KEYNOTE SPEECHES – DISCOURS PRINCIPAUX – DISCURSOS PRINCIPALES

Museums for Social Harmony
Musées pour l'harmonie sociale
Museos para la armonía social

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MEMORY, REVERENCE AND INNOVATION –WHICH MUSEUMS?
– Lourdes Arizpe

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It is a privilege to be present and to be able to contribute to an ICOM Congress that will, we all hope, place a marker in our understanding of museums in the constellation of the cultural and scientific life world we are building towards the future. Such an understanding will require many, many intellectual and political negotiations so it is very important that this Congress is held in China, a country which will be a key contributor to building this sustainable future.

In the coming years, people will conduct an infinite number of experiments in ways of living together to create a sustainable world. Museums must be partners in providing the building blocks to find these new sustainable practices: scientific knowledge needed for action; memories that may lead to unity and reverence for the collective commons; and contrasts of diversity and choice that foster innovation. In other words, a reinvented theory about museums as the "alephs" –you remember, as Jorge Luis Borges told the story, that alephs are world we can barely see with out own eyes but which contain, in a tiny scale, everything in the world—that, by concentrating meanings and values, are links in strings that bind all cultures of the world. A string theory of museums, if you will.

At present, museums, as key institutions in the cultural life world, are caught between two seemingly conflicting demands. On the one hand, that of enhancing resignified forms of national or ethnic identities on a global stage, as markets and technological infrastructures increasingly foster competition and redistribute power in new, unexpected ways. And, very importantly, as a reified concept of culture becomes one more instrument in that competition. The range of what is expected of museums has now opened up so brightly, like the tail of a paon, that one wonders is there is still a single animal that can carry such an irisdescent, rainbow coloured outgrowth that may allow us to give it a single name. Which museums, then, will we be talking about to create the future?

On the other, museums, as defined historically, is expected to provide the foundations of knowledge and sensitivity for the communicative engagement to build a new form of universalism. The new tasks of proposing rather than deconstructing, of negotiating overarching commonalities rather than a politics of endless difference, of agreeing on fairness and equality rather than continued legal and illegal abuse of the powerless, all these tasks require new capabilities which can only be sustained by a leadership that looks beyond immediate interests, towards long-term shared power and prestige.

Such is the maelstrom of conceptual and political challenges we are facing at present that practically all the concepts used in the preceding paragraph are being hotly contested. Both the concept of museum and of heritage now seem to be the lightning rods where such contestation concentrates its constructive fury. In turn, they have become the beacons of the two fundamental processes that are changing the context in which we work: the debate on ethics and ownership and that of what is cultural heritage.

On the one hand, in the debate of the opposing camps of either demanding repatriation and of keeping "universal museums", the underlying question is that of "Whose Culture is it anyway?", the very apt title of one of Kwame Anthony Appiah´s chapter in his recent book Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers[1]. Anthony Appiah reclaims a tradition of creative exchange and "imaginative engagement" across lines of difference, with a "cosmopolitan ethics". As in previous historical epochs, we are witnessing a gradual convergence towards key concepts. The "global ethics" which we had posited in Our Creative Diversity, the report of the United Nations Commission on Culture and Development, and also in the Report

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[1] Appiah, Anthony Kwame. 2007. **Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers**. New York: W.W. Norton & Co**.**

condenses Emmanuel Kant´s golden rule. This convergence seems to me to presage the new consensus that must be drawn about the museums of tomorrow in a world in need of sustainability.

