



INTRO TO THE ROUND TABLE
ROCK ART SITES AND MUSEUMS:
REAL AND VIRTUAL CONTEXTS AND COMMUNITIES

LYSA HOCHROTH*

ABSTRACT

We will explore how different definitions and types of museums with prehistoric collections or on or near rock art sites express various relationships to heritage and communities and compare these findings. We will overview the existence of prehistoric collections in museums, detail the history and tradition of archeological museums and the inclusion of prehistoric collections in so-called "universal" museums as well as in regional museums. In contrast, we will also present with curators, guests and participants involved with museums several experiments with new museology, ecomuseums, community museum developments, and educational programming at site museums

RIASSUNTO

Esploreremo come differenti definizioni e tipi di musei con collezioni preistoriche, o sull'arte rupestre, o vicino a siti di arte rupestre esprimano varie relazioni al patrimonio e alle comunità e confronteremo queste osservazioni. Daremo uno sguardo d'insieme dell'esistenza di raccolte preistoriche nei musei, tratteremo in dettaglio la storia e la tradizione dei musei archeologici e l'inclusione di collezioni preistoriche nei cosiddetti "musei universali", così come nei musei regionali. Presenteremo anche, con l'aiuto di curatori, ospiti e partecipanti di musei, vari esperimenti di nuova museologia, ecomusei, sviluppi nei musei di comunità e la programmazione formativa nei siti museali.

RESUME

Nous allons explorer comment des différentes définitions et types de musées dotés de collections préhistoriques, ou sur l'art rupestre, ou placés près de sites d'art rupestre, expriment des relations variées avec le patrimoine et la communauté et nous comparerons ces observations. Nous jetterons un regard d'ensemble de l'existence de collections préhistoriques dans les musées, nous traiterons en détail l'histoire et la tradition des musées archéologiques et l'inclusion de collections préhistoriques dans les ledit « musées universels », ainsi que dans les musées régionaux. Nous allons aussi présenter, avec l'aide de curateurs, hôtes et participants de musées, plusieurs expériences de nouvelle muséologie, écomusées, des développements dans les musées de communautés et dans la programmation éducative dans les sites muséaux.

Today and tonight, we will explore how different definitions and types of museums with prehistoric collections or on or near rock art sites express various relationships to heritage and communities and compare these findings. We will overview the existence of prehistoric collections in museums, detail the history and tradition of archeological museums and the inclusion of prehistoric collections in so-called "universal" museums as well as in regional museums. In contrast, we will also present with curators, guests and participants involved with museums several experiments with new museology, ecomuseums, community museum developments, and educational programming at site museums (*Guillermo Munoz & Judith Trujillo, GIPRI, "Ecomuseum in Portugal and Community Development"; David Coulson & Terry Little, "Dangers for African rock art, traveling exhibitions and the Abasuba Peace Museum"*)

The introduction will serve to present "prehistoric art" and "museology," the definition of a museum (according to ICOM and the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums) as well as the function and purpose of the virtual RAMP (Rock Art Museum Prototype) developed with The Tech Museum of Innovation (San José, California, USA) at The Tech Virtual on Second Life. The Round Table discus-

* Lysa Hochroth, Ph.D., Formerly Publications Editor, International Council of Museums, Member ICOM-ICME (International Committee on Museums of Ethnology)(USA/France)



sions will offer experiences illustrating different relationships between prehistoric collections, rock art sites, and museums. Museums will be shown to be manifestations of community involvement, tangible and intangible links to sites, providing access, management capacities and communication. The “**Connect-the-dots**” proposal first introduced at the XXII International Rock Art Symposium (2007) will be discussed as it has been developed through traditional and new technologies with the ongoing objective of linking sites and research centers to museums both on and off site to provide context and the bases for comparative analysis of prehistoric material cultures.

