



ART GALLERIES AND MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND (INC)

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A. G. M. A. N. Z. NEWSLETTER NO. 24

November, 1965.

TOUR OF U. S. MUSEUMS, MAY-JUNE 1966

Will any member who is visiting U. S. A. in 1966 and would like to be a candidate for this tour please advise the Hon. Secretary urgently. Details of the tour are :-

The American Association of Museums, in co-operation with the Department of State is planning to offer a regional tour of United States museums in May and the first part of June, 1966 for a group of foreign museum professionals.

Our only requirements are that a candidate be officially connected with a foreign museum, be not over sixty years of age, and have a good working knowledge of conversational English. Participation in the Tour is limited to one delegate from each nation represented, and it is not possible to include wives or husbands. During the Tour, it will be necessary to adhere strictly to our pre-arranged itinerary and to visit only the cities already scheduled. Delegates wishing to visit other areas on their own should plan to do so either before or after our Tour. All expenses for travel, food, and lodging of a tour delegate are paid by the Association for the duration of the tour. We do ask, however, that a delegate arrange and pay for his travel to and from the United States.

The Tour will start in Washington, D. C. and will cover selected museums in some of our midwestern states tentatively, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Illinois ending at the conclusion of the 61st Annual Meeting of the Association in Chicago, Illinois on June 11.

The Tour will include all kinds of museums, aeronautical, art, history, science, art centers and associations, natural history, historic houses and societies, planetariums, aquariums, arboretums, botanical gardens, and preservation projects. Also there will be visits to churches, schools, colleges and universities as well as to offices of business firms and industrial plants. The delegates will be guests of the local museums in the cities visited for luncheons, receptions, and dinners. During a portion of their trip they will be house guests in private homes where they will have an opportunity for informal contact with American families.

EDITORIAL

The new edition of the Guide to the Art Galleries and Museums of New Zealand will contain 76 or more entries. Mrs. Erenda Gamble has finished the final drafts for 51 museums and asks members concerned to complete their part of the remaining 25 as soon as possible.

In the 1933 directory there were 25 art galleries and museums. In the 1958 edition there were 38, including 4 libraries with collections. The remarkable growth since 1958 has taken place at the local community level without any planning or obvious outside stimulus. The Arts Council grant of £2,000 in December 1964 enabled the Association to provide expert advice and services in a few cases and a further grant has been sought to continue the work.

Overseas reports indicate that rapid development of museums is not peculiar to New Zealand and extracts from articles on Fijian, British and U.S. museums are circulated in this Newsletter for the information of members.

Robert Cooper
Hon. Secretary.

BRITISH MUSEUMS

The following extracts are from an article by Ian Naim, entitled Wanted: a museum revolution, published in The Observer on 25.4.65:-

'Most of the museums and art galleries in Britain are houses of the dead. Yet they needn't be. In our present cultural and educational revolution there are vast opportunities; and one of the encouraging aspects of Jennie Lee's recent White Paper on the arts is that it recognises the need for change; too many of our museums and galleries, as it says, 'have failed to move with the times, retaining a cheerless unwelcoming air that alienates all but the specialist and dedicated.'

I hope that there are Governmental deeds on the way to back up these words. Because museums and galleries have an immense job to do now.

They can provide two of the biggest extensions of personality possible to man. One is through art - that is, excellence, the achievement of something supremely good. And for this it is relatively unimportant whether the object on view is a painting, a primitive ju-ju, an aeroplane, or a film of Stanley Matthews in action. 'Good beer is better than bad champagne': and the phrase as used in this context is not mine but Miss Lee's.

The other extension is through history - not as dates and facts or as a branch of stamp-collecting, but as a means of re-defining man: reinforcing the sense of the viewer in the present by defining where he has been in the past. For this function museums will have to become more like opera-houses than reading rooms. You may laugh at Madame Tussaud's but the past does come alive there as it never does in the British Museum. And people do go to see it; there they can identify themselves with something, even if it is only a waxwork. At many museums the only points of contact with present-day reality are the Ladies and Gents.

"Whether the museum is displaying art or history, the result should be the same: the creation of a personality which does not crowd out the objects but acts as a matchmaker, bringing together viewer and viewed in an instant of recognition. And this is where Britain fails hopelessly by comparison with Europe. Our museums may have good individual rooms or displays - the Victoria and Albert especially has bright patches - but to seek an overall sense of purpose you have to go to freaks like the Soane or remote acts of dedication like the railway museum at Swindon.