Ethics are indeed surfacing in practically all fields of the arts and humanities, as was evident in the activities of the International Social Science Council, a sister organization to ICOM. Many other authors have written on this, for example, Phyllis Mauch Messenger on the Ethics of collecting cultural property: Whose Culture? Whose Property?--[2]. Colin Renfrew writes on Looting, legitimacy and ownership: the ethics of archeology[3]. Christopher and Geoffrey Scarre explain that "archeologists are becoming increasingly conscious of their ethical responsibilities in the discovery, interpretation and custodianship of the archeological record"[4]. The crucial question n such ethics is, rather, according to Ames, how to apply scholarly knowledge, to benefit who and what views must be developed to share and balance political equality?[5]

The second major issue that will influence the future of museums is, of course, the ownership question of cultural objects and content, which has two different debate routes. One follows the debate on the limiting views on cultural property: John Corman distinguishes four different types of property as generally defined by lawyers and economists, yet concludes that "property" is an inappropriate concept for cultural heritage[6]. For many years, the World Bank conceptualized its cultural projects on the basis of "cultural property", while Unesco brought to bear in its cultural programs, broader foundational concepts: memory, authenticity, meaning, diversity and creativity. The question at the rock bottom of this spiraling debate is whether economics as heuristic method can also encompass all cultural processes. After debating this question fiercely at a Bellagio meeting sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation in 2002, we came to the conclusion that culture does have dimensions that cannot be understood elucidated as an economic transaction. The title of the book that summarized this debate is explicit: Beyond Price…

The second process that has propelled dusty, dormant artifacts from museums into a dustbowl of polemics is the "Politics of Cultural Heritage", again, the title of an article by Magnus Fiskesjô, one of many publications with similar titles, but which, importantly, was published in the book Reclaiming Chinese Society: the new Social Activism edited by Lee Ching Kwan and Hsien You-tien[7]. They explain that, in China, at present, there has been a shift toward "the social", oriented towards "constructing a harmonious society", and that this social activism has made social justice its primary goal. May I say that, as a Mexican, coming from a country that is collapsing because the social and the cultural were left out of government policies only geared towards economic growth, that it is vital that a sustainable human development be the blueprint for the future.

One must say that, in visiting China, one is overwhelmed by the size of what is visibly growing, although, much more importantly, by what is the culturally intangible trend being projected into the future. Indeed, one may feel China is a living museum, if one connects ´Siang Khan and the wall of China, to Zhang Hu´s voyages in the Pacific and the Atlantic. Interestingly, these voyages were left to oblivion and its precious cargo of knowledge was left unacknowledged. Was it because no public museums existed to preserve such cargo? This is a deliberately provocative question, only to signal how museums do not exist except in a constellation of political, scientific and cultural policies and institutions. My point is that museums, if they are debated only in terms of existing and changing institutions, quickly run up against demands and debates that are unresolvable in the field itself of museology.

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[2] Mauch Messenger, Phyllis. 1999. **The Ethics of collecting cultural property: whose culture? Whose Property?**...........
[3] Renfrew, Colin. 2000**. Looting, legitimacy and ownership: the ethics of archeology**. London: Duckworth.
[4] Scarre, Christopher and Geofrey Scarre. 2006. …………………………………..
[5] Ames, Michael. 2002. Museología: la interrupción. **Museum Internacional** 227, 2, 2005. See also Bouquet, Mary, ed. 2001. **Academic Anthropology and the Museum: back to the Future**. New York: Oxford.
Kreps, Christina. 2003.**Liberating Culture: Cross-Cultural perspectives on Museums, Curation, and Heritage Preservation.** London: Routledge.
Shelton, Anthony. 2000. "Museum ethnography: an imperial science" in Hallam, E., and B. Street, eds. **Cultural Encounters: Encountering Otherness**.
[6] Corman, John. 2005. **Against cultural property: archeology, heritage and ownership**…………
[7] Ching Kwan Lee and You-tien Hsien, eds. 2010. **Reclaiming Chinese Society: the new Social Activism.** New York: Routledge

Culture as the paramount emblem of power

Paradoxically, the appeal of culture as a representational emblem stems from its conceptual universality – even as it is contested today--, and from the elevated status attributed to it by classical claims that culture and, especially, art, are the "supreme form" of human creativity, as André Malraux called it in the 1950´s to evoke "the museum of imagination". A different kind of legitimacy, of course, was attributed to culture by Adorno, Benjamin and Horkheimer, in the Frankfurt school of the 1930´s and 40's as possibly the "conscience of society". Culture, in these connotations, is given the status of being above politics, which is why people generally trust culture so much, while distrusting politics more in more, a trend which has, surprisingly, come very much to the fore in recent years.

