

**→ DON'T MISS IN THIS ISSUE**

→ Introducing the MeLa Experimental Action at the Diocesan Museum in Milan → Reporting the outcomes of the LEM final event and other MeLa related conferences → Providing some insights on the MeLa Seminar in Paris



A snapshot of the digital tool "Les mots migrants" at the Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration.

**→ FOCUS ON**

After a period particularly dense of events, this Newsletter issue offers an overview on some interesting MeLa related conferences, and on the MeLa initiatives which have taken place in the last months – such as the experimental design action at the Diocesan Museum of Milan, and the MeLa general meeting held in Paris at the end of September. These events have always been meaningful moments for introspection, reflection and advancement of the research, bringing the Partners together in relevant venues, sharing updated findings, and planning further tasks and steps. The latest appointment has represented a special occasion, which had its climax in the public seminar held on September 24th at the Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration, where the MeLa outcomes were shared with selected museum operators and scholars, and some outstanding innovative museum practices were presented by their curators and directors.

## The MeLa Seminar in Paris, Giving Voice to the European Museums in an Age of Migrations

The Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration, located in the magnificent Palais de la Porte Dorée in Paris, is a meaningful place of documentation, encounter and transmission of the inter-cultural stories illustrating two centuries of immigration history in France. This is why it has been chosen as the venue of the MeLa Midterm Seminar, an important milestone for the Project, intended as an opportunity to present the preliminary results of the MeLa activities, and to produce further stimuli for the research, through the presentation of paradigmatic experiences from a selection of European museums experimenting or planning innovative practices for the engagement with multi-cultural audiences. Focusing on the transformation of the contemporary museums, meant as cultural spaces, processes as well as physical

places, the Seminar "Let the Museum Speak. European Museums in an Age of Migrations" was aimed at illustrating some outstanding experimental initiatives through the words of the directors and curators who conceived and promoted them, in order to explore different perspectives on their outcomes, and stimulate inter-disciplinary considerations and exchanges.

The title of the conference ensues from the double-folded aim of this event. On the one hand, the MeLa partners intended to present the in-progress results of their investigations to the museum community, in order to gather further viewpoints and suggestions. On the other hand, moving from the registered need and high utility of sharing and debating experiences and ideas between academics and practitioners, and considering the rarity

of these opportunities because of the lack of funding for museums to attend these kind of events, MeLa decided to invest to promote the participation of selected curators and directors from different types of institutions, across Europe.

Hence, the morning session was dedicated to the principal investigators participating to the MeLa Project – the leaders of the MeLa

The two afternoon sessions were dedicated to the presentation of different European institutions, which have been selected for the pioneering practices they are promoting in order to foster the involvement of new audiences and enhance the role of museums as agents for social change. In particular, the first session was aimed at illustrating the experiments that have already been im-



### **an exploration of the most interesting and innovative practices engaging with new multi-cultural audiences, illustrated through the words of the curators and directors who conceived and developed them**

Research Fields 01, 02, 03 and 04, namely Chris Whitehead, Iain Chambers, Perla Innocenti and Victoria Walsh – who reported about the ongoing results of the activities developed in the last years. The speeches confirmed the raising awareness and commitment that are being developed across the MeLa related themes, which are among the most crucial issues at the core of the evolution of contemporary museums.

plemented, and was thus meant to report the findings and evaluate the results. The second session was dedicated to the presentation of ongoing and future strategies which some new or renovated important museums are planning to actualize, and was intended to envision further questions and to unfold new perspectives.

One of the most relevant features of the reported experiences regarded the consist-



ence as well as the heterogeneity of the initiatives, so as the differentiation of the focus and mission of the presented museums and their distribution across different European countries. The invited participants have indeed given voice to a wide range of institutions – such as the Museum of London (United Kingdom), Royal Museum for Central Africa (Tervuren, Belgium), Écomusée du Val de Bièvre (Fresnes, France), German Emigration Center (Bremerhaven, Germany), Galata Museo del Mare (Genoa, Italy), Museum of Cultural History (Oslo, Norway), Musée de l'Homme (Paris, France), Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée (Marseille, France), History Museum of Frankfurt (Germany) – highlighted the richness and the variety of the approaches, tools and strategies which are being experimented to afford the challenges posed by this “age of migrations”.