Where in Britain can you find museums with the individual taste of the municipal gallery at Castres in Southern France; with the utter sympathy for a period evident in the Impressionist gallery in Paris, the Jeu de Paume; with the sheer excitement generated between object and display in the cathedral treasury at Genoa? Where, above all, is the total involvement maintained from end to end of the Castello Sforzesco in Milan, which makes a visit into an experience more exciting even than the cathedral or Leonardo's Last Supper? And all of these have been created since the war....

The following sequence is an attempt to break down the job into six stages, with each stage demanding more of an imaginative leap than the last. Jennie Lee and her department have the earlier stages well in mind, and so have the best museum curators; but reform must not stop there.

Stage ONE is to get rid of all the small touches in museums that suggest that the public is allowed in on sufferance like peasants into the ducal demesne. These places are here to serve us, and not vice versa. There is a notice on a door in the Geological Museum which says 'Warders Only,' and this sums things up exactly. So does the poky tea-room in the B. M., which is approached down a long corridor containing deities of the underworld (whoopee!), and which turns out to be next door to a staff canteen which is three or four times as big. The Science Museum has a notice saying that iced lollies must not be brought in; the Tate actually has two cloakrooms, at opposite ends of the gallery, one of which will take only coats and the other only packages....

Stage TWO is in a way complementary, and that is to stop treating the exhibits as esoteric objects about which the minimum of information should be given. This is basically born out of contempt for the museum users: 'they should know about our special specialisations; and if they don't, then they can jolly well go away and look it up.' Again, things are slowly changing: Birmingham provides recorded talks in each gallery; the V. and A. has issued an admirable little leaflet called 'four masterpieces in fifteen minutes' - and so help me, got themselves sniffed at in an architectural paper for talking down to the public. But the National Gallery and most provincial museums are mines of non-information...

Information must never be rammed down the public's throat: there must always be the choice - to be instructed or to wander about and be struck by happy accidents; but this is merely a matter of siting and display.

'Stage THREE is that each museum should try to acquire a shape of its own, unimpeded by dreams of universality or a mania for 'gap-filling'....

Only the very biggest national collections have a duty to represent everything, and even then the coverage should be symbolic, not comprehensive; one Canaletto, one Bellotto, and one Guardi could stand for a whole century of Venetian landscape painting, if each were a masterpiece....

For 'art' museums a shape is desirable; for 'history' museums it is essential. The rooms of stuffed birds, armour, fossils, paid for grudgingly out of municipal rates, and jumbled down indifferently next to each other, are still with us. Yet the straightforward progression of time could itself be a sure crowdcatch, just as it is in historical films or novels. The core of the Dutch war museum at Overloon is utterly simple; a sequence of dark galleries with brightly lit exhibits in the walls, starting in the mid-thirties and finishing in 1945. Yet, at the end of it you feel that you have actually been through the Occupation....

Stage FOUR is the amplification of the truth that Madame Tussauds has already grasped; history ends last week, not in 1900 or 1815. The sharpest of all historical experiences is the one you have yourself lived through: it has changed you, you have maybe changed it: Eliot-like, you define where you are by where and what you were. The Second World War is still barely commemorated, yet now is the time to do it, when it is a living memory, and when most of the material is still ready to hand. A continuously changing museum of pop music of the last 10 years, with continuously changing biographies of the pop stars, would be unbearably poignant. So, on a larger scale, would the preservation intact of one of the ghost pit villages of West Durham or the Scottish Lowlands. Continuous preservation of the best would become a habit, and continual reminders of the immediate past would provide a good armour against the weather-cock frailties of fashion.

Stage FIVE is the recognition that there is far too much bad art around, old and new, and far too much good art crowded together in far too few places. For a gallery or museum to keep more than it can show properly - which does not mean piled together, as it is in the B. M. or the National Gallery - is just greed. And the converse is equally sad....

Again, the Continent has a head start on us, perhaps by accident. The Isenheim altarpiece is far more effectively displayed in a medieval church, in the medieval city of Colmar than it ever would be in the Louvre. To understand Toulouse Lautrec you have to make the long and pleasant trip to Albi; Hals demands a visit to Haarlem as well as Amsterdam. That is part of the delight of travelling, and we are now a highly mobile nation; we no longer need an attempted all-embracing compendium on our doorstep. The nineteenth-century conditions under which museums were assembled have altered; the nineteenth-century attitudes remain.

