

# Museum Collections on the Move

Conference Report, October, 28-29, 2004

The Hague, The Netherlands

## MUSEUM COLLECTIONS ON THE MOVE

### Art in parliament

The Dutch parliament has been a pioneer in collection mobility, the chairman of the Lower House, Frans Weisglas, told the conference in his opening speech.

**"S**INCE THE EARLY 1990s, the Lower House had been thinking of ways to embellish old and new parts of the building with objects from the collections held in storage by Dutch museums," Weisglas noted. This idea coincided with a call by the state secretary for education, culture and science to make mobility of museum collections a major priority in Dutch cultural policies. As a result, the buildings of the Lower House became host to a pilot project. "Public and semi-public parts of the House

have been set up with permanent and changeable art presentations from Dutch museums, archives or other organizations," Weisglas said. "We are really convinced that art should be a part of the Lower House as a reflection of the culture of the people it represents. It should serve as an example to other public buildings." Weisglas said he believed that, because of its being a facilitator of collection mobility, the old Dutch parliament buildings were an appropriate location for the gathering of culture and museum officials from all over the European Union. He said he hoped the two-day conference Museum Collections on the Move would provide an opportunity for representatives of museums and cultural officials to strengthen contacts. "I hope this conference will form a basis for international cooperation in the future."



FRANS WEISGLAS OPENED THE TWO-DAY CONFERENCE IN THE FORMER DUTCH PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS.

### Taking Europe's treasures out of storage and to the people

Europe's cultural face shows us how we are united by a common tradition. Our continent is a treasure trove overflowing with millions of objects. But they are often locked away. Why, asked Dutch state secretary Medy van der Laan, don't we get them out of the vaults and take them to the people?

**C**ULTURE CAN HAVE great significance for the European Union, declared the state secretary for education, culture and science. The economic and political effect of Europe on citizens' everyday lives is not enough to cement really close ties between us. "The great thing about the cultural face of Europe is that it speaks to the imagination," said Van der Laan.

"Culture shows us what we have in common." But European culture is also hugely diverse. What travels across national borders, she said, is the recognition of our differences as much as our common humanity. Europe is packed with cultural treasures but they are often stored out of view. "Opening up collections across Europe and sharing the cultural heritage – these are the key to collection mobility." Some progress has been made since collection mobility was put on the European agenda in 1999, Van der Laan noted. State indemnity schemes and museum standardisation have been discussed; ministers this summer re-emphasised the importance of collection

#### Plenary sessions

Frans Weisglas

Medy van der Laan

Henriëtte van der Linden

Harald Hartung

Discussion

Julian Spalding

Final round-table discussion

#### Presentations

Centre Pompidou

Prado Museum

Netherlands Institute for  
Cultural Heritage

Film: Museum Collections on the Move

Slovak National Gallery

Tate Gallery

Swedish Museum of National History

Berlin State Museums

Museum Loan Network

Rijksmuseum

#### Debating sessions

The policies of collection mobility

Inspirations and best practices

Practical problems and their solutions

mobility; the European Commission recently proposed a programme featuring the circulation of artworks and transnational mobility for people working in the cultural sector; and the European Council is soon to produce a working plan in which collection mobility is included. Practical arrangements needed at EU level include making state indemnity schemes more transparent, improving access to collections and expanding and strengthening networks, she said. Van der Laan urged the conference to produce a list of practical needs with regard to collection mobility. "You will be helping to mould European policy on collection mobility in an extremely bottom-up way."

## Expert in collection mobility

**Henriëtte van der Linden, director of the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage, the institution that organized the conference, said she believed collection mobility is set to grow in Europe. "The possibilities are endless."**

**T**HE COLLECTION DEPARTMENT of the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage (ICN), Van der Linden explained, manages more than one hundred thousand objects and maintains loan relations with more than 1,500 organisations at home and abroad. The institute plays a key role in collection mobility. It helped, for instance, to assess the security risks when the Rijksmuseum of Amsterdam created a satellite at Schiphol Airport. "At present, we are designing a database to enable museums to offer surplus objects to be placed in other museums via the Internet," said the director of ICN, which is an external department of the Dutch ministry for education, culture and science.

Van der Linden called ICN "the leading hands-on expert" in the field of collection mobility. "Of course this does not mean that we have a monopoly on wisdom – which is why we have organised this congress." She said she hoped the conference would give answers to a series of questions. Is it possible to exhibit museum objects outside the context of museums in a responsible manner? How can you safeguard the care for the objects in the long term? Where does the responsibility of the lender end and

that of the borrower begin? And which locations are suitable for exhibiting objects outside museums – ministries, airports, parliaments, hotels, department stores?

"Here in the Netherlands, we are only just beginning to explore the possibilities. But we have already learned two things: the possibilities are endless and there is growing enthusiasm for projects of this kind."

### Sound vibrations

Security and insurance issues should be taken into account and researched, the ICN director

said, and that is exactly what her organisation is doing. Currently, ICN is engaged in assessing the possible impact 'sound vibrations' could have on Van Gogh paintings in the Van Gogh museum at Amsterdam's Museum Square, where many protest demonstrations and outdoor music concerts are staged. ICN is a fervent supporter of taking collections to unusual places to exhibit art, she said, and said airports and railway stations could be among them.



THE FORMER DUTCH PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS PROVIDED AN APPROPRIATE BACKGROUND FOR THE GATHERING OF CULTURE AND MUSEUM OFFICIALS.

## Cultural riches can help build a feeling of Europe

Europe boasts more than 30,000 museums which generate over 250,000 jobs and attract more than 500 million visitors a year, said Harald Hartung, head of the culture unit at the European Commission's Education and Culture General-Directorate. "That beats the biggest football game."

**M**USEUMS ARE AT THE HEART of urban regeneration, Hartung said, and are a key factor in cultural tourism, the fastest developing tourism sector in Europe. Political decision makers and those responsible for

heritage into "lively laboratories which stimulate the senses", places of collective creation that build bridges from past to present.

But with the funds available for cultural cooperation at European level totalling just 0.04

*There is a lack of information, know-how and money*

funding museums need to be convinced the sector should get as large a slice as possible of national and European funds – though this is not an end in itself.

Hartung quoted Jacques Delors, who once said: "You don't fall in love with an internal market." With a growing gap between the public and political leaders, especially at the EU level, we must raise awareness of Europe's cultural riches and thus help build a feeling of belonging to Europe.

A steadily increasing number of museums are shifting, Hartung declared, from preservers of

percent of the EU budget, we must focus on specific areas, as with the "Culture 2000" Programme. The new culture programme is called "Culture 2007" and one of its main priorities is the mobility of works of art. Some museums are very successful at organising temporary exhibitions on a European scale, but the "critical mass" is lacking, Hartung said. There is a lack of information, know-how and money and we need to get together to share experiences and exchange best practices. "This conference is an important step in building up a broad network of expertise, know-how and best practices."