In order to share the “food for thoughts” ensued from the Seminar, a MeLa book reporting the presented experiences is being edited and will be available since Spring 2014 as an open-access digital publication on the “Documents” section of the MeLa website.

#### **→ MELa PARTNERS: POLITECNICO DI MILANO**

The Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DASU) of Politecnico di Milano operates as the coordinator for the MeLa Project. Politecnico di Milano is ranked as one of the most outstanding European universities in Engineering, Architecture and Industrial Design; in many disciplines it is regarded as a worldwide leading research institution. DASU promotes research and teaching activities related to the built environment in the fields of architectural and urban design, historical and critical analysis of the contexts, conservation and valorization of cultural heritage; its research group involved in the MeLa Project, led by Prof.s Luca Basso Peressut and Gennaro Postiglione, has a relevant expertise in interior architecture, exhibition design and museography. The group has promoted several successful national and international research programmes

and events and, in 2007, its activities were evaluated as ‘excellent’ from an International Peer Review. The research team is focusing on the evolution of spaces and exhibition settings in contemporary museums, but it is also involved into management and dissemination practices.

A contribution to the MeLa Project at Politecnico di Milano is also provided by the research unit DeCH (Design for Cultural Heritage) referring to the Design Department. DeCH is aimed at promoting research and education activities on design strategies and methodologies for the exploitation and enhancement of cultural heritage, enabling accessibility and fruition, translating territorial resources in cultural offer, and improving transmission and revitalisation through user centered design services, technologies and products.

## **Rethinking Religion Representation in Museums: The Experimental Action Promoted by the MeLa Project at the Diocesan Museum in Milan**



The MeLa Research Group at the Design Department of Politecnico di Milano, in cooperation with ITIA-CNR, has recently launched a critical research action at the Museo Diocesano in Milan, within the framework of the MeLa Project experimental design actions. This initiative, “Rethinking Religion Representation in Museums”, was aimed at exploiting the religious assets as a potential inter-cultural heritage through the use of digital technologies. The main objective was to test three conceptual models through which museums could improve their ability in

### **exploiting religious assets as a potential inter-cultural heritage through the use of digital technologies**

inviting people to deal with diversity issues; these models – multi-cultural storytelling, inter-cultural dialogue, trans-cultural practice – are intertwined with the possibilities provided by multimedia and digital technologies and devices, through the special focus of the *mise en scene* of the religious questions – discussing on religion, among religions and through religion: contesting, undermining religious identities or confronting, dialoguing about religious diversities and frictions. The first pilot test took place on October 15th; it consisted in a guided experience of *ad hoc* conceived contents concerning 5 paintings selected within the collection of the museum by a group of 15 “expert visitors” (museum curators, theologians, priests, members of different communities, cultural mediators). The test proposed a different approach to the contents of these artworks, this is, a parallel path to the artistic interpretation curated by the museum, aimed at opening the discussion on a wider cultural

sphere, and possibly foster transversal considerations among diverse religions. The experience has been supported with “video animation” and a digital platform accessible through portable tablets: both digital tools have been designed to stimulate multifaceted interpretations, to enable comments and contributions, and to encourage confrontation among the visitors. During the test, the tablets recognized the paintings and activated the related contents by simply approaching and framing the works of art, and guided the “expert users” through the three steps composing the experimented model: listen – interpret – contribute.

This first test aimed at developing a participative model finalized to the acquisition of authoritative and possibly multi-cultural contents generated by the users. These contents, gathered, analysed and critically evaluated in collaboration with the museum curators, will be used to plan a second pilot test addressing a generic multi-cultural and not-specialised public. By exploiting the technologies, visitors will be allowed to access additional virtual contents, to share opinions in real time with other visitors, to

perform and simulate gestures and actions which may be consistent with the religious contents, thus to better understand rituals and beliefs (e.g. using objects).

The use of technologies, even if limited to the development of the video animation and a portable tablet platform, offered the opportunity to make the paintings more eloquent. The implementation of these tools may effectively help to better address the social and virtual dimensions and the gestural interactive dynamics, that could activate multiple and augmented religious contents; furthermore it will allow to add further meanings to the museum environment and experience, as well as new contents and connections among different objects of the collection, by overimposing user-generated contents to those ensuing from the curatorial work.

