International Council of Museums
Natural History Committee Newsletter

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ICOM NATHIST Archive Project

In 2013, ICOM NATHIST reinstated the previously held practice of communicating through a regularly updated website, after a roughly three-year hiatus.

Earlier this year, we uploaded the ICOM NATHIST newsletter archive onto the web, at the following link:

https://icomnathist.wordpress.com/archive/

All newsletters going back to 1978 (issue #1) are available as a pdf. We have subsequently had requests to revitalize the practice of producing occasional newsletters, to ensure the long-term recording of communications.

Much of our communication is now using online forms and other technologies. For instance, the 2017 conference will be handled through an accessible standalone microsite produced by Carnegie Museum of Natural History, the host for this conference.

Our solution, then, is to produce an annual digest of the various materials produced by ICOM NATHIST, collated into newsletter form. This will include information from all sites, the main site as well as the Ethics Working Group and Wildlife Trafficking Working Group. Issue Number 36 covers 2013 communications. Newsletters for 2014 through 2016 will be produced early next year.

Those wishing to produce something specific for one of our newsletters (e.g. a specific article or even a separate issue dedicated to a particular topic) should contact us at the online form provided on the ICOM NATHIST website.

A note about the ICOM NATHIST logo

In 2013, ICOM underwent a rebranding exercise. As part of this all international committees, including ICOM NATHIST, have received new logos. We are currently engaging with the Secretariat-based graphic designer to update the logo to include the salamander "A", which has become a

recognized symbol of the committee for the past 10 years. Once this is accomplished, sometime in 2017, we will begin to update the logo on all communications, including our newsletters.

ICOM NATHIST in 2013

Note: not all photographs from the original web articles are included in this newsletter, due to space considerations.

Communication

Posted on August 30, 2013

At the last conference, we heard back from you that you are interested in having closer communication about the activities of ICOM NATHIST and, especially, how you can be more closely involved. One good way is through our Facebook page. You are also able to contact us through the form on the Membership Page. We're looking forward to hearing from you about your ideas, events and activities.

2013 Conference in Rio de Janeiro

Posted on August 30, 2013

The 2013 Conference and Annual General Meeting of ICOM NATHIST was held as part of the 23rd Global Conference of the International Council of Museums, in Rio de Janeiro from 11 – 18 August.

This year, we were able to celebrate a number of important achievements, including the adoption of the Code of Ethics for Natural History Museums. The text in English is available at the website of the ICOM NATHIST Ethics Working Group, and translations into French, Spanish and other languages will follow shortly.

Stay tuned for a fuller update on our meeting, along with a downloadable version of the minutes form the AGM. Meanwhile, here are some photos from our time together.

ICOM NATHIST Archive Project

Posted on September 29, 2013

We have started an archive section of this website to make available past publications of ICOM NATHIST, as well as a repository for new ones. If you have, or know of, something that you feel should be part of that archive, please contact us. Similarly, if you would like to contribute something to an upcoming newsletter, please let us know.

Announcement: National Grants for American Museums

Posted on September 18, 2013

The American Alliance of Museums is currently accepting proposals for the Museums Connect grant program. An initiative of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and

Cultural Affairs in conjunction with the Alliance, Museums Connect strengthens connections and cultural understanding between people in the United States and abroad through innovative projects facilitated by museums and executed by their communities. The program's mission is to build global communities through cross-cultural exchanges while also supporting U.S. foreign policy goals such as youth empowerment and promoting disability rights.

Museums Connect offers up to $100,000 for projects that address issues of critical need in the museums' communities. Partnerships consist of at least one U.S. museum and at least one non-U.S. museum; museums may find partners through existing relationships or by posting a profile on the Museums Connect website. Projects for the upcoming cycle must be completed between August 2014-July 2015.

For further information and deadlines, visit http://www.aam-us.org/resources/international/museumsconnect.

Nuevo blog post sobre ICOM NATHIST en Español

Posted on October 28, 2013

Profesor Fernando Almarza Rísquez ha escrito sobre ICOM NATHIST en el sitio web de la Fundación Ilam. ¡Echa un vistazo!

Annual Conference 11-16 October, 2014

Posted on October 6, 2013

We are pleased to announce that the 2014 ICOM NATHIST conference will be held from 11-16 October in Croatia, from kindly hosted by the Croatian Museums of Zagorje.

The theme of the conference is ***The future of natural history museums: relevance, balance and innovation***, which gives

plenty of scope for philosophical debate, innovation and reflection.