## Discussion addresses friction between preservation and public appeal

## Art must not be just a background object

Museums face conflicting tasks. Exhibiting objects wherever and however possible will help them attract and appeal to a large audience. On the other hand, they must preserve their collections for future generations.

"We are only meeting a small part of the population of our societies with our museums."

**I**N MY VIEW WE ARE SERVING the public. That is the fundamental thing we are doing with our museums." That was the opening gambit from panel member Kristian Berg, director of the Museum of National Antiquities in Stockholm, in a lively discussion led by Frénk van der Linden. Taxpayers must ask themselves whether museums are worth their money, Berg said, and museums must show their collections are used "in a broad societal way". His standpoint found support from a delegate from the Swedish natural history museum, who declared: "To us, all objects in our collection are the free property of the scientific world." But how free should works of art really be? For many, there are limits. Works of art should not be treated as mere objects of consumption, said panel member

There are public places aplenty where museum objects could be placed, agreed a delegate. But viewing museum objects requires time, concentration, contemplation. Are we sure a railway station, for instance, meets these criteria? Otherwise museum objects become just a background and a replica or reproduction may be sufficient, he said.

**Protected with too much glass**

Alfred Pacquement, director of the National Museum of Modern Art Centre Pompidou in Paris, expressed the concern that if collections were put in places like railway stations, they would have to be protected with so much glass, so many barriers and security guards that they would be seen totally differently than intended – or wrongly.

*Viewing art requires time, concentration, contemplation. Are we sure a railway station, for instance, meets these criteria?*

Tuula Arkio, general director of the Finnish National Gallery. We must, she said, ask how people experience art collections outside the museum environment.

Berg said Swedish museums were currently discussing placing works in one of Stockholm's main hospitals – a public space where lots of people spend lots of time. "We are only meeting a small part of the population of our societies with our museums."

"What we as a community have to do," said Pacquement's fellow panel member Cristina Acidini, "is rely on a body of common rules based on technical correctness or procedures." Acidini, superintendent of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence, said Italy had long experience of lending art to places like embassies, and this had worked well when there was a sensibility about the works. But in some instances, pieces had been damaged, put too close to heating or in too-humid conditions, because people were unaware of their value. Borrowers needed better knowledge and sensitivity about what they had in their (temporary)

*"Some works should be clarified as national treasures and must never travel"*

possession, she said.

A Cypriot archaeologist and art historian noted that his small state lent a lot and said there was a group of works that should be clarified as national treasures and must never travel. "They are very rare and very important for the cultural heritage of the state," he said from the floor. A British archaeologist said some works, such as Rembrandt's *Night Watch*, should not be exposed to more than the most minimal risk.



RONALD DE LEEUW, GENERAL DIRECTOR OF AMSTERDAM'S RIJKSMUSEUM (RIGHT), AND CRISTINA ACIDINI OF THE OPIFICIO DELLE PIETRE DURE IN FLORENCE.

**Not everything should be lent**

Every museum with national collections has treasures that should not be lent, Tuula Arkio concurred. But the EU could try to find the common storage every museum could use, she said, pointing out that many museums have second-rate collections while museums with very good collections have treasures in storage. Finland was busy making an inventory of all the country's art collections, so that museums who did not need parts of their collections could lend them out.

A delegate from the National Museum of Ethnology in the Netherlands said his museum had been keeping things in store "for future generations" for 150 years, but they should be brought out of storage and used. In the opinion of a Czech delegate, however, the first priority was to preserve works of art. The Pompidou Centre's Pacquement said his institution received mail every day asking to borrow pieces; requests were sometimes based on good reasons and sometimes not such good ones. A good purpose, he said, was scholarship, or an educational programme.



FRÉNK VAN DER LINDEN MODERATED THE DISCUSSION.

A bad reason was “the reverse”: the lack of a scholarly dimension or a weak topic, an artificial reason for gathering works together. Berg suggested thinking of collections as “metaphorically mobile”, projects combining different kinds of collections. “Collections on

against us? Lenders placed high insurance values on their works, to the detriment of borrowers. In this respect, museums behaved like Jekyll and Hyde, said De Leeuw. He pointed out that works in European museums lost their monetary value when they

*Borrowers need better knowledge and sensitivity about what they have in their (temporary) possession*

the move could also be a very nice way of promoting interdisciplinary research,” he said. Ronald de Leeuw, general director of Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum, pointed to the example of the Rijksmuseum at Schiphol as a successful example of putting art in an unconventional public place. A moment of contemplation had been created, he said, where the busy atmosphere of the airport contrasted with the tranquillity of the little museum. This was a far cry from, for instance, putting a Rembrandt painting over a ticket booth, said De Leeuw. “You have to do it in a responsible way which does not devalue objects.”

*“We ourselves are to blame if we throw up a threshold to art exchange, by turning art into money”*

#### Inflated values

When it came to inter-museum loans, De Leeuw bemoaned a growing tendency among museums to impose large fees on their colleagues. “We ourselves are to blame if we throw up a threshold to art exchange. How can we expect governments to support us if we are trying to turn art into money?” he said. Why, he asked, do we consider arts as objects of value in a monetary sense when that only works

came into collections because they were no longer on the market. “We keep feeding the pockets of insurance companies” but we should say it is the artistic value that counts. “We have a value in our objects but we don't put a monetary value on them, so we can freely exchange them,” said the Swedish natural history museum delegate. Finally, the conference discussed whether there was a cultural imperialism in satellite museums. Finland's Arkio said museums such as the Guggenheim Bilbao were more about power and being seen abroad than about cultural heritage and art. “The Guggenheim is a

power game,” agreed De Leeuw. Satellite museums were an interesting idea, however, and did not always require large buildings, said Arkio. A representative of the British Museum noted that there were two different models for a satellite museum. You could either construct a new building, or work with an existing museum in a different area. The latter, he said, seemed the more fruitful approach: museum staff



TUULA ARKIO OF THE FINNISH NATIONAL GALLERY:  
“MUSEUMS SUCH AS THE GUGGENHEIM BILBAO ARE MORE ABOUT BEING SEEN ABROAD THAN ABOUT CULTURAL HERITAGE AND ART.”

understood the local audience better and welcomed the association with another museum, which helped them attract visitors. The Hermitage Amsterdam was a complex issue, said De Leeuw. He said he did not believe Amsterdam needed another museum; Rotterdam's need was greater. But the Russians see the Hermitage offshoot as a gateway to Europe, so it was important for them to locate it in the Dutch capital, he said.



TEA BREAK IN THE ROYAL THEATRE.

## After-dinner speaker provides pill for digestion

## Constipated museums must loosen up

The function of museums has changed from collecting evidence for research to 'collecting our meaningful past'. But most museums are still constipated with old things and old thoughts, said independent museum consultant Julian Spalding. "Movability is everything."

