

CURCOM

UPDATE

Greetings from your Chairperson!

Change is afoot. CurCom’s website is undergoing a revision thanks to the effort of webmaster Allison Cywin. When it is launched in July, look for the updated Label Writing and Exhibition competition winners and find out how you may submit entries for consideration in 2013. Also, look for information about CurCom-focused fellowships to attend the annual meeting in Baltimore.

Have you ever wanted to submit a session proposal for an annual meeting and weren’t sure how to do it? Now is a great time to participate. Collections-based sessions are very welcome and we hope to increase what is offered in 2013 with your help. Starting in mid-July AAM is changing the submission process. AAM has posted session guidelines on their website. Session ideas and proposals may be submitted as early as July 16. Completed proposals (submitted on-line to AAM) are due by August 24. After that date, AAM members will vote on sessions prior to the Fall National Program Committee meeting. If you have questions or would like guidance, feel free to contact Ron Potvin or Elisa Phelps, Program Co-Chairs for CurCom.

And finally, there is one more change that is bittersweet. After many years of stellar volunteer service as the *Update* editor for CurCom, Deborah Tout-Smith has asked to resign from the position. Deborah’s schedule no longer permits the time to do this. While we regret her departure in this capacity, we look forward to continuing to work with Deborah on future CurCom projects. Please join me in thanking her for a job well done. And yes, we are looking for a new newsletter editor. Are you that person?

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Ellen Endslo
CurCom Chairperson



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CONTRIBUTORS

Thanks to all our contributors and writers for this issue of *Update*. As we have so many contributors in this issue, they are listed on page 21.

From the Editor



As usual we have some great content in this issue. Ann Meyerson provides an engaging insight into Cuban history museums, and we hear about the well-deserving winners of the Annual Excellence in Exhibition Competition. Updates from our members include reports from Martha's Vineyard Museum, Maine State Museum, Autry National Center, and Beverly Historical Society & Museum. There are some wonderful things happening!

I'm sorry to say that this will be my last issue as editor of *Update*. Due to my increasing work commitments I've decided it's time to pass the baton.

I've thoroughly enjoyed my time in this role – hearing about the great projects underway across the States, sharing the challenges we all face, and helping to connect the museum community. I've edited and laid out 34 issues in the past 11 years - how quickly time has passed! Thank-you all so much for your contributions over the years.

With very best wishes to you all,

Deborah Tout-Smith
Museum Victoria, Australia
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Future AAM Annual Meetings

Baltimore, MD
May 19-22, 2013

Seattle, WA
May 18-21, 2014

Atlanta, GA
April 26-29, 2015

SUBSCRIPTION AND MEMBERSHIP

Update is the periodic newsletter distributed to members of CurCom. It is also available on-line at <http://www.curcom.org>

CurCom (Curators' Committee) is a Professional Network (PN) committee of the American Association of Museums. All SPC members must join the AAM. Dues for CurCom (\$20.00 / \$10.00 for students) are payable in addition to AAM dues.

Membership is obtained through:

Membership Department
American Association of Museums
1575 Eye St. N.W., Suite 400
Washington, DC 20005

Phone (202) 289 9132; fax (202) 289 6578;
email membership@aam-us.org

Joint CurCom/SMAC/COMPT Reception

On April 29, 2012, during the AAM Annual Meeting, the Goldstein Museum of Design on the University of Minnesota's campus was the site for the third tri-hosted professional reception. For the fifth year, Delta Designs Limited was the CurCom sponsor.

The occasion was photographed by Barbara Lutz, Administrative Assistant, Goldstein Museum of Design.



Behind the scenes: staff share collections with guests from Delta Designs Ltd and SpaceSaver at the Goldstein Museum of Design



Colleagues from the Curators Committee, Small Museum Administrators Committee and Committee on Museum Professional Training enjoyed a hearty buffet



Bruce Danielson of Delta Designs, Ltd (CurCom's sponsor) inspects the cabinets at the Golstein Museum of Design

2012 Annual Excellence in Exhibition Competition Results

The 19th Annual Excellence in Exhibition Competition – sponsored by AAM Standing Professional Committees (SPCs) CurCom, CARE, EdCom, and NAME – drew 23 highly competitive entries from a variety of institutions, including natural history and science museums, art and history museums, children’s museums, and institutions with living collections. The budgets of the exhibitions ranged from \$3,200 to \$58 million (the latter a long-term exhibit with acres of outdoor facilities).

Competition judges declared one institution the clear winner and awarded honorable mentions to four others, basing their decisions on AAM’s Standards for Museum Exhibitions and Indicators of Excellence. Each exhibition cited for superior quality conveyed engaging messages, used appropriate media to help visitors acquire skills or engage in rich sensory experiences, and demonstrated a commitment to audience research to achieve its goals.

Plants Are Up to Something at the Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens stood out as an example of how an exhibition can provide extraordinary experiences. Its central component, ‘Real Plants, Real Tools, Real Science,’ grabbed audience attention and provided an ideal framework for eradicating visitors’ congenital ‘plant blindness’ – the fact that most people don’t see or know about vegetation. Smart interactive stations, such as ‘Different Smells for Different Pollinators,’ gave elementary schoolchildren an opportunity to use scientific apparatuses to explore in a fun and safe atmosphere. Judges were impressed by how the Huntington exhaustively prototyped and tested interactive components in local classrooms, aided by its advisory board and the local community, and inventively used graphic materials that could withstand a greenhouse environment. The Huntington, which had never used interpretation with a living collection, took a chance and added a rich layer of interpretation and interactivity to this one.

In *Evolving Planet*, the Field Museum introduced visitors to the complex topic of how life evolves, quoting Darwin and featuring images depicting the diversity of life on Earth. Visitors took a walk through time, touching on topics such as mass extinction, phylogeny, and convergent evolution. The media were imaginative and the collections impressive. The judges congratulate the Field Museum for not shrinking from the ‘e’ word.

The National Zoo’s *Asia Trail* exhibited seven unusual animal species, using layered interpretation of their habitats to illustrate how scientists study them. The content focused on conservation of wild spaces and how visitors can take action on the animals’ behalf – another welcome example of a living collection using imaginative media to convey meaningful ideas.

The main idea of the Chicago History Museum’s *Sensing Chicago* was that history is all around you and you are connected to it. The target audience was 8- and 9-year-olds; kids saw, heard and touched the past in age-appropriate ways – for example, fabricating the bleachers and recreating the experience of a baseball game in a historic ballpark.

The Wonder Cabinet at the Children’s Discovery Museum of San Jose capitalized on preschool children’s sense of wonder, love of exploration, and desire to learn through doing. Interactive areas presented a modern interpretation of the 16th-century Cabinet of Curiosities as well as a Sand Lab, in which children used funnels, beakers, and scales to measure sand. By replacing shovels with real scientific equipment, the area simultaneously provided sensory delight for 1-year-olds and a science lesson for 4-year-olds.