Our hosts: The Croatian Museums of Zagorje combines five museums in the area of Krapina-Zagorje county with headquarters in Upper Stubica. These museums include the Museum of the Krapina Neanderthal, pictured above.

We will very shortly be calling for papers and providing registration details. You can receive up-to-the-minute information by subscribing to our e-Newsletter.

Talk: Natural History Museum Materials as Cultural Assets

Posted on October 2, 2013

Dr Osamu Kamei

On the 13th of August 2013, Dr Osamu Kamei Head, CTR of the History of Japanese Industrial Technology National Museum of Nature and Science (formerly, The National Science Museum) gave a talk *Natural History Museum Materials as Cultural Assets* as part of the Annual General Meeting of ICOM NATHIST in Rio de Janeiro.

The talk provided considerable personal insight into the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami, as well as an opportunity to think about the place of natural history museums in responding to issues in the wake of a natural disaster.

In the presentation, Dr Kamei made the point that natural history museum materials should be on a par with fabricated objects in the consideration of protecting cultural assets. This resonates well with the Code of Ethics for Natural History Museums that was ratified at the same conference.

UNEP Children's Painting Competition

Posted on November 8, 2013

UNEP Children's Painting Competition. Click on the picture to follow the link.

ICOM NATHIST is pleased to be associated with The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in promoting their 23rd International Children's Painting Competition on the Environment.

The International Children's Painting Competition on the Environment is organized every year by UNEP, the Japan-based Foundation for Global Peace and Environment (FGPE), Bayer and Nikon Corporation. It has been held since 1991 and has received more than 3 million entries from children in over 150 countries.

Children have until the 15th of March 2014 to create and submit paintings on the theme of Food Waste. Click here for a PDF brochure with more information and instructions. UNEP also partners on a website "Think-Eat-Save" http://www.thinkeatsave.org/ which provides additional inspiration.

The theme of food waste has been addressed in the museum sector, for instance by the UK Museums Association (read the article here), and museums' engagement with children make this an ideal subject for public and educational programming. Natural history museums are especially well placed to think about this important topic because of it's connection to broader ecosystems. We encourage you to lend your support by holding children's painting competitions in your institution.

Meeting: Indian Council of Science Museums

Posted on November 8, 2013

The Indian Council of Science Museums in collaboration with the Indian Museum, Kolkata, is holding a meeting from the 10th to the 14th of February 2014. The theme is Strategic Transformations: Museums in the 21st Century. Please click on the announcement or here for more information.

New Director General for ICOM

Posted on December 30, 2013

Dr Anne-Catherine Robert-Hauglustaine, the new Director General of ICOM

On the 12 of December, ICOM Chairs received the following announcement from Hans-Martin Hinz, President of ICOM:

To the Chairpersons of the National Committees, the International Committees, Regional Alliances, Affiliated Organisations and Technical Committees

NEW DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR ICOM

Dear colleagues,

It is a pleasure for me to announce that ICOM has a new Director General. The Executive Council of ICOM, in its 127th session, unanimously approved the recommendation of the Selection Committee for a new Director General.

The new Director General of ICOM is Dr. Anne-Catherine Robert-Hauglustaine. She will start working for ICOM on 1 May 2014. The interim Director General Mrs. Hanna Pennock will continue until 16 May 2014 in order to assure a smooth transition.

Anne-Catherine Robert-Hauglustaine is the elected Treasurer of ICOM and will step back from this position on 30 April. The Executive Council, in its next meeting on 4-5 April, will decide upon a new Treasurer, according to the Statutes.

I am very happy with this choice of the Selection Committee, given Anne-Catherine's experience in developing exhibitions in the field of science museums, her having chaired the International Committee on Exhibition Exchange, her management experience and her knowledge of the French law, as well as the fact that she is a university lecturer in museology at the Sorbonne.

Follow this link to the ICOM website for more information.

We look forward to working with Anne-Catherine into the future and wish her the very best settling into the new role.

Season's Greetings

Posted on December 20, 2013

Blue Morpho butterfly on poinsettia. Photo: Peter Kemmer 2011

Dear Members and Friends of ICOM NATHIST,

It has been an exciting and busy for us. Platform 2022 went back online after changing servers, we solidified our relationships with UNEP, WAZA, BGCI and others, including jointly presenting at the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity

conference in Hyderabad.

The conference in Brazil last August was a great success. A new Board was formed, the Code of Ethics for Natural History Museums was ratified, and we made significant progress on a number of partnership projects.