IF THE IDEA OF DIGESTING museums made his listeners feel constipated, said after-dinner speaker Julian Spalding, he had "a little pill" that in just fifteen minutes would enable them both to think about museums and to digest their food with perfect equanimity. Think about museums not as they are now, the independent museum consultant urged, but as what they could become. What could be more indigestible than a museum? Had they ever seen visitors leaving museums with smiles of contentment? Visitors were more likely to look exhausted and slightly bored. And their mental constipation is hardly surprising given that the "food" museums serve up is usually unprepared. "All most museums do for their

indigestion. "They begin to drift, searching for something to alleviate the mental constipation, and usually fall back on a trip to the cafe." ("There's a thought," Spalding reflected as an aside. "Could the degree of a museum's failure be measured by the size of its cafe?")

**New attitude towards lending**

Spalding asked whether museums actually had any "food" to offer, insisting: "The objects in our museums can only be valued by the mental stimulation they provide."

Museums had to realise, he said, that the meaning of their collections was changing fundamentally. Museums began as by-products of the Enlightenment but most have now

*"The objects in our museums can only be valued by the mental stimulation they provide"*

visitors is to open the door to the larder" so they can make their own meals. That may be an egalitarian approach, but would you want to eat what they make?

Experts like himself know exactly how to tackle museums, Spalding said. "I choose what to look at, what will give me most mental stimulation, and then I leave. I don't have to look at everything. I am well-fed and well-bred." But the vast majority of museum visitors start by trying to look at everything and so quickly get

virtually given up collecting and stopped thinking about what their collections mean. Museums are no longer primarily institutions collecting evidence for research. As far as the public is concerned, he said, museums' primary function is to collect our meaningful past. At a time when younger generations are losing touch with the past, it is the job of museums to provide that link.

"Meaning is the only category for collecting," said Spalding. "Movability is everything."



Museums are constipated with old things and old thoughts, he lamented.

Spalding's promised "little pill," he said, was not a restructuring – as implemented in the 1980s and 1990s to little effect – but something much cheaper: a change in attitude, above all in attitudes towards lending. (Though lending is the wrong word, he said, because collections are owned not by museums but by the public.)

**Food for thought**

Spalding said museums had no right to refuse a request to put on safe public display any item currently out of public view in storage. These days, the public need must take precedence over the needs of scholars, he said. "It's no good preserving something if no-one can ever see it." Museums must not only make collections safe but also make them safely accessible. "When a museum begins to think about meaning, it begins to loosen up... It begins to see collections as food for thought." Spalding suggested museums put works they are not using into jointly-owned resource centres managed by a new breed of archival curators who will encourage loans to safe public venues. "Europe has in storage the heritage of the whole world and has responsibility to the whole world." Lending in future will be borrower-led, he predicted. The ambition to increase public understanding cannot be realised by museums as they are organised now: too restrictive, specialised and boring, impeding the growth of public interest. "The categories in which museums are currently organised are barriers to the growth of public interest. These barriers will be most quickly broken down by changing attitudes to lending." Museums on the move will be able to think creatively about meaning and to ask what the public really needs to be given. "And with the bowels loosened up, museums might even begin to collect again."



DINNER IN THE FORMER DUTCH PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, WHERE JULIAN SPALDING GAVE HIS AFTER-DINNER SPEECH.

## Closing debate seeks ways to enhance collection mobility

## Information can help collections move

In the final round-table discussion the debate became very practical: how can we enhance collection mobility? The keyword was knowledge, and an exchange of information. “I dream of having access to a database listing all loans of collections of European museums.”

**M**ORE KNOWLEDGE and exchange of information are required in order to improve conditions in Europe for loaning and borrowing works of art. This was the major conclusion five museum directors said they drew from two days of debate and presentations. “Information is the central issue,” said Ronald de Leeuw, director of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam. “Knowing what is possible and knowing what is being done in

*“I need more knowledge to support taking decisions whether to loan or not to loan”*

terms of collection mobility is essential.” Dorota Folga Januszevska, director of the National Museum in Warsaw, was more specific, explaining that she was particularly eager for access to knowledge about the approach of individual museums and EU member states to loaning art and heritage items. “I dream of having access to for instance a database listing all loans of collections of European museums, or a website containing information on the indemnities of all EU member states,” she said. “Also I would like to get practical information as to whether a potential partner has the proper level of public relations and meets other requirements. I need more knowledge to support taking decisions whether to loan or not to loan.”

De Leeuw and Januszevska were in a five-member panel wrapping up the results of the two-day conference in The Hague, along with Eliska Fucikova, director National Heritage in Prague, Rodolphe Rapetti, senior official of Musées de France (Paris), and Christina Hallman, director of the Swedish Museum of Natural History.

**Gain knowledge through lending**

Hallman indicated she interpreted the importance of knowledge and information slightly differently, saying it was her “absolute priority to gain more knowledge about my objects through lending”. Rapetti suggested creating a network of museum officials to share knowledge and build relationships between professionals.

Fucikova and Januszevska urged museum officials in western Europe to lend an open ear to the experiences of museums in Eastern European countries.

“For us, an exhibition is necessary to express the pain of our country,” Fucikova said, adding that in order to tell the story of the history of the Czech Republic, and the collection of her museum, she needs to collect pieces from all over the world, a sign of the deep impact history has had on the cultural heritage of her country.

*“It is my absolute priority to gain more knowledge about my objects through lending”*

Januszevska showed a picture of a bus that had been rebuilt into a mobile museum in Poland in 1947 to enable the population to see at least some of the country’s national heritage. “During the Second World War, about 90 percent of our collection was destroyed, and after the war we had no building available to exhibit the remaining 10 per cent. To me, this bus is a symbol of what took place in this part of Europe in that era – a legacy that is not always taken into account by our fellow



FINAL ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION.

institutions in Western Europe,” she explained. De Leeuw responded to Januszevska’s remarks by saying he might reconsider certain ideas that legitimized the establishment of many museums in the 19th century, especially ideas relating to the importance of national pride and identity, which have been pushed aside over the years in many Western European countries. They may deserve to be revitalized, De Leeuw said.

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POLAND REBUILT A BUS INTO A MOBILE MUSEUM AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR.



### Exhibitions of a human size

Museum officials discussed whether the volume of museum collections was getting out of hand and whether collection mobility could be a good solution to deal with the inclination of museum directors to forever seek to acquire more art or other items – a phenomenon described as museum 'bulimia'. Januszewska said ever-growing collections may already have contributed to giving audiences an overdose of art. She urged her colleagues to make more

*"I think we need to contain the number of exhibitions, given the problem of a 'loan traffic jam' "*

exhibitions of a "human size". De Leeuw stated frankly that, as far as he is concerned, there are already too many exhibitions. He pointed to what he called the problem of "a loan traffic jam". "I think we need to contain the number of exhibitions," he said. However, Januszewska argued that acquiring more art in itself is legitimate and necessary, as it chimes with the task of museums to preserve art and national heritage for later generations.

