Passcode : 063496

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