From the Judges

Many of this year’s entries met all or most of our standards of excellence. Our winner, *Plants Are Up to Something*, stood out in its thorough approach to audience awareness,

Continued on page 6

testing and evaluation, incorporation of learning standards and quality and appropriateness of design. In our opinion, the Huntington team's approach and solutions provide examples that other institutions can follow.

Honorable mention winners *Sensing Chicago*, *The Wonder Cabinet*, *Evolving Planet* and *Asia Trail* also set themselves apart by seamlessly incorporating interactives into many types and sizes of exhibitions. What made the outcomes so successful was each team's attention to prototyping, testing and their audiences.

*

Special thanks go to our wonderful judges, Ellen Giusti, CARE; Elisa Phelps, CurCom; Susy Watts, EdCom; and Abbie Chessler, NAME; and to the SPC chairs who oversaw the competition: Zahava Doering, CARE; Linda Eppich, CurCom; Jim Hakala, EdCom; and Phyllis Rabineau, NAME.

We urge all museums to enter next year's competition so that this energy can continue to propel the competition. The requirements for materials have been streamlined, and digital versions make it easier than ever to enter. Writing about your entry allows you to reflect on your exhibition's strengths and the lessons learned. Finally, showcasing your ideas to the rest of the museum community inspires all of us to push the limits of our own creativity in new directions.

Information about next year's competition, new coordinator Maria Marable-Bunch's contact information and entry materials will be posted in the fall on www.care-aam.org, www.curcom.org, www.edcom.org and www.N-A-M-E.org.

— Abbie Chessler, founding partner and design director, Quatrefoil, Laurel, Md.; Lindy Hankins, assistant curator at Museum & Collector Resource in Concord, Mass; and Ellen Giusti, a visitor studies consultant based in New York. With thanks also to AAM.

AAM Initiative: 'Invite Congress to Visit Your Museum' Week

AAM members are encouraged to invite their member of Congress to visit their museum August 11-18. AAM President Ford W. Bell explains that 'In August, Members of Congress will be at home for nearly a month, looking for opportunities to connect with constituents.'

'At a time when the national debt has reached \$15 trillion, 'sequestration' (automatically triggered cuts) could lead to deep cuts to all federal programs, state budgets are being squeezed, and non-essential funding is being slashed, museums must demonstrate that they are worthy of a federal investment,' says Bell.

'According to a recent study, constituent visits have more influence than any other influence group or strategy... This 'Invite Congress to Visit Your Museum' event is the

perfect opportunity for Congress to learn first-hand how museums provide essential community services. I urge every museum to participate in this event.'

AAM has made it easy to participate. It provides links for you to identify who represents you in Congress, has drafted an invitation letter, provides a 'how to' guide for planning the visit, and offers an on-line meeting report to tell AAM how the visit went.

AAM would like to know if you're setting up a meeting or have any questions about the effort.

Refer to <http://www.speakupformuseums.org/invitecongresstovisitaugust.htm> for further information.

Curators at Two Conferences: Experts or Facilitators?

Redmond J. Barnett, Head of Exhibits, Washington State History Museum

A hot topic these days is the balance between curatorial expertise and community involvement-cum-curation. Do curators create exhibits that demonstrate their expertise, or do they assemble and vet stories told from the community? Several sessions at the 2012 AAM Annual Meeting explored the question, and the issues surfaced at the recent Washington [State] Museum Association conference in Seattle and will appear at the upcoming Western Museums Association conference, October 21-24, at Palm Springs, California.

In a panel on 'The Future of Museums' in Seattle, Kris Morrissey, director of the University of Washington Museology Program, pointed out that the curator's role has been debated since at least 1888, when George Browne Goode spoke of going from 'a cemetery of bric-a-brac to a nursery of living thoughts.' Discussion noted a tendency to 'share authority,' with curators seen as 'convenors of conversation.' Leonard Garfield, director of the Museum of History and Industry, described how that museum had sought comments and stories from members of the community.

The Yakima Valley Museum has just opened a 'Cabinet of Curiosities' exhibit, containing dozens of unfamiliar items from its collection. Initially presented without labels, the exhibit will eventually have brief identification labels,

but its goal is to let visitors lose themselves contemplating 'strange' and 'weird' artifacts.

Susan Hildreth, the director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, identified community engagement and particularly crowd-sourcing as major trends, and urged museums to create a staff position to manage crowd-sourcing, particularly 'change role of curators to facilitate quality control of crowd-sourced work.' Her Powerpoint is on the Washington Museum Association website <http://washingtonstatemuseums.org/annualconference.html>.

Upcoming in October, the **Western Museums Association** will present several sessions of interest to curators. Besides keynoters W. Richard West (founding director, National Museum of the American Indian) and Nik Honeysett (head of administrative operations of the Getty), sessions will include those on museum transformation, collaboration with communities, changing ways national parks interpret American Indian culture, teenage-curated exhibits, 'loosening curatorial control,' and of course the exhibit critique session.

Details are on the Western Museums Association's website at http://www.westmuse.org/WMA_2012_Prelim_Program.pdf.

'Curate Now' Blog

A blog has been set up to provide a forum for curators to discuss the changing nature of our craft and to exchange ideas on how to ensure a quality museum experience for our visitors.

Come back often and join the conversation with our weekly posts at <http://curatenow.blogspot.com/>. We want to hear from you!

The Herbert Feis Award for 2012

Established in 1984, Herbert Feis Award is offered annually by the American Historical Association to recognize distinguished contributions to public history. The prize is named in memory of Herbert Feis (1893-1972), public servant and historian of recent American foreign policy, with an initial endowment from the Rockefeller Foundation.

The prize was originally given for books produced by historians working outside of academe. In 2006, the scope of the award was changed to emphasize significant contributions in the field of public history.

The terms of the award now define both 'contribution' and 'public history' broadly. Contributions could, for example, include work as the administrator of a public history group or agency (such as a historical society, a historic site, or a community history project) or as the creator or producer of a public history product or products (such as a museum exhibit, radio script, web site, oral history collection, or film). Often, the contribution will be the result of years of effort in the field, but the prize might also recognize

a singular contribution of major importance such as a path-breaking museum exhibit.

Public history is defined as work primarily directed at non-academic, non-school-based audiences. Those audiences could be very broad (e.g., television viewers) or highly specialized (e.g., policymakers). Although the audience should be primarily outside of academia, the recipient of the award could be employed at a university.

Last year's winner was a historian who for 40 years with the Defense Department balanced security with public access to archives. The year before, a historian involved with the National Collaborate of Women's History Sites received the award. Other winners include the founder of a university public history program, a senior historian of military history, a senior curator at the National Air & Space Museum, and a historian/curator at NIH.

The application deadline for the 2012 award is **August 1, 2012**. Application instructions and further details can be found online at www.historians.org/Feis.