### Pushing politicians to act

The museum officials refrained from taking an activist stance, but did send some messages to the Dutch state secretary for education, culture and science, Medy van der Laan, who can have an impact on European cultural policy under the Dutch EU presidency. "She should put all her efforts into raising the cultural budget of the EU and encouraging politicians in the individual member states to follow suit," Christina Hallman said, responding to a question from moderator Frénk van der Linden. Her colleagues, not surprisingly, supported her call. Dorota Folga Januszewska said she hoped the EU presidency would also take steps towards enabling museums to get wider access to knowledge and information about collection mobility. Ronald de Leeuw focused on the Dutch context, urging the culture minister to raise the budget

for indemnities. The culture minister "is in charge of a stingy indemnity system. She should raise indemnity in the Netherlands to the level of the Anglo-Saxon countries." Some of the directors said they hoped the conference would result in European museums stopping competing for funds. Instead they should lobby in unison for EU resources for common projects, for instance initiatives enabling them to create an efficient network for mutual exchange and loans.

### Not a one-off

The Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage (ICN), which hosted the conference, promised it would keep track of several working groups that participants agreed should be established. In her closing remarks, ICN director Henriëtte van der Linden also said the outcomes of the conference would be provided as 'input' for a meeting of the EU's cultural ministers, which was to take place on 16 November 2004. Van der Linden noted that collection mobility has already been embedded in an EU cultural programme for 2005-2006 and expressed



CONSULTANT FRANK BERGEOET OF THE NETHERLANDS INSTITUTE FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE (ICN) AND ICN DIRECTOR HENRIËTTE VAN DER LINDEN.

optimism, saying she saw good prospects for the issue being followed up at the European level. "This congress will not be a one-off."



## Centre Pompidou, Paris

## Eastward expansion

The explosive growth of the Pompidou Centre's collection – from around 17,000 objects when it opened in 1977 to 53,000 now – presented the museum with a major problem, said Alfred Pacquement, director of the National Museum of Modern Art Centre Pompidou in Paris.

**A**FTER EXPANDING AS MUCH as it could within the Pompidou Centre's Paris walls, the museum had to look outside them, said Pacquement. The museum often lends objects and has four thousand works on permanent deposit in other French museums, not to mention 'extra muros' exhibitions and exhibitions of its works in other countries. But this did not solve the problem of a permanent presentation of the collection. Given the difficulty of expanding elsewhere in Paris, premises were sought outside the city and Metz, east of the capital and near Luxembourg, Germany and Belgium, was selected. Metz is in a part of France where there are currently few places to see modern and contemporary art, said Pacquement.

A location behind Metz's striking railway station was found and an architectural competition held which drew around 150 candidates. The winner was Japan's Shigeru Ban, who designed a pavilion covered with a spectacular undulating roof – made of woven steel, plywood and a translucent membrane – inspired by a bamboo Chinese hat. The museum will have six thousand square metres of exhibition space and feature classical



DESIGN FOR THE NEW POMPIDOU CENTRE IN METZ.

exhibition rooms in raised boxes. Boxes will house an auditorium, a cinema, performing arts. Under them is space for large installations.

The Paris Pompidou, Pacquement explained, will not make permanent loans to Metz. Instead, parts of the collection will be shown in Metz before being returned to Paris and replaced in Metz with a totally new group of

works.

The Pompidou Centre's whole early-20th-to-21st-century period will be covered, as will all the disciplines it features, from painting and sculpture to video, design and architecture. The Centre Pompidou-Metz will not be a satellite of its bigger Parisian brother but will have autonomous directors with their own programme.

## Prado Museum, Madrid

## Dispersed and travelling

The Prado has managed thousands of works of art in multiple locations since the 19th century, explained Andres Gutierrez, head of the Spanish museum's register department.

**I**NAUGURATED IN 1819, THE PRADO merged with Madrid's Trinity Museum in 1872 but did not have the space to house the Trinity's more than 1,700 paintings, let alone sculpture and other objects. The solution, Gutierrez said, was "to start an external deposits policy in several places around the whole country". There was little control over the deposits until 1980, when it became clear that direct control by the Prado was needed, and research on each institution began. In the past two years,

following the proposal to set up a so-called "Dispersed Prado", the foundations of an all-round deposit management have been laid. The Prado currently manages 3,420 works on deposit. To control works in over four hundred institutions in more than a hundred different places, a periodic in situ inspection is conducted. A report is compiled showing the location of the works, their state of preservation, condition of the facilities and the appropriateness of continuing the deposit or not.

The new Dispersed Prado Management Centre in Avila aims to streamline deposit management. It is also the hub of the "Travelling Prado".

Karina Marotta, head of the Prado's exhibition department, described how the Travelling Prado chimed with the museum's long-held wish to make its deposit and dispersed collections known throughout the Spanish provinces. Collections are to be shown in theme-based exhibitions that will travel around Spain and to some international museums. But Spain's museums are so diverse that the Prado needs deeper knowledge of their situation, Marotta said, before planning any long-term exhibition schedule. It is therefore in the process of surveying all museums that could be suitable venues.

The Travelling Prado is currently running a pilot project: an exhibition on Belgian-born landscape artist Carlos de Haes which is travelling around Spain. It plans to have two annual exhibitions of its deposit and dispersed collections touring the country at once. The Travelling Prado will be completed in 2006 with the opening of the museum's extension in the "Los Jeronimos" building in Madrid.



ANDRES GUTIERREZ.



KARINA MAROTTA.

Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage (ICN), Amsterdam

## Managing mobility across Europe

ICN is working for the benefit of the 'Collectie Nederland', the entire collection of all public collections taken together. Antoinette Visser and Evert Rodrigo, head of ICN's consultancy and collection departments respectively, suggested its approach be taken as an inspiration to manage the mobility of the entire European art collection.

VISSER AND RODRIGO discussed several examples of taking museum collections to unorthodox locations, such as the Dutch Lower House and Schiphol Airport, and pointed to the advantages and value of these operations. "It gives collections new life, new perspectives," they said. In the case of the Lower House project, the speakers said this particular example of collection mobility had the positive

side effect of making parliamentarians more aware of the problem of collection preservation. This might lead to decisions being taken that are favourable to museums.

Exhibiting art at Schiphol Airport helped develop new regimes of security, Visser explained. It was obvious that security at such a busy place should be very tight. Experts found ways to create a safe environment for the

paintings that is indeed more secure than that in many museums and could be taken as an example for museums. The ICN officials said their organization is currently exploring whether 'extramural' exhibitions could be organized in schools, nursing homes or other public buildings.



CO-PRESENTATION BY ANTOINETTE VISSER AND EVERT RODRIGO.

"We would like to know what can be done and what cannot," Visser said. Accountability and the call for transparency have been important drivers of the institution's policy to move collections to places other than museums. "If we want to keep preservation affordable, the public needs to be willing to fund it. It will do so more easily if it has more opportunities to see collections."

