



The Museum of civilisations from Europe and the Mediterranean (MuCEM) will hold its 2<sup>nd</sup> International Scientific Meeting on 5-7 December 2013, in the J4, one of the sites of the new museum that will open up on June 2013.

The theme of the meeting will be:

**“Exhibition or inhibition: the museum in the modern world”**

Two years after the first conference dealing with the transformations and general challenges ethnographic and civilization museums are facing, this second symposium will focus on the ways museums deal with contemporary objects and issues.

Today, changes related to an increasingly globalized, virtualized and technologically connected world deeply reshape the ways of being together, the ways people share the same time and space.

Recognizing this new environment, such an assessment leads museums dealing with the contemporary world in all its forms to reconsider their role and their missions: research, enriching collections, conservation, exhibitions or museum education programs. As heritage institutions, museums are a link between past and present, but they also need to anticipate what will become cultural heritage for future generations. As places for reflection and debate, they must spot and analyze evolutions: but how can they participate in these changes, what is their role today?

This conference will try to define the specific role of museums in the creation and transmission of knowledge about our present societies, including the inherent risks, responsibilities and inquiries regarding the present and the future.

### **Panel discussion n°1: Forever contemporary?**

The concept of cultural heritage has to be redefined when contemporary issues and objects are concerned. Who decides, for whom and with what criteria, if a contemporary object deserves to be a part of the cultural heritage? If time is rendering objects more and more quickly obsolete, should we collect as many as possible in order to prevent their disappearance or extinction or can we de-access without the risk of undermining the principle of inalienability of public collections?

### **Panel discussion n°2: Finding the right distance**

Window, mirror, screen, showcase in order to reflect contemporary societies, museums contextualize and de-contextualize objects. Nevertheless, the contemporary is so close to us, chronologically, emotionally, and symbolically that new ways to display objects have to be found so that we can view them through a different lens. How do the crafts of architecture, display and museum design respond to this challenge? How to choose between explaining, searching for the necessary distance to analyze the contemporary world and a necessarily deceptive objectivity since no manner of display can be entirely objective. Should museums attempt to emphasize sensory immersion by appealing to the viewer's personal experience that allows an –illusionary – freedom of interpretation?

### **Panel discussion n°3: Which role for the museum: witness, actor, activist?**

The panel addresses the place of museums in the world of today: what is their scientific and cultural policy and what about their wider political mission? What attitude should museums choose? Should they be neutral or commit themselves to or promote a cause, a community, a territory? Can museums dealing with contemporary issues approach any subject? How free are they and how daring can they be? Is there a danger of censorship or self-censorship?

#### **Organization committee**

**Luca Basso-Peressut:** Architect, Professor at the Politecnico di Milano and MeLa Project Coordinator.

**Jacques Battesti:** Curator at the Musée basque et de l'histoire de Bayonne.

**Denis Chevallier:** General curator and Head of the Research and Teaching Department of the MuCEM.

**Dominique Ferriot:** Professor at the Conservatoire national des arts et métiers (Cnam) and treasurer of the International Council of Museums (ICOM).

**Dominique Poulot:** Professor at the Sorbonne University Paris I.

**Anne-Solène Rolland:** Curator and Secretary General of the Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration (CNHI).

#### **Contact**

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