News from Martha's Vineyard Museum

Bonnie Stacy, Chief Curator, Martha's Vineyard Museum and new NEMA representative on the CurCom Board

We have just finished installing our exhibitions for the summer season. We are open year-round, but summer is when we get most of our visitors, with the Island population swelling from about 16,000 to over 80,000.

This spring we opened *Showtime: 100 Years of Theater on Martha's Vineyard*, an exhibition that explores theater on the Island from the historical pageants of the early 20th century to today's amateur and professional theater. This exhibition was envisioned as a collaboration with the theater community, and the local theater groups were generous with lending materials for exhibition as well as planning performances at the museum while the exhibit is up. Linsey Lee, our Oral History Curator, interviewed many participants in Island theater and excerpts from the interviews are incorporated into the exhibit. She also produced a short film about the Shearer Summer Theater, an African American group that was active from the 1940s through the 1970s.

On June 15th we opened three exhibits: *Island Faces*, a portrait competition; *Hands On History*, an interactive gallery for families; and the Cooke House, our historic house. These exhibits join *Out of the Depths: Martha's Vineyard Shipwrecks*, which closes in August.

***Malaga Island, Fragmented Lives* opens at Maine State Museum**

Malaga Island, Fragmented Lives, the newest exhibition at the Maine State Museum in Augusta, opened to the public a few short weeks ago and is already a hit with the public and visiting school groups alike. The exhibition tells the controversial story of the poor, mixed-race community that lived on Malaga Island, a 42-acre island at the mouth of the New Meadows River in Phippsburg, Maine. Archaeological artifacts, historical photographs, objects, documents, and news stories from the time help bring the story to life.



In 1912, Maine's state government evicted the people who lived on Malaga Island. The Maine State Museum exhibition and public programs explore the events that preceded and followed the eviction 100 years ago.

'The Malaga Island community, numbering about 40, included fishermen, laborers, and their families. They were caught in a time of great change for Maine in the early 1900s,' explains Museum Director Joseph R. Phillips. 'As fishing and shipbuilding economies declined along the coast, Maine officials looked to tourism as a new source of

economic growth. Not pristine or traditional, Malaga Island's community did not conform to a marketable image of mid-coast Maine. Racism, eugenics, and social reform also played a part in the resulting government-sanctioned effort to send people from their homes. All traces of the community were removed, even the school and cemetery.'

'For nearly 100 years, Malaga Island was scarcely spoken of, except negatively,' adds curator Kate McBrien, who developed the exhibition.

'Descendants and people in surrounding communities felt the need to hide the island's painful past. When archaeologists from the University of Southern Maine began excavations on Malaga, the long-missing fragments of peoples' lives began to re-surface to provide a record of a multi-faceted, vibrant community. These archaeological fragments form the core of the exhibit and, with historical photographs and documents, allow us to glimpse and understand more about Malaga Island's people.'

Malaga Island, Fragmented Lives, will be on view at the Maine State Museum in Augusta from May 19, 2012 – May 26, 2013. For more information, see the museum's website, www.mainestatemuseum.org.

Photograph: Rosella and John Eason, with family, in front of their home on Malaga Island. Photograph taken by Herman Bryant on July 20, 1911.

Maine State Museum collection

News from the Beverly Historical Society & Museum

The Beverly Historical Society & Museum (Beverly, MA) hosted *The Ghost Army*, a travelling exhibit highlighting the work of a special unit during World War II. The 23rd Headquarters Special Troops consisted of approximately 1100 men and was given the unique mission to impersonate other U.S. Army units, sometimes three times as large, in order to fool the enemy using inflatable tanks, sound trucks, phony radio transmissions, and even play-acting to stage their over 20 battlefield deceptions. Many of these soldiers were artists and not allowed to keep diaries, so sketched and painted scenes throughout Europe. Their story is one of deception, showmanship, art, and ingenuity that had been kept secret for nearly 50 years, and a documentary by filmmaker Rick Beyer is bringing their heroic actions to light. This exhibit was up for the month of June. For further information visit www.ghostarmy.org.



Portrait of Laura Patch, oil on canvas by Luke Prince, circa 1840. From the upcoming Old Planters exhibit.

Image courtesy the Beverly Historical Society

The BHS is currently preparing to host the second biannual Old Planters Reunion, an opportunity for descendants of 17th century Beverly families to gather for genealogical research, lectures, historic walks, and an exhibit detailing the legacy of these families. The exhibit will highlight a handful of people representative of these families throughout the past 375 years. Visitors will have the opportunity to see agricultural, maritime, military, industrial, and domestic artifacts used by their ancestors including pewter made by renowned pewter smith Israel Trask; a first edition of John Hale's *A Modest Inquiry into the Nature of Witchcraft*; a journal from a vessel heading out west during the Gold Rush; and tools from the United Shoe Machinery Corporation (USMC). Maps and images will illustrate how the community has evolved from a small farming community to an industrial city.

The Old Planters Reunion will take place September 28-30 and the exhibit will be up through the spring of 2013. For further information and registration for the reunion, please contact info@beverlyhistory.org or (978) 922 1186.

North Carolina Glass 2012

October 28, 2012 - February 1, 2013

Western Carolina University has documented the development of North Carolina's glass community in a series of invitational *North Carolina Glass* exhibitions initiated in 1974. In contrast to the previous shows, this exhibit celebrates the 50th anniversary of the studio glass movement in the United States and will inaugurate the first in the series North Carolina Glass exhibitions to be hosted in the Fine Art Museum at Western Carolina University.

The selected artists were chosen from among those who have made their home and studio in North Carolina and continue to contribute to the tradition of studio glass in North Carolina.

The artists are: Gary Beecham, Rick Beck, Valerie Beck, Alex Bernstein, Billy Bernstein, Katherine Bernstein, Ken Carder, Richard Eckerd, Shane Fero, Robert Gardner, Judson Guerard, Jon Kuhn, Kate Vogel & John Littleton, Robert Levin, Joe Nielander, John Nygren, Roger Parramore, Mark Peiser, Kenny Pieper, Richard Ritter, Jan Williams, Sally Rogers, Yaffa & Jeff Todd, Tadashi Torii and Justin Turcott.

North Carolina Glass 2012 is curated by Joan Falconer Byrd, Professor of Art (Ceramics) School of Art & Design, WCU and Denise Drury, Interim Director & Curator, Fine Art Museum, WCU.



Ken Carder: 'Of Myth and Memory', 2011

Hot-worked imagery on glass and cut, polished and fabricated glass with metal appliqué

Dimensions: H 23" x W 12" x D 8"

Photographer: Ken Carder

News from the Autry National Center

Katsinas in Hopi Life

June 29, 2012 - June 23, 2013

Katsina in Hopi Life, featuring remarkable Katsina dolls from the Autry's Southwest Museum of the American Indian Collection, provides a glimpse into Hopi life and culture. *Katsinam* (the plural form of *Katsina*) are spiritual beings who represent all aspects of life and travel to be with the Hopi people six months of the year. Told from the Hopi perspective, this exhibition shares the unique relationship the Hopi people have with the Katsinam, focusing on the values, lessons, and encouraging messages learned from them.