Visser and Rodrigo said the Netherlands aspires to "lead in collection management". They said barriers should be broken down within Europe in order to increase collection mobility. "Let's create a pan-European approach and, for instance, develop a certain level of standardized training for museum staff, so that experts could work at museums all over Europe. Maybe we can move from 'Collectie Nederland' to 'Collection Europe'."

EXHIBITING ART AT SCHIPHOL AIRPORT HELPED DEVELOP NEW REGIMES OF SECURITY.



## Film: Museum Collections on the Move Rembrandt at Schiphol Airport

In a short film shown at the conference, the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage (ICN) showed examples of collection mobility in the Netherlands. In The Hague, the governmental capital of the Netherlands, the

ICN exhibits several parts of its collection in the Lower House of Parliament and in the new Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

The ICN was also involved in a landmark Dutch example of taking art from museums to unusual places: the initiative of the Rijksmuseum, home to the Night Watch and other Rembrandt masterpieces, to show part of its collection of 17th-century Dutch paintings at Schiphol Airport. "This one room of eighteen by eight metres has attracted an

audience of 130,000 travellers in the first year, bringing it into the top ten of Dutch museums in one stroke," a curator of the Rijksmuseum said. "It was challenging in terms of security and climate control. But we are happy we did it, because it has turned out to be very successful."



THE EXHIBITION ROOM AT SCHIPHOL AIRPORT.

*"One room of eighteen by eight metres has attracted an audience of 130,000 travellers in the first year, bringing it into the top ten of Dutch museums"*

## Slovak National Gallery, Bratislava

## Cross-border cooperation

Martin Kovac of Slovakia's Ministry of Culture and Alexandra Homolova of the Slovak National Gallery discussed what had been learned from recent successful art projects in Bratislava where collection mobility was key.

KOVAC, DIRECTOR GENERAL of the cultural heritage section at the Ministry of Culture, outlined the crucial factors for successful collection-mobility projects. They involved cooperation across borders and between different institutions such as churches, municipalities or the business sector, and created new partnerships, which would help develop further cross-border cooperation. The

key asset for further developing such projects, Kovac said, was the value and total volume of Slovakia's collections – its museums and galleries contain some 8.9 million items. Alexandra Homolova, arts collections director at the Slovak National Gallery in Bratislava, described two major art projects undertaken by that gallery in the last two years. Both involved cooperation crossing all types of borders –

regional, national, political and historical. One exhibition was on the history of Slovak fine art. It saw cooperation with institutions in countries like Austria, Hungary and the Czech Republic, and much communication with churches, where many items were to be found. The second project Homolova described was an exhibition on Ladislav Mednyanszky, an author who lived from 1852 to 1919. In 2000, the Hungarian and Slovak national galleries decided to cooperate and present the author's entire work. That meant joining forces in research, restoration and conservation. The exhibition was held in Budapest, Bratislava and Vienna and an accompanying book was published in four languages.

In order for Slovakia to build on the positive experience it has gained from these two projects, three priorities have been set, said Kovac. Firstly, the government wants to provide effective support to improve the infrastructure of museums and galleries. Secondly, it plans to create the appropriate institutional structures for museums and galleries: detecting gaps, decentralising and reorganising incoherent structures. And thirdly, it is to improve funding support for collection mobility, research, restoration, mobility of experts, project planning and preparation.



SEVERAL GALLERIES WORKED TOGETHER TO PRESENT THE WORK OF LADISLAV MEDNYANSZKY.

## Tate Gallery, London

## Trust is crucial to exchange programmes

Building a close relationship based on trust is a condition for success when loaning works of art to partner institutions, according to Freda Matassa, head of collections management at the Tate Gallery in London.

THE TATE HAS ESTABLISHED partnerships with five regional museums. "This was the maximum for us and they needed to be security proof and provide good access," Matassa said.

collection, which consists of more than 65,000 works of art. "Over the past four years, we had 26 exhibitions, with more than five hundred works of art in the partner museums," Matassa explained. "Thousands of people outside of London who might otherwise never have seen our collection visited these exhibitions." She said the partnerships have also increased the prestige of the regional institutions, and helped Tate to look at its own collection from a

reasons why we couldn't do this with museums in Europe," she said. Provided, of course, there is sufficient funding and good management in place at the partner institution. Partnerships are considered the most important part of Tate's exchange and loan activities, but Tate also toured exhibitions in Europe and over the past few years lent about a thousand works of art to 250 to 300 exhibitions all around the world.

*A major reason for entering partnerships was to increase the exposure of the huge collection*

Other requirements, she added, were "exciting, innovative ways to present our collection", and "we wanted them to be as far away in the country as possible". Tate's partners are museums located in Sheffield, Norfolk and the Lakelands but not in Scotland or Wales, which have their own exchange programmes and national museums.

A major reason for entering partnerships was to increase the exposure of the huge Tate

different perspective. "The benefits of the partnerships worked two ways: the regional institutions gained new knowledge and our curators also gained knowledge of new collections elsewhere in the country. Everybody benefits."

Matassa believes the way in which Tate has struck its partnerships could be taken as an example for other partnerships, for instance with partners outside the UK. "There are no



FREDA MATASSA DURING HER PRESENTATION IN THE ROYAL THEATRE.

## Swedish Museum of Natural History, Stockholm

# Borrower adds new knowledge to collection

Accessibility is the keyword for the loan policy of the Swedish Natural History Museum, declared its director Christina Hallman. Loaning out items is not only a good way to increase their accessibility, but also to generate new knowledge about them.

CHRISTINA HALLMAN, in an entertaining presentation, said that making the nine million or so items in her Museum of Natural History in Stockholm accessible to the public – a goal she said is central to the museum's philosophy – is being accomplished in several ways. "We've opened our storage rooms to the public and we use the Internet a great deal. We have joined an international effort, for instance, to put all our items on the Internet, where they

can be found, free of charge, with a description and a photograph. This is a tremendous democratic project and practically all museums of natural history in the world participate."

However, she stressed that loaning parts of its collection adds tremendously to the museum's assets. "Items come back with more knowledge about them, which gives more meaning to the

*The museum loans a lot to scientists, who often make new discoveries about an item*

Loaning items to other museums and scientific institutions is another way to increase the accessibility of the Swedish museum's collection. The Museum of Natural History, which is "the most visited" museum of Sweden, is very pragmatic and lenient about loaning items. Lending more than 22,000 items a year carries the risk of not getting everything back, Hallman said, and she showed some striking examples of the conditions of some of the items sent back to Stockholm.

collection." The museum loans a lot to scientists, who often make new discoveries about an item. "They may find, for instance, that a certain fossil thought to be originating from a particular era should actually be classified differently." The Museum of Natural History does not charge for loaning pieces of its collection, nor does it bother about insurance. "Not everybody knows how to deal with our items," Hallman said when showing pictures of packages being sent back with seemingly distorted museum items. "But do we get everything back? Yes, eventually we do."

