

INTRODUCTION

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"TRAINING FOR THE UNIVERSAL MUSEUM" addresses a theme of our time. A Canadian, Marshall McLuhan, coined the phrase "global village" for this age which has witnessed mass travel, mass communications, even mass credit. Are we now about to see the "mass museum", a museum presumably homogenized and popularized for whatever constitutes the greatest cohort of global visitor which might arrive on the doorsteps of every-museum, every-where?

The contributors to this volume think not. But there is in these papers some evidence of worry that we as individuals and institutions responsible for the education and professional development of museum workers are failing to consider seriously the impacts of the "global" forces at work in modern societies. Angelica Ruge discusses how the Germans are re-organizing museum training into a cohesive scheme, searching out the best elements from the former two states that now comprise the new German state. Margaret Greeves and Chris Newbery document the British search for a value free (and universally applicable?) set of museological skills which will underpin performance standards in the workplace. Both of these papers offer a response to the redefinition of the post-modern national state which as we watch, is redrawing political boundaries on every continent, and emphasizing the portability of skills and learning for the itinerant knowledge-industry worker.

Ivo Maroevic argues that the "universalism" of our times makes even more critical the need to preserve regional identity. So we need a philosophical underpinning for museum studies which sets the values of local culture firmly within the context of the emerging global culture. Jan Rosvall pleads for an integrated approach to the whole area of conservation studies: objects, museums, buildings, towns - even the natural and cultural landscape. His paper poses for us the dilemma as to whether or not there can be an "international

curriculum" for such studies. At least at the international level we could make a better job of talking to one-another throughout the educational and training process: faculty exchanges, student internship exchanges, making better use of ICOM for inter-institutional communications.

Pnina Rosenberg searches for a global language of common experience which both museum professionals, and the visiting public, can take to the "anywhere" museum. She claims to have found such a language in the aesthetic response to objects. Certainly if we look at our own national educational curricula, the "world history of art" is perhaps the only glimpse of our global heritage which shares some degree of commonality among all nations. Interestingly the content of this curriculum is museum driven. Perhaps this is a model for reshaping studies in other areas of the humanities. Hazel Moffat draws our attention how museums might facilitate such an educational program among all sectors, the various "niche markets" which constitute our "clients" in this, the consumer driven "information age". In the concluding essay Pierre Mayrand again voices the discomfort we all feel with the universalization of culture, then outlines how "new museology" searches out a common set of social and cultural values - including the value of difference - which should be an object of museum training everywhere.

My own thoughts on these dilemma of our time are ambivalent, and not well thought out. Certainly the non-European, particular aboriginal cultures, of the developing world are searching for a totally new, and different, "post-colonial" model for the institution we call the museum. But it has yet to emerge. Yet even in the western developed world of international technocratic economics and instant electronic information, traditional institutions are under immense stress to cope with drastic change. Jonathan Schell, writing in a recent edition of the journal *Atlantic Monthly*, (August, 1996) comments on the collapse of the traditional American political system, a fewer and fewer both to vote, more and more people are

disillusioned by failed election promises, and pole after pole shows politicians to be the most reviled of the professional classes. This situation is unique to America. Schell argues that part of the problem resides in the emergence of what he calls "hyper-democracy" where the government, money, and media have become so tightly intertwined that political platforms, policies, or even reasoned decision making have become irrelevant. Government decisions are based on instant feedback. Ever faster methods of computerized polls, trend analysis, 30 second media sound-bites, internet based lobby and special interest groups have tightened feedback loop to the point where the "spectator" citizen, awash in information, actually knows nothing. Political leadership, itself trapped by the tyranny of this instant communications democracy, feeds back to the political spectating classes their own same vacuous opinions of the moment. Schell calls this "supply side politics" and observes that in this system there is no place for new ideas, long term strategies, philosophical discussion, in other words what we in the west used to call "leadership".

So what has all this to do with the "universal museum" and the education of museum workers? Quite a lot I think. Museums are still influential institutions in the cultural lives of communities. Through ICOM and ICTOP, as a world-wide profession we talk to each other continually. Through conferences, publications, now through electronically mediated communications we are doing this better and more effectively. Perhaps we, as a profession, need to talk more about a global museological agenda - a common set of values: for instance the need to extend the opportunities for global peace among nations, or the need to conserve and make sustainable our common heritage - the natural environment in which we all live and breath. Since ancient times museums have been places to go for education contemplation of abstract truths, and to draw inspiration from the heritage of our ancestors. Might a renewed ICOM curriculum for museum training, a new ICTOP code of ethics, and the

principles iterated here as the Declaration of Lisbon be underpinned by such considerations?

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