Communication about this activity has been made easier with a new website and e-News as well as a revitalised Facebook page.

It promises to be a stimulating meeting in Croatia next October. We' will be back to you early in the new year with a call for papers and information about registration.

Until then, warmest wishes of the season. We look forward to seeing many of you in 2014.

ICOM NATHIST Ethics Working Group

New Website for ICOM NATHIST

September 4, 2013

The website for ICOM has moved to http://icomnathist.wordpress.com/. There you'll find updated information about our committee, its activities and membership to the International Council of Museums.

Museums and Illicit Trafficking of Wildlife

October 20, 2013

Forest elephants in the Mbeli River, Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, Congo. Photo: Thomas Breuer

The International Herald Tribune just reported that in Zimbabwe last Wednesday a court sentenced a poacher to more than 15 years in prison for poisoning and killing elephants with cyanide. This incident comes just a day after the Zimbabwean Parks and Wildlife Authority said 100 elephants had been killed by cyanide for their ivory in a single national park in just over a month.

Hunting elephants for ivory and rhinos for horn is a huge international black market heading in Asia and the Middle East for ornaments, as talismans and for use in traditional medicine. A hundred elephants have died in Hwange National Park alone due to cyanide poisoning and 12 people have since been arrested and four have been convicted and sentenced.

The Convention on Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) reports that annually, "international wildlife trade is estimated to be worth billions of dollars and to include hundreds of millions of plant and animal specimens. The trade is diverse, ranging from live animals and plants to a vast array of wildlife products derived from them, including food products, exotic leather goods, wooden musical instruments, timber, tourist curios and medicines. Levels of exploitation of some animal and plant species are high and the trade in them, together with other factors, such as habitat loss, is capable of heavily depleting their populations and even bringing some species close to extinction."

Natural history museums should be thinking deeply about this topic. Aside from the ethical mandate to protect populations from which their specimens come, there is also a pressing issue – theft of increasingly valuable specimens responding to a burgeoning black market. In 2011 a rash of thefts of rhino horn began from museums across the UK and Europe. At the time of writing, at least 200 such robberies have taken place from museums and private collections in Europe alone in an epidemic that has spread across five continents. This has prompted many museums to take rhinoceros material off display to replace it with replicas. With museums proving such accessible targets, other objects such as gemstones and even specimens of extinct species could come under threat. The 2009 theft of almost 300 bird skins worth millions of pounds from the Natural History Museum in Tring is a case in point.

Each new theft increases the market for natural history material, making the situation of living populations even more perilous. Save the Rhino International suggests that museum thefts stimulate poaching of the remaining 20,000

white rhinos and fewer than 5,000 black rhinos in the wild.

HOW TO HELP?

ICOM NATHIST is interested in helping natural history museums address this issue globally. We are working with other international organisations to develop programming, but we're also interested in gathering ideas from members, as well as the scientific and museum communities worldwide. We welcome your comments here, or feel free to contact us directly.

These activities sit alongside ICOM's effort to fight illicit traffic in cultural goods. See more about their programme here.

Call for new members of the ICOM NATHIST Ethics Working Group

November 13, 2013

ICOM NATHIST is accepting expressions of interest to be on their Ethics Working Group. Ideally, members should be members of ICOM NATHIST, however we will consider others as appropriate.

To register, please fill out the form below and we will be in contact.

Vietnam man caught cooking tiger bones

November 13, 2013

8 November 2013 Police in the north central Vietnamese province of Ha Tinh caught a man cooking tiger bones to make traditional medicine in his home. This incident occurs a year after a rash of raids by police of makers of "tiger bone paste", which is said to treat a variety of ailments, including rheumatism.

Tiger bone paste is strictly for the elite – as glue, the bones of a 200kg tiger is worth VND1 billion (US$48,000), or VND20 million (US$960) per ounce. To fetch these prices, it must be made from pure tiger, unadulterated with the bones of other animals.

Obviously, with prices like these, pressure on the wild tigers is extreme. According to the IUCN Red List of threatened species, tigers are "Endangered", with fewer than 2,500 mature individuals left in the wild. According to this sort, the biggest threat is *Illegal trade in high-value Tiger products including skins, bones, meat and tonics is a primary threat to Tigers, which has led to their recent disappearance from broad areas of otherwise suitable habitat, and continues at unsustainable rates.*

With dwindling natural populations, it's not a farfetched to wonder if tiger material in museums could come under threat of theft, much as rhinoceros has recently been. (See that story here.) More than ever, museums need a mechanism to address poaching and illicit trafficking, from a practical standpoint as well as an ethical one.