CHRISTINA HALLMAN: "WE HAVE JOINED AN INTERNATIONAL EFFORT TO PUT ALL OUR ITEMS ON THE INTERNET, WHERE THEY CAN BE FOUND WITH A DESCRIPTION AND A PHOTOGRAPH."



## Berlin State Museums

# Busy borrowers and lenders

The Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (SMB) cooperates in a variety of ways with institutions both within and beyond German borders. Deputy director general Günter Schauerte described some of them.

THE SMB HAS AN agreement with Italian museums to fill gaps in each other's collections, said Schauerte. So successful has this been that it forged a similar agreement with Greece and is in discussions with Turkey. Private collectors are of great importance to the museum. Much Impressionist and Expressionist art was lost during the Nazi era,

A MoMA exhibition was the most successful modern art exhibition ever held at the Berlin State Museums, said Schauerte. It brought in millions of euros for the museum and in tax revenues – not to mention for hotels and restaurants. "This is a very important economic issue," he commented. In some cases, the SMB lends works to third-

*The museum is depending more and more on private collectors to lend works*

and the high cost of buying such art on the market means the SMB is constantly in discussions with collectors to plug this gap, said Schauerte.

The art market is moreover so productive that it is impossible to buy everything, so the museum is depending more and more on private collectors to lend works. When it comes to asking other museums to lend pieces, there must be some compensation involved for the lender - as in the case of a swap German museums did with a Taipei counterpart.

party institutions who then restore them and keep them for a period of time. It has had numerous such cooperation projects with Japan and the USA.

The Ethnological Museum sent an exhibition called "Arte de Africa" to Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo and Brasilia, where it attracted more than one million visitors. In 2005, the Museum of

Egyptian Art will send an exhibition to Mexico City.

The SMB operates the "federal programme" – exhibitions or bigger loan complexes, either produced and complete or easy to realise, which can be shown by museums all over Germany. And it also offers complete collection complexes as branches of the national museums for the price of the cost of production to selected institutions.

THE GERMAN ETHNOLOGICAL MUSEUM SENT AN EXHIBITION ABOUT AFRICA TO BRAZIL.



## Museum Loan Network, Boston

## A glue that binds

The United States' Museum Loan Network (MLN), created in 1995, aims to make objects of cultural heritage more accessible and comprehensible to the public. It encourages collecting institutions to share works over extended periods of time. Director Lori Gross traced its history.

THE CONCEPT OF LONG-term loans to supplement a museum's collection has always been central to the MLN, Gross said. A feasibility study in 1995 examined the reasons and incentives needed for collection-sharing. What would make "richer" museums loan to less-rich institutions? Gross said she had little truck with the suggestion by some that larger

museums had a duty to collaborate with smaller peers. And smaller museums were unlikely to contact their bigger colleagues because they simply did not know them. "I really believe successful collaboration is as much about being selfish as it is about being generous," said Gross. "We needed to create the climate that would encourage collaboration.

*"It is important for museums to set a tone of collaboration rather than competition"*

We needed incentives."

The MLN, which is funded by private foundations, created three kinds of grant – survey, travel and implementation grants – each with their own incentives. It has awarded 342

grants worth nearly six million dollars to 229 institutions in 165 cities across the United States, in every state except North Dakota. Communication was essential. Museum conferences were visited, phone calls were made promoting the idea of collection-sharing, and the MLN worked with all parts of the museum: not just directors but curators and educators

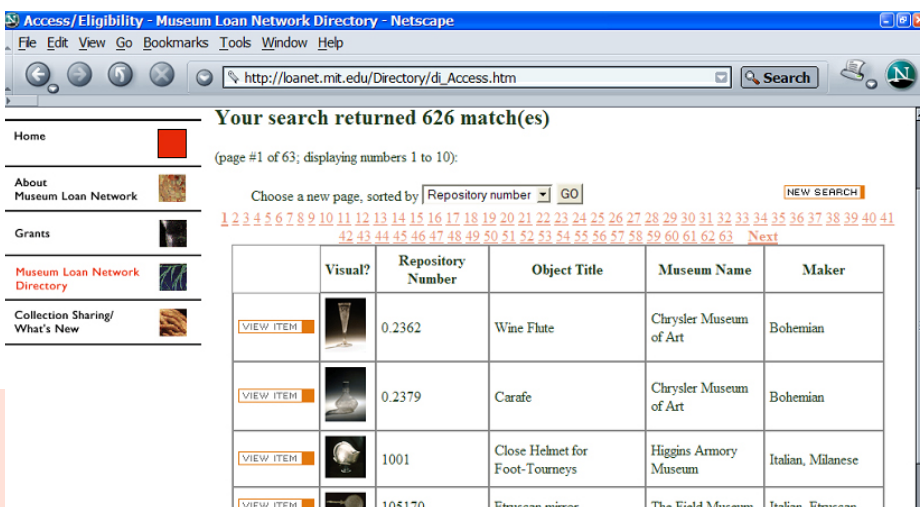
too. "Curatorial ambassadors" were created.

Also of great use were a website, publications in conjunction with exhibitions, a directory containing thousands of objects and a newsletter. "We are using all kinds of communication to connect with a museum audience," said Gross.

The change in attitudes attests to the MLN's success. Gross told of a curator of a large art museum who ten years ago dismissed the idea that museums might lend their works as "ridiculous". A year later that man had become one of the project's biggest supporters. And the MLN was recently described as the glue that holds museums together.

"It is important for museums to set a tone of collaboration and cooperation rather than competition and rivalry."

THE MLN WEBSITE PROVIDES ACCESS TO MUSEUM COLLECTIONS AROUND THE COUNTRY.



## Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

## Renovation is a time for reinvention

With more than ninety percent of the Rijksmuseum closed for renovation for four years, the Dutch museum set itself a goal of acquainting a wider public with its riches. "The Rijksmuseum has the ambition to reinvent itself," said head of exhibitions Jan Rudolph de Lorm.

THE RIJKSMUSEUM RAN a publicity campaign informing the public that though it was closed until 2008, it was still open. Its "hard core" of 17th-century highlights can currently be viewed in its south wing, which has been cut off from the main building. The Dutch Golden Age is presented in a number of notions or impressions, rather than chronologically, De Lorm said. The Rijksmuseum has meanwhile teamed up

collection mobility daring."

At the same time, the Rijksmuseum wanted to address a broader Dutch public who would not usually visit it in Amsterdam. It has joined forces with local museums to create satellites in towns and cities from Assen to Maastricht – and even in Germany's Kleve and Belgium's Antwerp – where it has placed groups of objects on long-term loan. Rijksmuseum works such as those now at Maastricht's

the past. You see things being done to collections by the guest museums... which sometimes inspire us to look at the collections from a different angle."



**WEGENS VERBOUWING GEOPEND.** Het hoofdgebouw wordt verbouwd maar de Philipsvleugel blijft open. Met daarin Rijksmuseum, De Meesterwerken, een tentoonstelling van al die topstukken die u wel kent maar al veel te lang niet gezien heeft.