California's Designing Women, 1896-1986

August 10, 2012 - January 6, 2013

Museum of California Design exhibition at the Autry National Center

The newness of California, and the state's periodic bursts of population growth, afforded unprecedented opportunities for women to participate in the creation and production of design, one of the principal engines of California's dynamic economy, now the sixth largest in the world. As California's extraordinary role in American design is receiving the recognition it has long deserved, *California's Designing Women, 1896-1986* acknowledges the work of more than 50 of the women who, as designers and entrepreneurs, helped make that distinction possible.

Women have long been recognized as practitioners of the decorative arts, but commercial design and fine craft, which are the focus of *California's Designing Women, 1896-1986*, were long considered the province of men. This unprecedented exhibition honors female designers who made major contributions to Californian and American design by incorporating into their work the newest styles, materials, and technologies of their time – often influenced by California's unique confluence of cultures, among them Indigenous American, Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican. Many of its approximately 240 examples of textiles,

ceramics, furniture, lighting, tapestries, jewelry, clothing, and graphics are being exhibited for the first time.

These functional and decorative objects, which span almost a century of design movements – from Arts and Crafts to Art Deco to Mid-Century Modern and beyond – exemplify California's national and international reputation for unrestrained creativity. The exhibition opens with hand-cut, wood-block printed posters and closes with one of the first computer-aided graphics. In between these technological poles are works created from a gamut of materials, including wood, abalone, glass, cotton, steel, silver, acetate, acrylic, and fiberglass, materials of American daily life forged in California's vast, welcoming workshop.

- Bill Stern, Guest Curator, Autry National Center

Richard 'Rick' West, Jr to Lead Autry National Center

June 20, 2012 (Los Angeles, CA) – The Board of the Autry National Center of the American West has announced W. Richard 'Rick' West, Jr will be joining the museum as its new President and CEO. He will be taking leadership of the organization as it moves into the next critical phase of its development as a premier museum, education center, and research institution bringing together diverse experiences, collections, and stories that make Western history come alive.

'As you know, the Autry is undergoing comprehensive and exciting changes as an organization, with refocused programming in new exhibit galleries, the Autry Resource Center in Burbank, and the newly conserved Southwest Collection,' said Marshall McKay, Chairman of the Board of the Autry National Center. 'In our strategic development, we've encountered new challenges and opportunities and carefully reassessed what the Autry needs to make this transition a success at every level. We believe Rick West's wealth of expertise as

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MID-ATLANTIC NEWS

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM NICOLE BELOLAN AND ELLEN ENDSLOW

'SWAT' Team Project by University of Delaware's Museum Studies Students

The University of Delaware's recently reinvigorated Museum Studies graduate program, headed by Professor of History Katherine C. Grier, completed the third annual, two-week collections 'SWAT' team project. This year, students tackled the collections at Auburn Heights Preserve in northern Delaware. The project, funded in part this year by the IMLS program 'Sustaining Places,' resulted in graduate and undergraduate students contributing 570 hours of work cleaning and inventorying objects.

If your institution is in Delaware, northern Maryland, south-eastern Pennsylvania, or southern New Jersey and is in need of volunteer assistance, equipment loans, etc., email sustainingplaces@udel.edu to inquire about getting involved.

For more about UD Museum Studies: <http://www.udel.edu/museumstudies/>.

DeBraak Hull Conservation Work

The Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs is preparing to place the hull of the *DeBraak* on a new support system to help ensure its long-term conservation. The vessel sank in 1798 and was recovered off the coast of Delaware in the Delaware Bay circa 1985.

For more information, visit: <http://history.blogs.delaware.gov/2012/02/21/raising-the-debraak-part-1-murky-waters/>.

Winterthur Celebrates 60th Anniversary

This year the Winterthur Program in American Material Culture is celebrating its 60th anniversary. To mark the occasion, Winterthur has mounted an exhibition about the history of the Material Culture Program (to run until June 16, 2013) as well as the Art

Conservation Program and a conference titled 'Reaching and Teaching through Material Culture: A Winterthur Graduate Program 60th Anniversary Symposium' (to be held on September 28-29, 2012).

The Winterthur Program in American Material Culture (WPAMC), originally known as the Winterthur Program in Early American Culture (WPEAC), was founded in 1952. The Winterthur-University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation (WUDPAC) was founded in 1974. Together, these programs boast more than 800 graduates. In their hands rest the study, interpretation, and conservation of objects significant to the history and culture of their communities. Through their work in museums, historic sites, conservation laboratories, cultural organizations, and arts advocacy, they steward the material heritage of the United States and, increasingly, the world.

For more information, visit: <http://www.winterthur.org/?p=967>.

The **Pennsylvania Federation of Museums and Historical Organizations** continues to provide professional opportunities to the museum community throughout the state. Click on the link for more information about the numerous workshops and other professional opportunities. <http://www.pamuseums.org/site/showpage.asp?page=16>.

Despite significant reductions several years ago in the PA state budget and the elimination of several state-operated sites, the **Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission** still supports numerous interesting projects and has begun hiring part-time curators. This past year Jim Vaughan was hired as its new executive director. Learn more about him and the PHMC on their website <http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=512&mode=2&objID=1426>.

Tarrytown, NY is the place for the 2012 annual meeting of the **Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums in October**. Learn more about 'Building Audiences – Visitor Engagement: A Foundation for our Future' at <http://www.midatlanticmuseums.org/>.

Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, PA held its first sampler documentation day in April. This information

and photographs will become a permanent archive at CCHS and include needlework of any era made by someone born before 1950. It was held in collaboration with the Sampler Archive Project, for which this was the first field research day. The SAP is part of the Sampler Consortium and is supported by the University of Oregon, the University of Delaware, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Call for Papers: 'Home and Hearth: Regional Museums and Gastronomic Heritage'

Join colleagues from around the world to discuss documenting, preserving, and interpreting tangible and intangible aspects of gastronomic heritage, and contribute your own 'food for thought.'

The International Committee for Regional Museums (ICR), ICOM South East Europe Alliance (ICOM SEE), ICOM Serbia, and the Regional Museum of Prijepolje invite you to participate in the annual conference to be held 22-29 September 2012 in Belgrade and Prijepolje, Serbia. The organizers seek presentations and case studies relevant to the theme 'Home and Hearth: Regional Museums and Gastronomic Heritage.'

Hearth and home, fireplace and family, warmth and comfort – these are the vital ingredients of social life. Food and the spaces in which it is prepared and served play important parts in family and community life. The kitchen has changed over time - in some urban contexts today it now resembles a laboratory. How has technology changed how and where food is prepared and served? What are the unwritten rules regarding food selection, preparation, presentation, and consumption? How have urbanization, immigration, and other changes to community and family life affected diet, gastronomy, and the material heritage?