When John Mach, writing about the British Museum, states that "…the repatriation debates which engage contemporary museums often have to do with negotiating questions of unresolved identity"[8], he falls short in describing the vast expanse of the present dilemmas and disputes about world cultures, politics and recognition. Since the nineties, as culture has come to substitute political ideologies and become a contested instrument of governance, there has been an aesthetization of world politics but also a politization of cultural goods and content, that traditional specialists in the field, including us anthropologists, are far from having incorporated into our analyses. I agree, then, with Lowenthal in that we can only use the past in a fruitful way if we realize that inheriting is also transforming. This is especially true in the field of ethnography and intangible cultural heritage.

It must first be made clear that there are several different histories of museums. For example, Glenn Penny, in studying the German ethnographic museums shows that "the museum´s goal was not to instruct its visitors with didactic exhibits or project particular principles through its displays. These displays were meant to function as tools of induction and comparative analysis that scientists could use to locate and explore the elementary characteristics of a unitary humanity and the fundamental nature of "the human being"[9]. Indeed, as Lynch and Alberti caution "museums were complicit in the construction of physical and cultural hierarchies that underpinned racist thought from the Enlightenment until well into the 20th century, in marked contrast to the inclusionary role that many now seek to fulfill[10].

I would like to point out, however, that there were many other museological processes going on in the world since the 19th century than the stark confrontation between colonial powers and colonized regions. To mention only a few. The history of Latin American and Caribbean anthropology and museology is still to be written and, in several places, at a given moment it surpassed Euro-North American research and cultural institutions. To explore this idea and since I believe in evidence-based science as the only way forward, in this paper I would like to extract from my experiences working in museums and in cultural policy, that which seems to me to illuminate the basic components museums must have to become the links in the knowledge strings towards sustainability. The main areas of analysis will be ethnographic museums, centers of intangible cultural heritage, and institutionalized agoras of identities.

Ethnography: a scientific prism

I worked as a student in the Ethnographic Vaults of the National Museum of Anthropology of History where the National School of Anthropology was actually housed. As I did so, I came under the strange fascination of dimly lit deposits where ethnographic objects cascaded as in a still life, from the improvised shelves down to the floor. I remember I went through two experiential moments there. The first was one late afternoon when, after having classified basket after basket, noting designs, colours, forms, production

[8] Mach, John. 2003. **The Museum of the Mind: Art and Culture in World Cultures**:21.
[9] Penny, 2002:3. He also explains that the history of German museums has until recently been focused either in locating the antecedents of racist and biological theories promoted during the Nazi era or to expose ethnologists connections to imperialist desires and colonialist policies.
[10] Lynch, Bernardette and Samuel Alberti. "Legacies of prejudice: racism, co-production and radical trust in the museum. http://www.artsmanagement.net/downloads/Lynch-Alberti.pdf

types and so on, from regions all over Mexico and even the U.S. Southwest, I was struck by how basic similarities in all of them. Different languages, different mode of production, all different, yet so similar. A few years later, while copying by hand the objects from Melanesia and Polinesia at the British Museum, the same impression went deeper into my mind. It was those two seminal experiences and so many others in so many other museums in different countries, that made me a fervorous believer in the Human Area Relations File and its oh, so optimistic expectation of finding human universals. We have lost that hope, but it is no wonder, then, that I believe that processual and especially, generative models, including Chomsky´s theory of generative grammar and such associated theories can lead us to reconstruct a new concept of universalizable norms and cosmopolitan agreements. And this is why I strongly support post-colonial critiques of imperialist or dominant exploitations, but I dig a trench to stop extreme militancies who state that no commonalities are there to find new political arrangements to bridge post-multiculturalism. For the same reason, I also believe that the concept of humanity has been too hastily put aside, precisely at the time when the nature-culture debate has dissolved and genetics is providing firm grounds to assert that a new concept of humanity is indeed in the making.