Book Announcement – Scandalous: A Reader on Art and Ethics

Eric Dorfman / November 10, 2013

Book Announcement The Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm*, and* Sternberg Press *are pleased to announce the publication of Scandalous: A Reader on Art and Ethics (ed. Nina Möntmann). A book launch will take place at Iaspis in Stockholm, with presentations by Nina Möntmann and Måns Wrange and a film screening by Renzo Martens.*

Recent encounters between art and life, the ubiquity of images of violence and humiliation in visual culture and the media, and the persistence of controversial debates on public and participatory art projects are raising fundamental questions about the importance of ethical decisions in art and curating. How far can provocation in art go, before it becomes cynical and abusive? Does "good censorship" exist? Are

ethical decisions seen as more urgent in participatory art?

This reader introduces current notions of ethics in several contexts related to the cultural field. Responding to the instrumentalization of ethics as a privileged tool of neoliberalism, the reader claims the need for an ethics that critically reflects the mechanisms of contemporary global power structures. The contributions discuss models of subjective and situational ethics and pit them against a canon of unquestioned principles and upturned notions of ethics and human rights. – From the publisher

Scandalous : A Reader on Art and Ethics
Edited by Nina Möntmann
Texts by Petra Bauer and Annette Krauss, Franco Berardi Bifo, Galit Eilat, Ronald Jones, Maria Karlsson and Måns Wrange, Nina Möntmann, Peter Osborne, Marcus Steinweg, Nato Thompson; conversations between Simon Critchley and Miguel Á. Hernández-Navarro, Renzo Martens and T. J. Demos

16.6 x 22.5 cm, 178 pages, 16 color and 6 b/w ills., softcover
ISBN 978-1-934105-87-0

More on Moa

Eric Dorfman / December 31, 2013

Pre 1920s illustration showing two Ratites alongside the Giant moa.

A couple of years ago, we posted on the ethics of fossil hunting and made special reference to collecting moa sub-fossils in New Zealand. Since then, a group of New Zealand natural heritage advocates are calling on the Government to change legislation to provide better protection for the remains of extinct native species such as moa and huia.

Disturbingly, the trend for selling skeletons, bones, eggs and feathers online is increasing in New Zealand. Material that is collected illegally means that the genetic material is lost. Even if it does eventually end up in the care of a

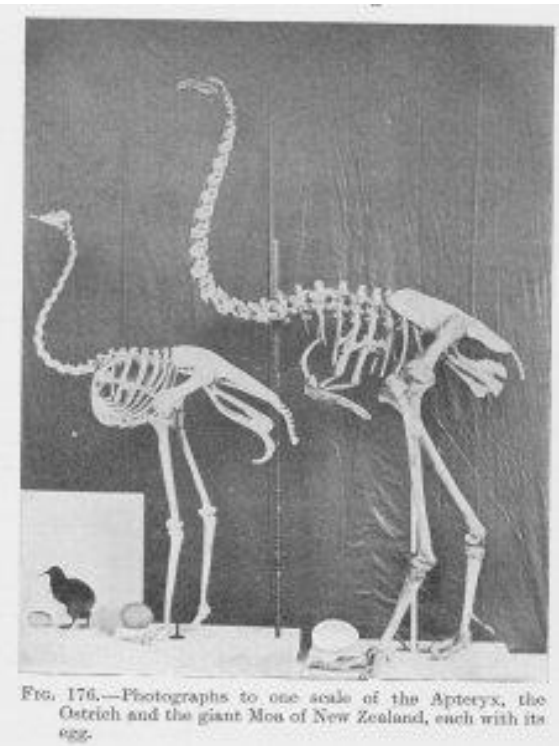
FIG. 176.—Photographs to one scale of the Apteryx, the Ostrich and the giant Moa of New Zealand, each with its egg.

researcher, the lack of documentation about its situation *in situ* means that critical information cannot be recovered. Added to this, is the lack of consultation with Māori over customary rights.

The group, comprising academics, researchers, and museum professionals, have been tracking online sales and have lodged a submission to Government calling for a law change to ban the sale of extinct natural heritage items. While the removal of any material from an archaeological site or conservation land is already illegal in New Zealand, anything said to have been found on private land, or collected in the 1960s or earlier, can be sold under current laws, which makes a neat loophole for those looking to sell fossils illegally. Click here for the full article.