How do the households of cultural, religious, and ethnic groups differ regarding food selection, preparation, presentation, and consumption? What are the unspoken rules,

practices, manners? How are these rules reflected in the material culture and vice versa? Until recently the types of available foods depended upon geography, but what make one type of animal or grain more desirable than another? What foods are reserved for festivals and other special occasions? What special utensils and containers are used to make these foods? What are museums doing to document and collect these changing practices and technologies? How are the traditions and stories associated with food interpreted for visitors?

ICR seeks examples of good practices, successful exhibitions, cooperative activities, community partnerships, events, and educational programs which address these questions. Proposals consisting of a title and abstract (summary of up to 200 words) for presentations of 15 minutes and case studies of 10 minutes should be sent to Sue Hanna at sushanna1@aol.com and Rune Holbek at ruh@vaf.no by 20 July 2012. Decisions about proposals will be communicated by 27 July 2012. Authors of successful proposals will be asked to provide a written version of their presentation by 5 September 2012 for consideration for publication in the Conference Proceedings. Papers should be submitted as a Microsoft word document with photos, tables and charts as separate attachments. For additional information go to www.icr-icom.org or contact Sue Hanna, ICR Secretary at sushanna1@aol.com or Rune Holbek, ICR Treasurer at ruh@vaf.no.

La Lucha Continua: Cuban History Museum Narratives

Ann Meyerson, PhD

There is a saying that goes, 'after you visit Cuba for a week, you can write a book, after a few weeks, an article, and after a year, nothing.' Having visited Cuba in March 2010 to explore 16 museums and historic sites, and then again in November 2010, I feel there is much to say about the role of public history and history museums there, and, at the same time, I realize I am only beginning to scratch the surface of a very complex world.

Many of the questions I brought to Cuba were quickly discarded as I visited exhibitions and spoke with museum professionals. Questions such as which themes are privileged, and culturally-specific vs integrative historical interpretation, seemed irrelevant once I began to explore Cuban museums and historic sites. In my work, I have been confronting issues of historical interpretation in U.S. history museums from the perspective of culturally-specific or 'identity' museums. I quickly learned that this is simply not a burning issue in the Cuban world, because in Cuba race and ethnicity take on a whole other character from ours. Similarly, the historical themes the Cubans choose to privilege in their exhibitions flow from a historical and political experience, and cultural /national identity, that is much more cohesive than ours. The experience of 300 years of foreign domination frames everything – the particular messages conveyed in, and the mission of, their museums, exhibitions and historic sites.

Driving their public history program is the idea that, as one museum director so eloquently put it, 'a people without history will quickly die.' (Alberto Granado Duque, Director of Casa de Africa) This is generally reflected in the immense importance given to history museums and historical interpretation, in contrast with the U.S. Museums in the U.S. are more often than not defined as art or maybe science. History museums are considered second class.

In Cuba, on the other hand, public history is celebrated and given substantial resources. In a word, there is no 'role,' as such, of history museums to examine, as one would here in the U.S. Preserving, and interpreting, history *is* the whole story in that country.

Two broad and interrelated themes stand out in the historical narratives presented in Cuba's museums and historic sites: firstly, the experience, and overcoming, of 300 years of foreign domination, and secondly, the existence of a strong and uniquely Cuban identity. The first theme can be illustrated by three museums I visited: 1) the Museo de la Revolucion in Havana; 2) Museo Nacional de la Campana de Alfabetizacion (the Literacy Museum); and 3) the Museo de la Ciudad de La Habana. The second theme can be illustrated by two museums: Casa de Africa, and, indirectly, by the maritime or sub-aquatic archeology museum housed in the Castillo de la Real Fuerza, both in Havana.

The **Museo de la Revolucion**, the first museum created after the 1959 Revolution (prior to 1959 there were only 17 museums in all of Cuba), is housed in the former Presidential Palace. The concept was to 'turn a negative into a positive,' according to the director, Jose Andres Perez Quintana. The negative is the building's role as the grand palace where the hated dictator General Fulgencio Batista, as well as all the other presidents of Cuba from 1920 to 1965, lived and ruled. The positive is that the building is also the place where Fidel Castro declared the revolution's victory on January 8, 1959. It is also where rebels had made an unsuccessful assassination attempt against Batista in 1957 (you can't miss the bullet holes at the elegant entrance staircase). It is perhaps the most important building in Cuba, and therefore, appropriately, the place where the story of the Cuban Revolution is told. The museum receives about 300,000 visitors a year, about half Cubans, and half foreigners - mostly from Spain and Latin America.

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The museum's curatorial voice, selection of artifacts, and photographs clearly reflect the point of view of the revolutionary government (the museum is, in fact, run by the Ministry of Defense), underscoring patriotic themes and interpreting world events in terms of how they played out in Cuba – for example, objects relating to Cubans who fought in the Spanish Civil War are displayed. But the exhibits and galleries lack prominent headings and text panels that would allow the narrative and overarching themes to become more explicit. One does grasp, however, that the material is definably being interpreted through the lens of the eventual triumph of the Revolution. The underlying narrative is of the Cuban people's single, continuous struggle, from the 19th through the 20th centuries, to overthrow imperialist domination. The exhibition thus situates the socialist revolution of 1959 in a broader, Cuban nationalist context.



Museo de la Revolucion gallery showing Castro's toga worn at his trial in 1953 and typewriter

The museum is undertaking a large and costly renovation project to preserve the historic building which suffers from poor environmental conditions, to re-design and re-organize the galleries, and to provide proper climate control for its collection. Once that happens, one hopes that the key 3-d artifacts displayed at the end of the exhibition, mostly linked to individual

revolutionary heroes, will be more prominently displayed and interpreted.

An important exception is the display of the *Granma* – the boat on which Castro and his comrades sailed from Mexico to Cuba in 1956 to begin the final stage of the revolutionary struggle – which is encased in glass in a fenced-in garden at the rear of the palace. It is positively thrilling to see the *Granma*. It says more than any label or textbook could ever say about how miraculous it was that these few determined rebels could overthrow so many years of colonial and neo-colonial domination against great odds. It makes the history come alive and, at the same time, become more human. The decision by the museum to preserve and display this artifact is quite impressive.

The **Literacy Museum** on the outskirts of Havana (Museo Nacional de la Campana de Alfabetizacion), also housed in a historic structure, follows the narrative, and continues the chronology, of the Museo de la Revolucion. It very movingly tells of the long uphill struggle of the Cuban people to achieve full literacy mostly after the triumph of the revolution.

The building housing the Literacy Museum was part of the Columbia Garrison, the largest in Cuba, and the place from which Batista fled in 1959. By literally turning garrisons into schools, the Revolution conveyed the importance placed on full literacy for the Cuban people. One of the most powerful parts of the museum experience was a film at the end of the exhibit where the visitor learns, through interviews with some of the teachers, how much their young lives had changed through the process. Many teachers seemed to have gained as much from the experience as the people they taught to read and write.

