

**Annual symposium 2022**  
**General Assembly of ICOM France**

*To whom do the collections belong?*

**Friday 23 September**

**Musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac**

*218 rue de l'Université, 75007 Paris*

*On site and on digital platform*

On a whole number of fronts, current events are encouraging museum professionals to revisit the question of "collections" in France and around the world:

- In France, the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Museums act (*'loi musée'*) is creating a lot of discussion with regard to how it was formed, the fact that legislation was considered an appropriate vehicle, the "Musée de France" designation and the very notion of a collection in the general interest, and the major principles that govern such collections, including their inalienability and unlimited scope. There is a French 'model', the uniqueness of which is perceived well beyond its borders;
- The debate on the definition of museum and the Code of Ethics involves the entire professional community within ICOM and its 134 countries. The Code of Ethics setting out the main principles of acquisition, protection, documentation and conservation is binding on the 50,000 members of ICOM and is currently being updated. The *definition* of museum has occupied many professionals from all regions of the world for three years. Although we do not know at this time what version will be agreed by vote next August, it is clear that the four consultations conducted with members have - fortunately - brought "collections" back to the centre after the attempt to consign them to the margins in 2019.

This focus on collections is driven by museum professionals and correlates with the growing position that museum institutions have taken in society over the past few decades, with more than 90,000 institutions worldwide. The public's tangible interest in its *heritage* and the objective widely shared by professionals to make it increasingly accessible is nurturing an awareness of the meaning of objects, which raises many questions.

*To whom do the collections belong?* Who is responsible for preserving them, telling their story and exhibiting them? Their position has become an issue: how did their history come to be preserved in a particular location? Where do they come from? What do we know about their history? How were they acquired? What legitimacy does the country or museum that presents them have, and what responsibility does it have towards them?

These are burning, and sometimes controversial, issues - "a new global phenomenon" - writes Neil MacGregor, chair of the Louvre, in his book *A New World, New Museums*. "Everywhere, statues and monuments that could be seen as expressing acceptance of slavery and racism or celebrating colonial aggression against indigenous peoples have been challenged, defaced; displaced or simply destroyed". "The simmering debates...have resumed with increased intensity, reaching far Beyond the Academic and museum worlds; indeed, entire regions of the world have begun to contest, rewrite or deconstruct their history in the public square and, thanks

to social media, local actions have quickly become part of a global exercise in rethinking and reconfiguring the past<sup>1</sup>.

In France, 2022 has also seen a Number of restitutions, following the adoption of an *ad hoc* law. In Europe (Belgium, Netherlands, Germany), objects from the geography and time of colonisation are the subject of significant debate. Moreover, museums aspire to have the means to work on artworks origins and journeys and with their counterparts in the countries concerned.

In the face of all these questions, it is not just for museum professionals to respond, because the movement goes far Beyond our profession. It sits at the crossroads of deontological, legal, cultural, political, and Scientific questions, and clearly demands international comparisons.

As the national Committee of an international organisation positioned at the heart of this issue, our role is to encourage debate and consider our responsibility.

On 23 Septembre we intend to contribute to this debate by addressing the following questions:

- ▶ How do different countries deal with these issues?
- ▶ What is the role of law and legal frameworks?
- ▶ What do we know - what can we know better? What is the role of research - in history and art history, of course - but also in physics and chemistry, material sciences, geography, etc.?
- ▶ What financial means are needed to work with the countries of origin?
- ▶ What form of co-management can be envisaged?
- ▶ How can we get an overall perspective on collections, including public and private collections, those held by institutions and individuals, collectors and the art market, acquisitions and donations.
- ▶ How can we bring the principle of “not for profit” up to date?
- ▶ What should we think of NFTs?
- ▶ What about “woke”, decolonisation, “cancel culture”, reconstitution, cultural appropriation, and universalism? Is there, behind these terms, a new way of exercising the profession of museum professionals?

ICOM was created 75 years ago for peace. In 2022, the war in Europe reminds us of our fundamentals: collections are under threat, and the museum and heritage community is able to take a very active role.

In September 2022, asking ourselves **To whom do the collections belong** is to remember that they represent riches - and therefore objects to be coveted - but also that they are essential witnesses - and therefore threatened; vulnerable, and directly targeted during conflict.

Engaging in these reflections in collaboration with the musée du Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, under the presidency of Emmanuel Kasarhérou, is a way of taking a stand in the debate by remembering the museum's founding slogan: *Where cultures dialogue*.

The scope of the topic is such that we do not aim to cover everything but rather to open up the debate to a range of expertise that will contribute to identifying the issues at stake and specifying the responsibilities of all parties. The outlines of a new way of working in museums are undoubtedly taking shape.