The prototype, the second pilot test and the analysis of this experimental action's outcomes are expected to be concluded in Spring 2014.

*Eleonora Lupo, Politecnico di Milano*

*Follow the experimental action next steps on the MeLa blog.*



## The LEM Final Event: A Note from 'The Learning Museum' Project Coordinator

LEM – *The Learning Museum* is a European project funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme, which focused on the idea of museums not only as learning places, but as learning organisations: learning from the communities, from the public, from their stakeholders, and also from other agencies, with whom they have to build alliances to accomplish the ambitious objectives set by policies at national and European level and meet the challenges of the future decades. During the three years of its activity (2010-2013), LEM aimed to create a permanent network of museums and cultural heritage organisations, to insure that they can play an active role with regard to lifelong learning. The project started in November 2010 with 23 partner institutions from 17 EU countries plus the United States of America, and ended in October 2013 with 81 partner institutions (23 full partners and 58 associate partners).

### **museums are learning places as well as learning organisations: learning from the communities, the public, the stakeholders and other agencies**

The LEM partners and a large number of associate partners convened in Bologna between 19 and 21 September 2013, to celebrate the outcomes of the project and illustrate its achievements to the over 170 delegates which came from 30 countries in representation of 120 cultural organisations. On September 19th, the conference delegates, hosted by local museums, attended seminars on the different subjects addressed by the LEM Working groups, namely: *New trends in museums of the 21st century; Museums and the ageing population; Audience research, learning styles and visitor relation management; Museums as learning plac-*

*es - learning spaces in museums; Museums and Intercultural dialogue.* On these same subjects, the Working Groups had each produced one or more reports, which are downloadable from the LEM website (<http://www.lemproject.eu/the-project/project-partners/Partner-in-Evidence>). In addition, the project realised also an online gallery of museum innovative learning spaces ([www.learningmuseum.net](http://www.learningmuseum.net)) and a film, titled "Shells - Museums for learning, museums for living". The conference "The Learning Museum" – one of the 8 international events organized during the lifetime of the project – took place on September 20th in Bologna, and was live streamed (all sessions can be viewed on the LEM website). Next to the conference, a meeting and networking space – the Agorà – was set up for participants to share their materials and ideas, in order to create the conditions for further cooperation projects.

LEM indeed intends to continue its activities as a network even after the conclusion of the funding period. The website will be kept alive, the newsletter will continue to be released and seminars are being planned already in 2014 and 2015 thanks to the support of partners, such as NEMO – Network of European Museum Organisations and EMA – European Museum Academy. New organizations interested in LEM subjects will be welcomed as Associate Partners. For any further information, please visit the website [www.lemproject.eu](http://www.lemproject.eu).

Margherita Sani, LEM Project Coordinator



### → ME LA RELATED: ONE BOOK

Meijer-van Mensch, Léontine, and Elisabeth Tietmeyer, eds. 2013. *Participative Strategies in Collecting the Present*. Berliner Blätter, Ethnographische und Ethnologische Beiträge 63..



The papers presented at COMCOL / ICOM INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR COLLECTING's annual conference, held on 2 November 2011 at the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin have been published as issue 63 of Berliner Blätter, a publication of Panama Verlag. The book, edited by the chair and vice-chair of COMCOL, includes contributions by Zvezdana Antos, Zeldá Baveystock, Pina Cardia, Kathrina Dankl, Christine Fredriksen, Dennis Herrmann, Angela Jannelli, Aleksandra Janus, Dorota Kawecka, Renée Kistemaker, Jonas Koch, Arjen Kok, Léontine Meijer-van Mensch, Peter van Mensch, Tena Mimica, Tanja Rozenbergar, Elisabeth Tietmeyer, Thomas Michael Walle, Markus Walz and Annemarie de Wildt.

The contributions deal with a wide variety of case studies from different countries – such as the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Austria, Croatia and Slovenia. The focus is on how museums need to find answers to what it means to be part of a participative culture, i.e. a culture in which members believe that their contributions matter and in which they feel some degree of social connection with one another. In documenting contemporary culture, participative projects add new perspectives to collections. At the same time they provide participants with a better understanding of the specificity of museum work. This better understanding fosters people's sense of ownership in a museum. Yet, the participative method of collecting is not uncontested. It may question the autonomy and authority of the museum professional, involving a redefinition of the professional as an "external expert" acknowledging the "internal" expert knowledge of members of the community concerned.