The **Museo de la Ciudad de La Habana** (City Museum of Havana), like the Museo de

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la Revolucion and the Literacy Museum, is a 'historic building' as well as a museum. As the Palacio de los Capitanes Generales, the building was the seat of the Spanish government from 1791 to 1898. As such, the museum interprets the city's and Cuba's history. Its elegant and beautifully restored



Restored room at the City Museum

rooms, as well as gorgeous decorative art objects and furniture – all not authentic to the building itself, but authentic to the period, and painstakingly gathered from local sources – drive home the message that the island was extremely important to the European powers that controlled it, and that Havana, in contrast to many other Caribbean cities, has a long history of European influence and wealth as revealed in its material culture.

But restoring the beauty of this building presents certain contradictions, of which the curators are well aware. Margarita Suarez Garcia, the director of the museums operated by the Office of the Historian of the City of Havana (see below), pointed out that at the same time as the building reveals the beauty of colonial decorative arts, it must also tell the story of the oppression of the period and great disparities in wealth and class. Without labels, however, it

Courtyard of the City Museum



is difficult, if not impossible, to grasp this in a self-guided tour. Most often visitors and students are guided on docent-led tours where this is conveyed.

But just as the City Museum celebrates the beauty of the colonial city, the restoration of old Havana of which it is a part, seems, in the same way, at odds with the mission of the primary history museum program discussed previously. What is missing from the interpretation is the struggle of the disenfranchised. As Lisa Maya Knauer states in writing in 2006 about the restoration of old Havana: 'Elite narratives are usually foregrounded and other stories are silenced. History is often turned into a vehicle to promote popular consumption. ... Although colonial Havana had a substantial slave and free black population (and the present-day inhabitants of Old Havana are largely black and mulatto), no slave quarters were restored or recreated. The historic markers recently erected in some of the restored plazas do not discuss slavery and its traces.' (1) Thus, while the City Museum, and public history interpretation generally, as created by the Office of the City Historian, privilege the theme of historic European influence and

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control in Cuba, they do not expose either the contradictions of that history, or the experience of, and struggles against that domination as the other museums do. This inconsistency, as Lisa Maya Knauer implies, no doubt has more to do with the government's desire to capitalize on tourism, than anything else.

Segueing into the theme of the existence of a unique Cuban identity as presented in the country's historical museums, let us consider the **Casa de Africa**, also run by the Office of the Historian of the City of Havana. It can be seen as the closest thing to an 'identity museum' in Cuba. Its mission is to show the influence of African culture in Cuba historically and also to promote contemporary African art and culture. According to the museum's director, Alberto Granado Duque, Cubans see themselves as descendants from Africa – Africa, being 'female,' is the cultural mother of all Cubans, whereas Spain is seen as the father. The present exhibits focus on contemporary African art and African-descended rituals and religion in Cuba. However, they are static and without much interpretation, leaving the visitor with too many questions about the role of African-descended people in the country. As part of an upcoming renovation, the museum intends to expand its interpretation of slavery, and

particularly the role of slavery in sugar production, which was, historically, the mainstay of Cuba's economy. But Granado was quick to point out that 'nobody wants to be an African descendant if they only learn about slavery' (paraphrased translation).



Model of the ship *Santisima Trinidad*

Thus, like many African American museums in the U.S., Casa de Africa aims to celebrate contemporary and historical cultural achievements brought from Africa. But perhaps the museum's lack of explicit interpretation and a dynamic treatment of race and racial oppression stems from the overall sense that what it means to be Cuban in Cuba is 'not political, not religious, and not ethnic' (to paraphrase Alberto Granado). Rather, to be Cuban is to have a strongly-felt, uniquely 'Cuban' identity combined with a feeling of nationalism. One hears over and over again that Cubans are a mixed people – that Cuba is an 'Afro-Latin nation, and African-derived cultures were part of a national culture that transcended race.' (2)



Casa de Africa display

Interestingly, Cuba has no national ethnographic museum, nor one that interprets the history of Cuba and its peoples. (3) But the **Museum of Sub-Aquatic Archeology**, housed in the

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Castillo de la Real Fuerza, helps one understand, albeit inadvertently, the origins of this view of Cuban identity. The museum houses a state-of-the-art maritime exhibition with displays of tall ship models and pirate loot, as well as fascinating maps and a model of the beginnings of the city of Havana. The piece de la resistance is a huge, gallery-sized model of the ship *Santisima Trinidad*, emblematic of the nearly 200 ships constructed by Cuban workers at the Royal shipyard in Havana during the 18th century.

Oddly, the take-home message from this maritime museum does not so much concern pirates and colonial battles but rather the importance of Cuba's geography. As the largest island, by far, in the Caribbean, Cuba was extremely important in the early shipbuilding industry, and consequently, in Spain's colonial conflicts. This made me think about how many different peoples, over several centuries, had passed through this cosmopolitan crossroads creating a sophisticated world. No wonder Cubans speak of the unique Cuban identity. Cuba was not just any port, but historically one of international importance.

To conclude, Cuban history museums present a moving and powerful narrative of Cuban national identity and the country's struggle against foreign domination. Yet questions and concerns remain about their interpretive approach. For example, we see little of the technique of using 'voices' of ordinary individuals to tell the story. Such voices can be emblematic of broader experiences and ideas, as well as multiple perspectives. Generally, in Cuban museums, we hear a lot about, and from, named heroic fighters, but not much from or about others. (The Literacy Museum is a welcome exception to this absence of ordinary perspectives.) There is, generally, a single, implicit, voice-of-authority/narrator. Moreover, women and people of color are not presented as distinct voices in Cuban history museums. As most museums and historic sites are government-owned and/or operated, the 'narrator' voice reflects the views of the country's leadership. The leadership presumably either does not believe there to be disparate voices, or sees

the need to submerge these stories in the interest of unity in general, and perhaps against the U.S., in particular.

To be sure, the 'mixed Afro-Latin people' narrative in Cuba is very different from the one that emerges, for example, out of ethnic/racial 'identity' concerns in the U.S. The United States is understood as having a mix of peoples, but is *not* comprised of a single mixed people. Many identity museums in the U.S. are, like Casa de Africa to some extent, focused on instilling pride in a particular group's culture, and presenting stories of distinct achievements as well as discrimination and oppression.

Cuban history, as presented in the country's museums and historic sites, on the other hand, implies a single, *shared*, national identity, of mixed origins to be sure, but one that does not consist of multiple, distinct peoples. Further strengthening this concept is a strong sense of nationalism growing out of three centuries of still-ongoing struggle against foreign domination. Nonetheless, an important strategy for Cuban history museums to create a more layered, complex and dynamic presentation, supportive of critical thinking, might be to include a broad array of voices, both of ordinary people and of distinct groups. It will be interesting to see if in the future Cuban museums, propelled perhaps by the emerging thinking that black Cubans comprise a somewhat distinct voice within the Revolution, will shift their public history interpretation.