Stage SIX is the final leap; first from art to art, then from art back into life, so that a visit to a museum or gallery becomes as natural as a trip to the greengrocers or the pub. Art calls to art already; the wartime concerts in the National Gallery have left an impression where the Festival Hall remains as loveless as a recording studio. But this process needs to go much further. William Boyce in the earphones when you look at Hogarth, but also a Bugatti to partner Picasso and Léger. The spirit of art doesn't recognise fancy classifications, and moves where it will. It is our job to catch it, not art's job to conform.

"If the rest has been attended to, the last leap, from art into life - or rather, the making manifest, Malraux-like, of what was in the art all the time - is almost easy. There are wonderful things, beautifully displayed; there are people eager for delight. Why not let them mingle?

Son-et-lumière is only the first step. The central court of a Victorian museum should include a Victorian pub still fully licensed. In a motor museum you should be able to drive a red label Bentley as well as see one. If Greek pots were meant to carry water, then - with the masterpieces safeguarded - let them be so used; and if one gets broken, then that is history, too. The pitfalls are clear enough, but if the idea caught on they would be swept away on a tide of common sense enjoyment, along with our silly divisions into high and low-brow, art and science, sacred and profane. And that would be a real revolution.

Fine, high-flown stuff, all this, you may say. But who would pay for them, these glorious new museums?

Initially, money is the biggest drawback, of course, though in the end I am sure that the spectacles would pay for themselves. Here, the central Government must help, and is prepared to help. Jennie Lee describes the present grants as 'priming the pump': whether more is forthcoming will largely depend on how the present allotments are used.

One way of helping to pay for the new deal - and a way which I personally favour - is to charge an entrance fee. But Miss Lee is opposed to this, on political grounds. There is no clear pointer here from across the Channel. The new Léger museum at Biot charges eight bob a time, for instance, but the Castello Sforzesco is free. If the entrance fee would, in fact, make the difference between a dowdy museum and a live one, then the French system is the best: one to two shillings for weekday entrance, free on Sundays. . ."

E. EARLE VAILE ARCHAEOLOGIST

Miss Janet M. Davidson, Research Assistant to Dr. R. C. Green, Department of Anthropology, University of Auckland, was appointed E. Earle Vaile Archaeologist to the Auckland Institute and Museum on 20.10.65.

Miss Davidson was a University Junior and Senior Scholar, won the Sir Peter Buck Memorial Prize in 1962, and graduated with first class honours in Anthropology in 1964. She is a past Council Member of the N. Z. Archaeological Association, was in charge of salvage excavations at Paremata for the N. Z. Historic Places Trust in December 1962, and has taken part in excavations on Moorea, Western Samoa, Tonga and the Eastern Caroline Islands. She will begin duty at the Auckland Museum on 1.7.66 on completion of her fieldwork in Samoa.

The new post was established by the Museum Council mainly to further the study of archaeology in New Zealand with special emphasis on the Auckland Provincial area, but it is hoped that studies will extend regularly also into the Pacific area. Miss Davidson will work in the present Department of Ethnology and assist with the care of the large research collections as well as carrying out fieldwork. The salary for the post is made possible through the magnificent endowment provided by the late Edward Earle Vaile.

FIJI MUSEUM

The following extracts are from the Annual Report of the Director, Mr. Bruce Palmer B. A. , for the year ending 31. 12. 64 :-

Staff: The usual difficulty was found in retaining young men with sufficient interest in museum work as a vocation, especially in view of the low salary scales which do not attract applicants with suitable academic qualifications. The increasing professional activities of the Museum impose greater demands on local staff who cannot be expected to meet these demands without a long period of staff training. Negotiations with the Art Galleries and Museums' Association of New Zealand indicate that they are interested in trying to help in this matter and it might be possible to arrange for a short period of training in New Zealand for a suitable person. . . .

Visitors: Attendance figures have increased from 29, 000 in 1963 to just on 70, 000 in 1964, although the latter figure was partly inflated by the Methodist Inauguration Week when over 10, 000 visitors passed through the Museum. School and club parties were again regular visitors; talks and lessons were given in many cases but the new Children's corner was not used fully because it was needed to relieve the critical shortage of storage space in the rest of the Museum. Tourists formed a good proportion of all visitors and they seemed to find plenty to interest them in the exhibits. Many overseas visitors did, however, suggest that there be some sort of refreshment service as in many museums elsewhere, because they did find the walk from town enervating in hot weather.

Research: While the traditional and historic periods of Fiji's past are well covered in the literature, there is a marked gap in the prehistoric period. . . The Museum's Archaeological Survey will remedy this to some degree and all sites seen and visited go on file. . . More significant though, is the fairly complete survey of a particular area and in this case the island of Wakaya was chosen. All major sites were surveyed and maps of them have been drawn by Mr. L. E. Thompson of Suva. In 1965 further work will be done on Wakaya to complete this survey.