The form and function of museums have been evolving over the years, and indeed this can be traced in International Council of Museums (ICOM) definitions of a museum (1946-2007) in which, for example, one sees how typologies have been abandoned in favor of functions. The original purpose of the ICOM definition was to qualify membership in an international nongovernmental organization (OING), sustained in large part to this day by its 27,000 members – individual museum professionals and museum institutions. Therefore, the community or network was established by virtue of the definition of that to which the members belonged, an institution, a field of study or discipline, an area of research or practice. Thus emerged what has become the most widely accepted international definition of a museum and a constituent statute of the organization thus self-defined:

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Section 1. Museum. A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.
(ICOM Statutes, adopted by the 22nd General Assembly (Vienna, Austria, 24 August 2007)

This functional ICOM definition emerged over time to distinguish museums from art galleries or commercial exhibition halls and aligned with *The ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums* to prescribe the minimum requirements for museum professionals and institutions to fulfill their role “in service of society and its development”. Georges Henri-Rivière, first Director of ICOM and Hugues de Varine, second Director of ICOM and still active in community museum development, coined the term “**ecomuseum**” (in 1971) to promote a new type of museum, different from the traditional museum, one created by, with, and for the communities where the heritage to be valued on the territory or site concerned was an act of collective self-determination. With hundreds of ecomuseums around the world today, including the **Ecomuseo del Vaso Ré at Cerveno (Angelo Fossati)**, the following definition was recently announced, based entirely on the original Hugues de Varine definition: “*An Ecomuseum is a dynamic way in which communities preserve, interpret, and manage their heritage for a sustainable development. An Ecomuseum is based on a community agreement.*” (*Declaration of Intent of the Long Net Workshop, Trento (Italy), May 2004*).

Following on work by Andrzej Rozawadowski (Valcamonica Symposium (2007), p. 401 sq.) regarding the usefulness of ethnological bases of comparison as opposed to chronologies for comparative research in Central Asian rock art as well as the findings reported on the fruits of comparative research in determining Armenian rock art sources for the advent of hieroglyphic writing by Gregor Vahanyan (Yerevan State Academy of Arts, Armenia, Valcamonica Symposium (2007), p. 507 sq.), and the comparative studies done by Jo McDonald (Director, Cultural Heritage Management Pty Ltd and Adj. Sr. Research Fellow, Centre for Cross-Cultural Studies, Australian National University) and Peter Veth (Research Director, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Adj. Prof. Center for Cross-Cultural Studies, Valcamonica (2007), p. 327 sq.), we recognize the urgent and collectively recognized need for the comparative study of rock art around the world to resolve basic problems of the interpretation of prehistoric cultures. Thanks to the leadership of Prof. Emanuel Anati, and in response to his urging to consolidate efforts to “learn to read” the messages carried by rock art and what it conveys of “the essence of the spirit, of the ethic and aesthetics, of material and immaterial values of human existence,” through museum networking, we have aimed at reinforcing “rock art partnerships” and developing a tool to coordinate such efforts in a sustainable, long-term manner.

Without opposing “new museology” to “old museology”, we propose a collaboration in and around sites for communication and management purposes to coalesce the ever-growing data and permit comparative analysis, without which contextualization and understanding are impossible.

Comparative analysis ultimately provides context for study, that which is robbed from archeologists when excavation sites are looted, that which is divorced from African countries when small pieces of a large puzzle end up in museums far from sites, that which is lost even to researchers when – for the purposes of research – vast resources are locked under key – for safety in the world’s private collections, cultural institutions, universities and museums, hidden away and yet dispersed all over the world

Museums with prehistoric collections of all types therefore have objects, research, documentation, information, sometimes the very environment – in a word *the context* – of rock art studies. Much allows us to realize why museums are essential to the vast and overwhelming challenge of preserving and learning from the world’s rock art collection, scattered around the globe, in some of the most inaccessible places left for us to return to, we humans “the most dangerous animal on earth” (as the visitor captured in the cage at the **Livingstone Museum in Zambia** realizes), but as part of the chain of life, whereby the role of protector and guardian of earth and the sacred sites must once again devolve to our human species.