Juliette Raoul-Duval, April 2022

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<sup>1</sup> Neil MacGregor. *A New World, New Museums*, Paris : Hazan/Louvre Éditions, 2021, p.134

# Programme

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08h45 **Registration**

09h30 **Official openings**

**Emmanuel Kasarhérou**

*President of the musée du Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac*

**Jean-François Hebert**

*Director General of Cultural Heritage and Architecture, ministry of Culture*

**Emma Nardi**

*President of ICOM International*

**Krista Pikkat**

*Director of Culture and Emergencies, Unesco*

10h00 **Keynote lecture — *Reflections on the History of Museums: their Past, their Future***

**Krzysztof Pomian**

*Historian, honorary director of research at the CNRS.*

10h30 **Introduction to the day**

**Juliette Raoul-Duval**

*President of ICOM France*

10h45 **Session 1: To whom do the collections belong: The Challenge of a Law**

**The singularity of French law**

**Claire Chastanier**

*Deputy to the Deputy Director of Collections, French Museums service, Ministry of Culture*

**How others countries do it? International comparisons**

**Marie-Sophie de Clippele**

*Visiting professor, Université Saint-Louis-Bruxelles, FNRS research fellow*

**María Leonor Pérez Ramírez**

*Coordinator, Research Associate*

**Friederike Pöschl,**

*Research Associate and Legal Advisor - German Contact Point for Colonial Collections*

**Lynda Knowles**

*Attorney, Denver Museum of Nature and Science and member of the LEAC (Legal Affairs Advisory Committee, ICOM)*

**Inkyung Chang**

*Director of the Iron Museum, Vice President of ICOM*

Moderator : **Juliette Raoul-Duval**

12h45 **Lunch break**

14h00

## Session 2: Is it enough to acquire an object for it to "belong" to us?

### Opening

**Luís Raposo**

*Member of the ICOM Executive Board*

### Roundtable - What does it mean to own ?

**Vincent Négri**

*Researcher at the Institute of Social Sciences of Politics*

**Manlio Frigo**

*Professor of Law at the University of Milan*

**Alice Lopes Fabris**

*Doctor of Law*

**Véronique Moulinier**

*Research Director, CNRS, UMR Héritages: Cultures/s, Patrimoines/s, Créations/s (CY, CNRS, MC)*

**Sylvie Sagnes**

*CNRS Research Fellow, UMR Héritages (CY, CNRS, MC)*

**Paz Núñez-Regueiro**

*Head Curator of Heritage, Head of the Americas Heritage Unit, musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac*

Moderator : **Vincent Négri**

15h30

## Session 3: The challenge of dialogue

**Chedlia Annabi**

*ICOM Tunisia, member of ICOM Define (Committee for the definition of the museum) and ICOM ETHCOM (Ethics committee)*

**Gaëlle Beaujean**

*Responsible for the African collections at the musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac*

**Felicity Bodenstern**

*Senior Lecturer, Sorbonne University, co-director of the Digital Benin project, guest researcher at musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac*

**Jean-François Chougnet**

*President of the Museum of Civilization of Europe and the Mediterranean (Mucem)*

**Emmanuel Kasarhérou**

*President of the musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac*

**Charles Personnaz**

*Director of the National Heritage Institute (Institut national du patrimoine)*

Moderator : **Lise Mesz**, *Advisor on the history of the collections - musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac*

17h15

## Statutory General Assembly of ICOM France (members only)

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### Practical informations

The event will take place on-site and on digital platform (to be chosen when you register).

#### Physical access

**Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, access by 218 rue de l'Université, 75007 Paris**

Reception of the public from 8.45 a.m.

Free wifi - Passcode : ICOMFRANCE

**Registration is required to attend the event in situ**

#### Digital access

##### Morning

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84768626066?](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84768626066?pwd=YzllbTlYbmpNbW02clpJZ2FtbCtJdz09)

[pwd=YzllbTlYbmpNbW02clpJZ2FtbCtJdz09](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84768626066?pwd=YzllbTlYbmpNbW02clpJZ2FtbCtJdz09)

Webinaire ID : 847 6862 6066 - Passcode: 879717

##### Afternoon

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88634198331?](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88634198331?pwd=bjVDOXgxY29BUDhWanNOeTgvdS96QT09)

[pwd=bjVDOXgxY29BUDhWanNOeTgvdS96QT09](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88634198331?pwd=bjVDOXgxY29BUDhWanNOeTgvdS96QT09)

Webinaire ID : 886 3419 8331 - Passcode: 170292

*The meeting will be available in simultaneous translation online in Spanish, English and French thanks to the support of the DGLFLF - Ministry of Culture*