## A MeLa Insight from the 2013 'Digital Cultural Heritage' Conference

The 'Digital Cultural Heritage' International Congress took place on 28 October-1 November 2013 in the European Capital of Culture, Marseille, in the architecturally stunning new waterfront museum complex – the restored Fort Saint-Jean and adjoining new MuCEM and La Villa Méditerranée. The event was organised under the patronage of UNESCO, Culture Sector and Communication & Information Sector, French Ministry of Culture, Région Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur, V-MUST.NET – EU Virtual Museum Transnational Network of Excellence, French National Research Council.

'Digital Cultural Heritage' 2013 encompassed leading scientific events in digital heritage, such as: 19th International Conference on Virtual Systems and Multimedia, 10th Eurographics Symposium on Graphics and Cultural Heritage, 2nd UNESCO International Conference on Memory of the World in the Digital Age, plus two major public exhibitions (7th Exhibition on Virtual Archaeology and Museums, DAW – 7th Digital Art Week). The congress was complemented by a rich number of regional and special events, including: 5th International Meeting on Archaeology, Graphic Informatics, Cultural Heritage & Innovation, ICOMOS/ ISPRS Heritage Documentation Workshop, Computer Applications and Quantitative Methods in Archaeology, Special Workshop on Remote Sensing in Archaeology, ICOMOS International Committee for Heritage Interpretation & Presen-



tation, Museum & Technology, Special Workshop on Business Model Innovation, as well as numerous European Project meetings and workshops (V-MUST.NET, DARIAH, 3D-ICONS, Archeolandscapes, LinkedHeritage, ATHENA+). This rich federated event included 350 presentations, with some 100 full papers, 130 short and special session papers, 90 posters, 20 panels, tutorials and workshops, and 37 exhibitions. More than 600 delegates attended the congress.

The MeLa paper 'Migrating heritage, digital cultural networks and social inclusion in Europe', authored by MeLa RF03 leader Perla Innocenti (University of Glasgow) was accepted for presentation and publication as full paper in the conference proceedings, produced in

collaboration with IEEE Computer Society and Eurographics. Our MeLa paper was one of almost 700 submissions, with an average acceptance rate of 22%. It was well received at the congress and fostered a number of connections on cultural networks.

The idea behind such federated event was indeed to bridge and bring together disciplines and cultural heritage communities, strengthening intersections and creating new synergies. The interdisciplinary Scientific Programme is available on the event's website, also as an interactive schedule featuring social networking, dynamic attendee directories, and more.

Perla Innocenti, University of Glasgow

## Lives on the Move. A Conference to Explore and Debate the Stories of People, Commerce and Ideas Between Antwerp and Genoa

There is a *fil rouge* running in-between Antwerp and Genoa, basically ensuing from the connections these two cities share with the sea and, thereafter, the movement of people, commerce and ideas this relationship generates. On October 30th, the Milan-based Flanders Tourist Office promoted a conference focusing on the "Lives on the move" which characterise these places, and fostering a critical comparison of their historical development, their museums and their narratives concerning human mobility.

The event was hosted by the Galata Museo del Mare in Genoa, whose Director, Pierangelo Campodonico, opened the conference by depicting the cultural framework into which the museum was born: a historical overview of immigration to Italy, and the subsequent desire to strengthen the common reflection in this respect, paved the way for the "Memory and Migration" section, which deals with the theme of both emigration and immigration to the country.

Luc Verheyen, Director of the newly opened

Red Star Line Museum in Antwerp, highlighted how the premises' restoration took place, which is the museum's mission and how it deals with its publics. The museum's narrative aims at escaping the trap of "localism" and at inserting the Red Star Line shipping company's history into the broader, universal story of human mobility, considering it as an example of this phenomenon and connecting it to the present time. It does so by depicting accurately its features – through first-hand documents, objects, pictures, personal biographies, etc. – while showing its transnational dimension: people from all over Europe gathered in Antwerp before departing to the USA, as well as people from all over the world nowadays gather in the city, making it the second world's more diverse one after Amsterdam.

Subsequently, Art historian Stefano Zuffi described the many artistic links connecting Genoa and Antwerp, especially during the XV and XVI centuries: commerce, and therefore the circulation of goods, experiences and

taste, created the conditions for an uninterrupted and fruitful dialogue, whose traces are still visible in both territories.