ENDNOTES

1. Lisa Maya Knauer, 'Afrocuban Religion, Museums, and the Cuban Nation,' in *Contested Histories in Public Space: Memory, Race and Nation*, ed. Daniel J. Walkowitz and Lisa Maya Knauer, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2009, p. 295 - 297.
2. Knauer, op. cit., p. 292
3. Knauer, op. cit., p. 293

Photographs taken by Ann Meyerson

Of all the odd places...

Museums reflect the diversity of interests and lifestyles of our communities. Outside the mainstream collections sit a broad range of fascinating and sometimes challenging museums. Many rise from personal collections or passions; others are generated to preserve corporate memory or raise brand profiles.

Museums about products range from broadly product-based to full-blown corporate museums. Often surprisingly engaging, their interpretative techniques include stunning numbers of similar objects, giant copies of products or ingredients, and walk-through experiences that can border on the bizarre. I've been to a couple of them. The **Cumberland Pencil Museum**, England houses the biggest pencil in the world: 26 feet and weighs over 70 stone! When I visited many years ago it included a walk-through model of a graphite cave. The **Guinness Museum**, Dublin, Ireland, is distinguished by a clever layout that sees the visitor walk through vast displays of ingredients at the bottom, then rise up through displays like bubbles in Guinness to the top of the building, where views of the city can be enjoyed while downing gallons of the foaming black brew. Other oddities on the far side of the Atlantic include the British Lawnmower Museum, Merseyside, England, featuring over 250 lawnmowers, a tribute to the garden machine invented in 1830 by Edwin Beard Budding.

The US has its fair share of object-specific museums. The **Salt & Pepper Shaker Museum** in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, houses a collection of over 20,000 sets of salt & pepper shakers from around the world, some dating to the 16th century. The **SPAM Museum** in Austin, Minnesota features a wall of Spam, interactive displays, a video, and historical exhibits of the Spam brand and Hormel Foods Company in a space of more than 16,000 square feet. Across in Washington, the Washington Banana Museum in Auburn features a collection of around 4,000 banana-related objects.

Other food-specific museums include the Instant Ramen Museum in Osaka, Japan,

where the world's first instant noodle product originated in 1958. The museum showcases the many ramen flavours made throughout the years, and visitors can enjoy a chicken ramen hands-on workshop.

Building materials have also been gathered into museum collections. **The World Brick Museum** in Maizuru City, Japan, is located in the 1903 Maizuru Naval Forces Arsenal Torpedo Warehouse (Japan's oldest extant steel structure brick building). The display explores the history of bricks and materials relating to brick buildings from around the world. Building fittings are also the focus of museums such as the famous Sulabh International Museum of Toilets, New Delhi, India. The US has a home-grown version is the Toilet Seat Museum in Alamo Heights, Texas, featuring more than 1,000 decorated toilet seat covers.

Museums about animals are found in many parts of the world. The Cat Museum in Kuching, Malaysia features 2,000 exhibits, artifacts, and statues from around the globe, and is also a research and information centre that concentrates on the history and cultural beliefs about cats. In Maidstone, England, the **Dog Collar Museum** in Leeds Castle features a collection of dog restraints, mostly dating from the Middle Ages (no dogs allowed!). **The Meguro Parasite Museum** in Tokyo, Japan features what it claims to be the world's longest tapeworm - all 8.8 metres of it - accompanied by a rope the same length that you can 'play with' to get a 'feel' for its dimensions. The small gift shop sells a parasite-themed souvenirs.

The final museums in this short exploration of the unusual are those exploring human behaviour, ideas, and beliefs. The **Museum of Broken Relationships** in Croatia grew from a traveling exhibition exploring the concept of failed relationships, and now invites people to donate personal belongings to the Museum's collection as a way of formally recognizing the end of a relationship in a concrete, positive way.

Deborah Tout-Smith

founding director of a national museum, tribal leader and Native legal expert offer the background the Autry needs.'

With a Master's Degree in American History from Harvard University and a J.D. from Stanford University, Mr West spent decades in the legal arena, much of his work focused on Native American and tribal issues. In 1990, he became the founding director of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in Washington, D.C.

'Having worked for most of my professional life on Native American issues, I am passionate about telling the compelling and important story of the American West and all the people who created that history and shape the present and future,' said Mr West. 'The Autry has such a powerful and unique opportunity now to deliver on that mission with exciting new resources, exhibits, and facilities to engage and educate the public. I am honored to join this institution as it celebrates its 25th anniversary and moves toward bright future horizons.'

As President and CEO, Mr West will be responsible for all operations at the Autry from collection development and financial sustainability to institutional growth and visitor experience. He will oversee a team of 160 professionals as well as 300 volunteers, all dedicated to the Autry's core mission.

About the Autry National Center

The Autry National Center is dedicated to exploring and sharing the stories, experiences, and perceptions of the diverse peoples of the American West. It was formed in 2003 by the merger of the Autry Museum of Western Heritage with the Southwest Museum of the American Indian and the Women of the West Museum. The Autry Institute includes two research libraries: the Braun Research Library and the Autry Library. Exhibitions, public programs, K-12 educational services, and publications are designed to examine the contemporary human condition through the lens of the historical Western experience and explore critical issues in society.

Thank-you to our contributors to this edition of *Update*:

Redmond J. Barnett	Washington State Historical Society
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James Burns	Desert Caballeros Western Museum
Darren Brown	Beverly Historical Society
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Susan E. Hanna	Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
Nathan Jones	General George Patton Museum of Leadership
Kate McBrien	Maine State Museum
Ann Meyerson	Independent Curator and Exhibit Developer, New York City
Amy Scott	Autry National Center
Bonnie Stacy	Martha's Vineyard Museum
Bill Stern	Museum of California Design

Conferences, Meetings and Workshops

Fifth International Conference on the Inclusive Museum

University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados
2-5 August 2012

<http://onmuseums.com/the-conference/>

The Inclusive Museum Conference is held annually in different locations around the world. The 2012 Conference coincides with the 2012 Crop Over Festival. For Barbadians and visitors who have joined in the summer festival known as Crop Over, there is nothing to compare with the experiences. That is why this one of a kind feeling is described as 'The Sweetest Summer Festival'.

We have a strong commitment to providing opportunities for conference participants to interact, converse, and learn from each other. Built in to the conference program are a number of sessions and events that are designed specifically to promote interactions among the on-site members of the knowledge community.

'Commemorating Struggles: Claiming Freedom'

Association of African Museums Conference

Baltimore, Maryland
August 22-25, 2012

<http://www.blackmuseums.org/prodev/conference.htm>

The ending of slavery and the ending of racial segregation, respectively, were important benchmarks in America's history of pursuing its revolutionary ideals, and the evolution of its most basic identity as a 'free people.' Yet, with few exceptions, embracing the American freedom narrative, including emancipation and civil rights histories, has often been challenging to mainstream America too. These topics have been held apart and frequently regarded as important to the history of African Americans, but not fully *American* history. Thus, with the calendar turning toward these anniversaries, museums are presented with opportunities - albeit replete with challenges.