Excavations were carried out at Karobo, on the south coast of Viti Levu, where a stratified site containing early pottery was located by Fergus Clunie of Suva. . . Further work on this highly important site will continue during 1965.

Mr. Ross Duberal of Geological Survey, Suva, has started on a big project, the examination of and plotting from aerial photographs files of all visible fortified sites on the windward side of Viti Levu. Over 800 have been plotted by this method in conjunction with ground surveys. The material is being coded and mapped for publication.

Publicity: . . . Thanks must be extended. . . to Mr. Rob Wright MBE, who kindly photographed the Belcher paintings of Fiji birds in colour. This will provide the Museum with excellent lecture material and will enable sets of transparencies to be sold.

During the year a policy was inaugurated of bringing to the public in Fiji, the work of artists visiting the Colony. The first of these was that of the Japanese artist Katsura Yabe. . . The eminent English artist Philip Sutton, who spent a year in Levuka, kindly allowed twelve of his charcoal and pastel drawings to be exhibited in the Museum. The most successful, however, was the large exhibition of the work of Nicolai Michoutouchkine and Aloysius Pilioko who transformed the interior of the Museum for the occasion. M. Michoutouchkine's very fine ethnographic

collection of artifacts from the South-west Pacific formed the background for their own thoughtful and original work...

General: Consultations between the Director and Mr. F. Holtom of Larsen, Holtom & Associates have led to the first sketch plans of extensions to the now overcrowded Museum building. This will greatly relieve the critical pressure on storage space and enable greater conservation measures to be taken in the future. Such extensions will create a modern research institution fitted to cater for the professional requirements now being asked of it from abroad, and provide a community centre in an area of Suva that will grow in importance. In addition to this it will enable the Museum staff to undertake much more fundamental educational work with both schoolchildren and adult groups....

During 1965 it is planned to issue the first Fiji Museum scientific publications; these will appear as Fiji Museum Records (for shorter papers) and as Fiji Museum Bulletins (for longer studies). In addition there are to be Special Publications and the first of these is to be "A Field Guide to Fiji Birds" by Robin Mercer, the Honorary Ornithologist. The first paper for the Records is to be "The Strombidae of Fiji" by Walter Cernohorsky, the Honorary Conchologist....

There is a list of 18 papers, written by the Director and Honorary Conchologist during the year, at the end of this excellent, attractively-illustrated report.

TECHNICAL PAPERS

Miss J. Goulding obtained the following leaflets from the American Association of Museums:

- R. O. Hower, Freeze-drying Biological Specimens. 8p. 5 figs. 1964.
J. M. Graham II, A Method of Museum Registration. 8p. illus. 1964.
R. L. Feller, The Deteriorating Effect of Light on Museum Objects: Principles of Photochemistry, the Effect on Varnishes and Paint Vehicles and on Paper. 8p. 5 figs. refs. 1964.
S. A. Gyermek, Conservation of Ethnological Materials. 8p. illus. refs. 1964.
R. D. Buck, A Specification for Museum Airconditioning, and
E. J. Amdur, Humidity Control - Isolated Area Plan. 8p. illus. 1964.
G. H. Myers, Rugs: Preservation, Display and Storage, and Principles of Practical Cleaning for Old and Fragile Textiles. 8p. 4 figs. 1965.

Members may borrow them on application to the Hon. Secretary.

PLANNING MUSEUMS AND ART GALLERIES

The Museum Journal, volume 63 (1 & 2), June-September 1963, contains a series of illustrated papers which should be of value to members in planning new buildings or extensions.

U. S. MUSEUMS

The following extracts are from a statement made by Otto Wittmann, Director of the Toledo Museum of Art and a Vice-President of the American Association of Museums, before the special subcommittee of the arts and humanities of the Senate Labour and Public Welfare Committee on 4. 3. 65:

... It has been determined from recent surveys conducted by the American Association of Museums, and through a joint survey prepared by the Association, the Office of Education, and the Smithsonian Institution that annual museum attendance now considerably exceeds 200 million people... No institutions other than the public schools command an audience of similar size, nor one representing a wider cross section of the community than do museums. The rate of increase of museum attendance has accelerated during the past decade, and now exceeds both the rate of establishment of new museums and, also, the rise in national population.