RIJKS MUSEUM  
amsterdam

DE MEESTERWERKEN  
THE MASTERPIECES

THE RIJKSMUSEUM IS OPEN DURING RENOVATION.

*"Guest museums do things to a collection which inspire us to look at it from a different angle"*

with a number of "guest museums" where some of its works are on long-term loan. The boldest example is Schiphol, whose philosophy of being an "airport city" complete with church and internet cafe has now been supplemented with an art museum. "This is not a museum extra muros, it is a new museum," said De Lorm. "It was for us the ultimate expression of

Bonnefantenmuseum are no second-rate or storage collections, De Lorm said. And given the right to present the Rijksmuseum pieces in the way they choose, guest museums have sometimes surprised the Amsterdam lender. This has enabled the Rijksmuseum to look afresh at its collections, De Lorm said. "Our image of the collection was always attached to

DEBATE 1 **Museum collections and European citizenship****Museums bridge cultures across Europe**

The European Council and European Commission see collection mobility in terms of fostering European citizenship through cultural exchange and cooperation. Yet museums are primarily interested in staging attractive exhibitions to retain their existing public and lure new visitors. The debate found museums can contribute to EU citizenship by building a sense of belonging. “Museums are bridges to different cultures and help us define who we are.”

SAROLTA SCHREDL of the Austrian Federal Office for the Care of Monuments said that for political reasons major museums are obliged to take part in great international exhibitions. Cultural exchange has an important social function and can give insights into former political and cultural relations. Taja Vovk Cepic of the City Museum in Ljubljana said culture has no borders and the

key to national curricula and collection mobility can help create feelings of belonging and identity.

In the United Kingdom, the scope of museums has been extended to different types of artefacts and oral history. Ways of remembering the past other than museums have been developed, increasing the participation of young school children.

*New museums tend to stress their national identities*

goal is to find and appreciate similarities. Cepic discussed the 2003 project 'Ljubljana in European eyes', which asked foreign inhabitants what they liked and disliked in Ljubljana compared to their home towns. Collection mobility could not have given such an insight.

EU citizens share a collective memory, values and failures. The study of cultural heritage is

Participants considered local and regional identity versus an idea of European citizenship. 'New' museums tend to stress their national identities, whereas established 'Western' museums often reject regionalism because of political correctness. Museums should be places of debate. Politicians can help greatly to increase cultural awareness.

Michael Houlihan, general director of National



Museums & Galleries of Wales, who chaired the discussion, summarized by saying museums must have the confidence to utilise their cultural richness in order to create a broader sense of belonging to the EU. Developing smaller museums can contribute significantly to EU cultural citizenship. European programmes can be built on areas of shared cultural heritage.



MANY COLLECTIONS in Europe are already European, declared European Museum Forum chair Wim van der Weiden. If objects are not literally stolen from another country, they bear the influences of craftsmanship, skills and taste from other regions and countries. ICN museum consultant Frank Bergevoet explained how the 'Collectie Nederland' (the Netherlands Collection) was developed as a theoretical instrument used by the Dutch

*Many collections in Europe are already European*

government to gain insight into the composition and value of the national collection. It has made thinking on museum and collection policy more coherent, enhanced cooperation and knowledge of other museums' collections and improved coordination of acquisition policies.

DEBATE 2 **'Collectie Nederland' – Collection Europe****European collection management is an option to explore**

Debate 2 considered whether the “Collectie Nederland” concept was applicable Europe wide and concluded that European collection management and cooperation is feasible in the long term, provided European diversity is taken into account.

Vienna museum developer Dieter Bogner said his efforts to create a similar exhibition concept for the German town of Kassel encountered strong mental and emotional barriers from the cultural institutions involved.

Finnish professor of museology Janne Vilkkuna told how a concept of the Great Finnish Museum eagerly embraced by Finland's education ministry was welcomed less warmly by museums, which tend to look inwards. Vilkkuna advised all 25 European countries to create their own great national collections, which together would form the “United European Collection”.

To debate the issue, participants formed two groups – the first of museum directors and

advisors, the second of governmental workers and political advisors. The outcomes contrasted hugely. Group two thought the European Collection concept desirable and feasible and developed some practical ideas on its implementation; group one strongly opposed the concept although nobody was against



cooperation between museums on a European level or the development of political instruments to assist such cooperation. Despite their differences, participants united to conclude that some member states have strikingly similar nationwide approaches to museum collections policy; that European collection management and cooperation is an option to explore; that cooperation on a European level has added value for museum professionals, citizens and communities; and that there is a need to demolish mental barriers and build trust on a European level.

DEBATE 3 **Museum satellites/decentralization**

## Partnership puts museums on an equal footing

**Partnership, personal contacts and vibrant networks are crucial to stimulate the exchange of museum collections, Debate 3 found. European authorities must support such networks and tackle the practical obstacles to the ideal of cultural exchange.**

**P**AUL HUVENNE welcomed the Rijksmuseum collection of mannerist paintings from the Utrecht and Haarlem schools into his Royal Museum for Fine Arts in Antwerp. The borrowed works enrich the story he wants to tell – Flemish painting in the 16th century – and illustrate how moving a museum collection presents both collections in a new light to a new audience.

The Rijksmuseum calls the displays of its

collection in museums elsewhere in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany 'guest presentations'. The Amsterdam museum sought combinations that would work in the local situation while opening a new perspective

*A relationship with the community is of importance for the development of a satellite museum*

on the richness of its collection.

Michael Tooby of the National Museums & Galleries of Wales and former project manager of Tate St Ives recalled the upheaval in the local community when London's Tate Museum created a branch museum in St Ives. Building a relationship with the community is of the utmost importance for the successful development of a satellite museum. Tate St Ives has played a significant role in promoting the small town as an art centre and tourist attraction, but the arrival of the London museum culture inevitably changed the local context.

Partnership with local authorities is essential when a large national institution creates a branch venue elsewhere in response to public appeal, noted Nils Jensen of the National Museum of Denmark.

Partnership is the watchword. It puts museums on an equal footing and creates a better basis for dialogue. But how much is a local community willing to pay to attract an important museum collection, and can the receiving institution offer anything to balance the deal?

Personal contacts and networks are key, but keeping a network alive and productive is hard work and must be someone's job. Europe could give more support here, and needs to address the major practical obstacles, such as insurance costs, copyrights and other regulations that conflict with the ideal of a free exchange of ideas and universal access to culture in the European community.

DEBATE 4 **The museum extra muros**

## Extra mural presentations increase visibility

**Museums are like fortresses: collections are either exhibited or stored in specially-designed environments. Preservation, safety and presentation are key. But most museums are visited by just a small part of the population. Perhaps we should bring the mountain to Mohammed instead of Mohammed to the mountain.**

**P**ARTICIPANTS DISCUSSED new developments in showing museum objects outside the protective walls of the museum. The museum extra muros is one of the more adventurous ways of increasing collection mobility. The debate centred on whether this concept should be further developed, and the best conditions for doing so.