The conference will address questions such as: How might

museums professionals work effectively to ensure that African American history is included and accurately reflected within the discourse of American history? What types of research and investigation are needed to document obstacles, challenges, struggles, and successes encountered by African Americans? What approaches might African American professionals in mainstream institutions employ to push this story from the margins into a broader view?

'Home and Hearth: Regional Museums and Gastronomic Heritage'

International Committee for Regional Museums (ICR), ICOM South East Europe Alliance (ICOM SEE), ICOM Serbia and the Regional Museum of Prijepolje conference
Belgrade & Prijepolje, Serbia
September 22-29, 2012
<http://icr-icom.org/>

Join colleagues from around the world to discuss documenting, preserving and interpreting tangible and intangible aspects of gastronomic heritage, and contribute your own 'food for thought.' A call for papers is included in this issue of *Update*.

'Research and Collections in a Connected World'

Museums Australia Conference
Adelaide, South Australia
September 24-28, 2012
<http://ma2012.org.au>

Join us for the 2012 Museums Australia National Conference to be held at the University of Adelaide in the Australian springtime. The University lies at the heart of South Australia's cultural precinct and will be the ideal venue to explore our conference theme: 'research and collections in a connected world.'

How can museums and galleries contribute to the needs of a world that is awash with information but hungry for meaning? To address this important and timely question, we will offer a diverse program of events exploring the potential of research:

- **By museums:** the role of collections and curatorial expertise in understanding current global challenges such as climate change;
- **With museums:** research collaborations with industry, academia, government, and community;
- **About museums:** how the process and outcomes of research can transform the social, economic, and educational role of museums in a rapidly-changing world.

'Reaching and Teaching through Material Culture: A Winterthur Graduate Program 60th Anniversary Symposium'

Wilmington, Delaware
September 28-29, 2012
<http://www.winterthur.org/?p=967>

The conference is open to all who are interested in discussing topics such as 'What to Collect & How to Maintain: Availability, Acquisition, Responsibility'; 'Technology and Accessing Collections'; 'Balancing Intellectual Relevance with Popular Interest'; and 'The Role of Cultural Heritage Professionals in World Events.'

'Museums Navigating the Seas of Change: Charting a New Course from the Gulf Coast'

Mountain-Plains Museums Association Conference
Corpus Christi, Texas
October 1-5, 2012

When you come to the 'Sparkling City by the Sea' as Corpus Christi is known, we'll offer you sun, sand and seafood and great museums. It doesn't get any better than that!

MPMA always provides great educational experiences to kick off the conference. And our Host Committee, led by Rick Stryker and Rocco Montesano, has made sure this year's are some of the best.

This year's keynoters include Cheech Marin, television and film actor and part of the comedy duo

of Cheech and Chong, who will talk about other major interest of his: collecting Chicano art and connecting with Chicano audiences; Steve DeSutter, President & CEO of Stripes LLC, an inspiring speaker who will discuss entrepreneurship and how this small company grew and branched into four states with 540 stores; and Keith Arnold, President & CEO of the Corpus Christi Convention and Visitors Bureau, who will speak about tourism trends.

'Crossroads: Exploring Vibrant Connections Between People and Place'

American Association of State and Local History 2012 Annual Meeting
Salt Lake City, UT
October 3-6, 2012
<http://www.aaslh.org/am2012.htm>

A crystal clear mountain lake, an American Indian cliff dwelling, a railway crossroad, a farmstead, your home. Each evokes an emotional response; each stirs the human spirit; and each reminds us that history is, at its core, about the powerful connections between people and place. The 2012 Annual Meeting of the American Association for State and Local History will consider the sometimes empowering, sometimes challenging, but always special connection between people and place.

'Restore and Rejuvenate: Our Natural Cultural Resources'

Western Museums Association
Annual Meeting
Palm Springs, CA
October 21-24, 2012
http://www.westmuse.org/conferences/2012_annual_meeting_palm_springs.html

In convening the 77th Annual Meeting, WMA continues a rich tradition of amazing, and at times provocative, programs for all in attendance. In Palm Springs we will RESTORE and REJUVENATE by asking probing questions, sharing strategies, and by reaching out to professionals throughout the region. WMA knows its most valuable resource is our attendees! So, we have provided many opportunities for attendees to learn - from each other.

In addition to numerous networking based social functions, we have planned several small group discussion events for attendees to meet new people and let your ideas flow.

'City Museums: Collisions / Connections'

CAMOC & Museum of Vancouver
Vancouver, Canada
October 24-26, 2012
<http://camoc.icom.museum/index2.php>

CAMOC, the International Committee for the Collections and Activities of Museums of Cities of ICOM, in collaboration with the Museum of Vancouver, invites papers for 'City Museums: Collisions | Connections,' a conference on city museums and their engagement in city life.

The conference will bring people together to talk about how city museums are reconsidering their role in civic life due to the enormous pressure cities face in terms of aging infrastructure, the need for urban regeneration, economic and environmental crises, and social issues such as demographic shifts, global diasporas, and increasing immigrant and urban Aboriginal populations. The conference will look at city museums under development, urban/suburban city museums, and city museums in large and small cities.

'Superheros: The Extraordinary Power of Small Museums'

Small Museum Association 29th
Annual Conference
Ocean City, Maryland
February 17-29, 2013
<http://www.smallmuseum.org/conference.html>

The SMA conference attracts more than 200 museum professionals every year from a wide variety of small museums. Sessions topics range from collections and education to staffing and board issues, plenty of informal networking opportunities for you to talk with (and get ideas from!) small museum professionals and volunteers. We are now accepting session proposals, due by September 1, 2012.

American Association of Museums Annual Meeting

Baltimore, Maryland
May 19-22, 2013
<http://www.aam-us.org/am13/>

The 107th AAM Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo needs you to play a bigger role than ever in this, the largest gathering of museum professionals in the world. We need your best ideas for sessions and your thoughts on those sessions proposed.

Submit your best idea and join the conversation starting this July. Help determine the sessions for 2013 in Baltimore.

This year we are introducing a new, crowd-sourced session proposal approach, premiering in July. This will improve your session, as well as, the substance of next year's meeting, while providing new avenues to network, collaborate and secure feedback.

The earlier you submit your proposal, the better it will be - and the better your chances of premiering your session in Baltimore.

23rd General Conference, International Council of Museums

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
August 10-17, 2013
<http://icom.museum/where-we-work/events/general-conference/icom-rio-2013.html>

Some 3,000 to 4,000 international participants are expected at this crucial event for ICOM. It provides a platform for museum professionals from different nations, regions, and cultures across the world to share and exchange on their expertise and experience.

In 2009, ICOM members confirmed their confidence in Brazil by selecting Rio de Janeiro as the location of the General Conference in 2013 and look forward to discovering and exploring the cultural delights the city, its surroundings and Brazil as a whole have to offer.

CurCom *Update*
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July 2012

AMERICAN  ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS

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UPDATE