Vik Leyten, from Antwerp Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten (Royal Fine Arts Museum), gave the audience a forecast of what the museum will look like when it will open its doors after the ongoing major renovation, in 2017. The works, directed by the Rotterdam-based Claus and Kaan Architects, will create a sort of "museum inside the museum" by inserting new exhibition spaces into the previously unused patios.

Anna Chiara Cimoli, Politecnico di Milano



# The MeLa Project at the Second General Meeting of the Project 'EMEE – EuroVision. Museums Exhibiting Europe': Setting Further Tasks and Planning New Sinergies to Develop Multi-perspective Approaches for the Europeanisation of Contemporary Museums

EMEE – EuroVision. Museums Exhibiting Europe is a four year long Research Project (2012-2016), co-funded by the European Commission under the Culture Programme, and intended to develop multi-perspective approaches for the Europeanisation of national and regional museums. The EMEE project aims at exploring innovative approaches, new ways of representation, scenography and strategies for visitor engagement, to support national and regional museums in re-interpreting their objects in a broader context of European and transnational history, as well as to help the visitors to discover new transnational and European perspectives. The project thus investigates a variety of different activities which put into practice the concept of 'change of perspective' – a concept developed by the Department of History Didactics in order to deal with historical culture and historical identity. At the same time, the project develops creative concepts for the "audience-development", and tries to assign a new role to the museum as a "social arena" within an increasingly multi-cultural society.

The project is coordinated by the University of Augsburg, Department of Didactics of History, headed by Prof. Dr. Susanne Popp, and involves seven partners: the Université Paris-Est Créteil (France), Università degli Studi Roma Tre (Italy), the Bulgarian National History Museum in Sofia, the Museu Nacional de Arqueologia in

Lisbon (Portugal), the National Museum of Contemporary History in Ljubljana (Slovenia), the art association monochrom in Vienna (Austria), as well as the Atelier Brückner in Stuttgart (Germany).

From 12 to 15 November, the EMEE partners met in Rome for their second general meeting, which included a public event at the Terme di Diocleziano and an internal meeting aimed at reporting and reviewing the results achieved in the first year and planning future tasks and activities. EMEE has almost concluded its preliminary investigation work – based on a "mapping process" concerning the selection and documentation of best-practice examples of innovative exhibition concepts and education approaches, in which the change of perspective from regional interpretations to trans-regional and European views became visible – and it is now starting to develop a series of tool-kit for museums and to plan a competition for Young Scenographers under the provisional title 'One Object – Many Visions – Eurovisions'.

Considering the commonalities between EMEE and the MeLa Project in terms of approaches, topics and objectives, the coordinator has been invited to attend the meeting in order to present MeLa and its preliminary findings, share experiences and ideas, and envision future cooperations and synergies among the two projects.

## → MELA RELATED FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### Conference:

*Migration, Media and Intercultural Dialogue*  
25-26 November 2013  
UNU-GCM | Barcelona, Spain

### Conference:

*Exhibition or Inhibition: The Museum in the Modern World*  
5-7 December 2013  
MUCEM | Marseille, France

### Conference:

*Changing Europe - Changing Migration: Europe in the World on the Move*  
20-25 January 2014  
Centre for Migration and Intercultural Studies | Antwerp, Belgium

### Conference:

*History of Exhibitions in 20th Century*  
6-8 February 2014  
Centre Pompidou | Paris, France

### Conference:

*Collecting Geographies. Global Programming and Museums of Modern Art*  
12-14 March 2014  
Stedelijk Museum | Amsterdam, Netherlands

### Conference:

*City Margins, City Memories*  
7-8 April 2014  
Institute of Germanic & Romance Studies | London, United Kingdom

## → MELA RELATED ACTIVE CALL FOR PAPERS

### Call for papers:

*Museums & Memory: Challenging Histories*  
City Hall | Waterford, Ireland  
DEADLINE: 2 December 2013

### Call for papers:

*7th Conference on the Inclusive Museum*  
The Autry Center | Los Angeles, USA  
DEADLINE: 12 December 2013

### Call for papers:

*Cities of Translation*  
Trinity College Dublin | Dublin, Ireland  
DEADLINE: 15 January 2014



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