Petra Timmer, freelance curator and member of the ICN conference team, introduced the debate with some twelve projects showing that the methods and aims of extra muros presentations can vary widely. Examples ranged from 17th-century paintings in the sheltered Civic Guard Gallery of the Amsterdam Historical Museum and the often-mentioned Rijksmuseum presentation at Schiphol airport, to modern art in a social housing art project (the Strip in Vlaardingen in cooperation with Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam). Most participants had their own experiences of extra mural presentations. Commercial objectives for creating an extra muros presentation were generally rejected.

Cees van 't Veen (Fries Museum/Prinsessehof) said this was his main criticism of the presentation at Schiphol, whose museum shop entrance he dislikes. Presentations with free access for a large and broad public were

*A relevant context will enhance the meaning of an object or collection*

favoured, and financial conditions and security/preservation demands regarded as vital.

Everybody agreed with Lori Gross (Museum Loan Network, USA) that the relevance of this kind of presentation to both its new context and the expected public were a primary condition for its success. Andrew Burnett (British

Museum) stressed that the expectations and demands of both lender and host should be equally met.

The museum extra muros increases the visibility of museum collections, participants concluded. A wider and different public can be reached, and the objects will contribute to the cultural value of their surroundings. Meanwhile, a relevant context will enhance the meaning of an object or collection. Participants were optimistic that the museum extra muros could help foster EU citizens' identity.



DEBATE 5 **State indemnity and non-insurance agreements**

## Towards a European insurance system

A pragmatic combination of three systems – private insurance, state guarantees and non-insurance – facilitates the circulation of artefacts, Debate 5 found. Participants called for a European scheme of insurance and expressed the wish that European states without systems of state guarantees might be able to establish these in the short term.

**P**ARTICIPANTS ACCEPTED all the recommendations of a report produced at the European Commission's request by the Reunion des Musées Nationaux in France and the State Museums of Berlin. They agreed that state indemnity should apply not only when works of art are on loan for special exhibitions, but also to long-term loans.

The group recommended a common method of assessing the insurance value of objects and the monitoring of movements of objects and insurance values. It agreed the transparency of insurance systems and practices is essential, as is the standardization of lending request procedures. On these issues, a permanent working group recognised by the Commission would be welcome. Participants hoped European states and the EU budget could fund a European insurance system.

Insuring loaned cultural artefacts is a powerful encouragement to their circulation. This could be combined with agreements not to insure some or all risks, as Rijksmuseum managing director Jan Willem Sieburgh suggested (see box). These agreements could be made between museums if the facilities and security measures offered by the borrower inspired sufficient confidence in the lending institution. A unilateral renunciation of insurance by the lending institution is always possible.

Long-term exchange policies between two or more museums are useful, the debate found. Depending on cultural, scientific and practical circumstances, long-term loans can usefully focus on isolated objects or parts of the collections. In this respect, museums of ethnology and natural sciences present clear opportunities for cooperation and collection mobility that have not yet been sufficiently investigated. The group identified the particular case of building work on museums which may occasion the exceptional moving of major parts of the collections. Loans for exhibitions or long-term loans must abide by a common code of ethics, Debate 5 emphasised. ●



### “The best way to reduce insurance costs is to eliminate them”

“One of the first lessons of economics I learned was about the difference between objective value and subjective value,” began Rijksmuseum managing director Jan Willem Sieburgh. A glass of water offered to a person in a brook is worth far less than one in the desert. “Subjective value is clearly defined by need and scarcity. The penultimate form of scarcity is uniqueness. And that is where works of art are different from any other valuable good. So why do we act as if an object can be replaced if there is no replacement? Why do we insure? The more unique a piece of art is the more irreplaceable it is.”

As soon as an important work of art becomes the property of the state, city, or province, we

The Netherlands has a non-insurance agreement (known as the framework agreement) on loan traffic between the state and municipalities which aims to encourage and remove obstacles to loan traffic. The borrower is not liable for the complete loss of an object and is not required to take out insurance for a loaned item. Sieburgh noted that the costs of exhibitions are rising, largely due to insurance costs based on the increasing market value of works of art. The best way of lowering insurance costs is to eliminate them, he ventured. Sieburgh recommended that reciprocal non-insurance agreements between all member states be implemented where possible, and full state

*“Why do we act as if an object can be replaced if there is no replacement? Why do we insure?”*

should stop thinking in terms of market value, Sieburgh suggested. The state and museums retain great works because of their cultural heritage value, their symbolic, historical, monumental, artistic, tourist or emotional value – not because of market or financial value. The alternative to insurance is simple, said Sieburgh: “Non-insurance of course is the best alternative, not the only alternative.”

indemnity provided when non-insurance is not possible. The focus should be not on market value but “on the values we really care about” and the money currently spent on insurance should be redirected toward better security and budgets for acquisitions.

“We should dare to challenge our own conventions,” Sieburgh concluded. “Let’s change the rules.”



## DEBATE 6 Collection mobility – The back office

# Standardised loan documents can boost efficiency

A European conference held in Naples in 2003 found a clear need for standardisation of practical documents on the lending of objects or collections between European museums. Debate 6 focused on how high aspirations regarding loans and mobility can be realised. "We have to establish a new framework to simplify practice."

**D**AVID MCNEFF (loans manager at the National Portrait Gallery in London) pleaded strongly for further development of commonly-agreed guidelines that can be used as a framework for drawing up standard forms. As an example of such practical documents, he mentioned the UKRG Standard Facilities Report.

Loans are always built on a relationship of trust between lender and borrower, but for international long-term loans, practical problems must be overcome and common

organisation. Several Dutch museums have already used these as a source for the renewal of their own loan agreements. Participants agreed loan documents must be standardised – saving time and so boosting efficiency – and generally acknowledged the Bizot general principles on the administration of loans and exchange of work of art between institutions as the common guideline. A research group should be set up to inventarise the procedures and forms already available, in order to establish European guidelines.

*Some documents used in lending are more suited to standardisation than others*

guidelines or standards developed, said Isabel Cordeiro (vice-director of the Portuguese Institute of Museums).

Margriet de Jong (staff member International Affairs, Netherlands Museum Association) explained the loan agreements for a fixed term and for the long term as developed by her

Some documents used in lending are more suited to standardisation than others. The Loan Contract Form, for instance, is tricky because of legal differences between countries. More conducive to standardisation are documents like the Facility Report (which includes disaster planning), the Condition Report (containing



handling advice) or the Conservation Report (which includes risk assessment).

The research group could operate under the umbrella of the Network of European Museum Organizations (NEMO) and led by The Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage (ICN). A call for voluntary members can be made through national museum associations, but the Bizot group must be represented. EU funding should be sought for the research group, and if it is granted, results will be reported back to the European Commission.

## Colophon

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Text and layout: Congreskrant.nl  
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RECEPTION AT THE MUSEUM BEELDEN AAN ZEE IN SCHEVENINGEN.