This rapid growth in public use of museums has created serious problems for and unprecedented pressures on museums. No longer are available funds adequate for operation of the many educational and community services offered by most museums. As public demand for museum services has increased, new museums have been established. One-third of our museums have been established since 1950. In 1930 there were 1,200 museums in the United States and Canada; now there are over 5,000. Growth of public use and proliferation of new museums has resulted in inadequate financial support and understaffing of vital educational programs in the majority of our country's museums...

That the museums today are important educational institutions is clearly evident from the fact that 80% of over 3,400 returns reported formally organized educational or training programs for children, adults, students, volunteers and staff members. An equal number reported informal education, such as lectures, films, cultural events, talks and so forth.

Many museums have college credit programs which are coordinated with universities and schools. Almost all museums receive daily visits from school children during the school year, many prepare teacher training aids to make the trips more meaningful. The correlation of the museum program with that of the school and university curriculum is now a common practice.

Many museums make research facilities available to students and industry as well as to scholars. The museum staff works closely with many local organizations in the community. Designers and industrial specialists draw on museum collections in producing new products. Science students learn from museums; scientific research is often fostered or aided by museums; archaeological expeditions are sponsored by museums. Specialized museum libraries are open to all.

Because of these and other facilities, the museum can no longer be considered a mere store house for treasures. It is an important center for learning in many communities; and can be in many more if adequate funds and staff can be made available to satisfy the public thirst for knowledge. In many smaller communities, the museum provides the only facility available for such programs and is truly the community's cultural center....

With the present higher standard of living in this country and with more and more Americans travelling, it is imperative that museums and national landmarks with their rich heritage and visual evocation of the country's past be kept from decay or destruction from lack of care.

If we consider just the historic museums, some startling figures emerge. The question of preservation is crucial to the historic buildings and their contents, and yet the preservation movement has been from its very beginning largely the work of private individuals, and it remains so today. A 1962 report shows that nearly 68% of the preservation projects are in private hands. The Federal Government accounts for only slightly more than 5% of the projects.

And yet, many smaller American communities are observing the truth of the survey made by the U. S. Department of Commerce itself, that an average of only 28 tourists a day visiting a town with historic attractions will bring in as much money during the year as a new industry or business with a \$100,000 annual payroll.

While it is generally recognized by educators and museum specialists that American museums lead the world in the field of education and cultural programs, this accomplishment also presents museums with serious problems. The most urgent is a financial one. In 1962, the American Association of Museums published statistics on sources of income for art museums, which we believe would be fairly representative of history and science museums as well. Endowment funds represented the largest single source of art museum income, 43%. It must be observed that most such endowment funds were established 20 to 40 years ago, and are no longer adequate to meet today's sharply increased operating costs. This, coupled with the expanded services demanded by the American public today, means that most museum budgets will only allow for salaries that are lower than those of other similar professions. Retirement and hospitalization benefits are the exception rather than the rule.

There are not sufficient funds available for research, conservation, restoration, training, nor for attracting recruits to the museum field. Expanded museum-university programs for training museum personnel are imperative if we are to have adequate staffs for our increasing museums and growing services. This is a matter of grave concern for us, for quality rather than mere quantity should measure the museum's performance. . . .

Museums have played a major part in advancing the present general cultural level of our country. If museums are to continue their cultural leadership, and to develop and expand their community educational services, additional funds from federal, state, municipal, and private sources must be forthcoming. Federal funds should be in the form of matching grants, and the quality of the museum's programs or goals should be evaluated before such grants are made.

We stand on the threshold of realizing a prediction made by the great American statesman, and our second President, John Adams, who wrote in 1780:

"I must study politics and war, that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural history and naval architecture, navigation, commerce and agriculture in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture, statuary, tapestry and porcelain".

GIFT DUTY ON HISTORIC ARTICLES

Mr. V. F. Fisher has suggested that the attention of members be drawn to Section 13 of the Historic Articles Act 1962 as its provisions may be of assistance to donors of historic articles. Section 13 is:-

"Notwithstanding the provisions of the Estate and Gift Duties Act 1955, no gift duty shall be payable in respect of any gift of an historic article to the Minister on behalf of the Crown or to any library, museum, or other public institution for the benefit of the public and no such gift shall be included in the dutiable estate of the donor, notwithstanding that he may die within three years after having made the gift. "

SECURITY

The Unesco quarterly review Museum, volume 17 (4), 1964 contains an illustrated, indexed report on The Protection of Museums Against Theft by André Noblecourt, Technical Adviser on security to the museums of France and chairman of the ICOM subcommittee for security.