The second experience I wish to extract from my work as a student at the National Museum of Anthropology was the shock I received on realizing that no matter how accomplished a museographic display I could create, no exhibit could ever reflect the beautiful, roaring river of theculture of those nahua speakers I had lived with for two years. No diaporama, no reconstructed thatched huts, no glass cage could remotely capture this life.

Soon after I would find out, that this is the agonizing process one goes through in creating displays, in writing texts, with pretexts, subtexts and all. Moreover, that the same agony went into writing anthropology, literature or any work of art. And yet, those who saw the display said they were awed by the beautiful weaving, the handsome headdress and so on. It gave them, precisely, an appreciation of cultures they knew nothing about. So, something is transmitted. And that transmission has been valued and is valuable.

So, two thoughts may be highlighted here. The first, stated in a very schematic form, is that museums must be part of a larger narrative which in the past has been political but which, more fundamentally, has to be scientific. And the achievements of science, in spite of critiques, are today about to be abandoned in any country of the world. Therefore, all museums, have a narrative of science they can connect to, even if they are art or other cultural kinds of museums.

In many aspects, of course, the scientific narratives that framed museums must be changed, as they are changing already. But the assumption must be that museums acquire sense only as part of a larger edifice of meaning and questions. This also includes achievements in political, social and cultural advancements such as the principles of democracy, participation, recognition and human rights which now drive the demands of nations and ethnic groups to have museums which reflect their own idioms of identity. The question is, now, do old museums have to bend backwards to fulfill these new aspirations, or should new ones be created, better equipped, to deal with new processes of recognition, archiving, inventorying and displaying? In answering this question the issue of selectivity comes to the fore.

Questioning the Questions

Having said the above, I would now like to extract from my own experience my critique of ethnographic museums. Yes, ethnographic collections were always highly selective. Yes, that selection sometimes implied values of discrimination and racism, but other values were present as well. The wish to know other peoples, the will to preserve and admire their cultures, the unending question in our heads, how does this world work, how do other peoples survive, how do they think, how can we communicate? In México, the questions that led to the very original museology of the National Museum of Anthropoogy and History also came from two very different narratives. One that came from foreign scientific texts, but had it only been that, the Museum would have been identical to the Louvre or the British Museum and it wasn't. Because there was another plural, tumultuous narrative that came, partly from a State held accountable to the nationalistic and social demands of the Mexican Revolution. But by the 1950's this narrative included various very robust cultural and artistic and opposition which gave us anthropology students another narrative: that of wanting

to eradicate the deep inequalities and marginalization of a majority of Mexicans, especially Indians. These diverse but strong movements led to the massacre of 1968, which only deepened the resolve of all of us young scientists to go further in studying and explaining and doing advocacy to change México. Today, given the social and cultural regression in Mexico, this narrative has only become broader and stronger.

The point I want to make here is that the history of museums is very different in different countries and must not be subsumed, again, underneath the history of museums linked to the colonial experience in metropolitan countries. Nor is it a history exclusively of governments assigning a role to anthropology or ethnology in the subjection of colonized peoples but of opposition political ideologies, artists mobilizations, cultural movements, interest in publics about ethnography all converging towards supporting, strengthening and broadening ethnographic museums, as for example, Glenn Penny has shown for German ethnographic museums. These pluralistic histories of ethnographic museums are only beginning to be known, and have not even been recorded in many developing countries. These histories are much more complex than processes of simple imitation of Western museums. And falling into the limited conduits of heated debates about museums in metropolitan countries is of little help to the majority of plural cultural groups in developing countries.

This is very important because, today, different countries are at different moments of constructing or reconstructing, at the same time two levels of identity. On the one hand, a renewed national identity that will give them presence in the current transformation of the world order, especially emerging nations such as China, but with some countries such as Mexico falling far behind socially and culturally. On the other, giving greater recognition to internal cultural and ethnic groups while acknowledging that governments will be unable to provide the funding to build an infinity of museums to attend to each cultural group's demand.

Re-inventing humanity

It is paradoxical to realize that, just at the historical stage when sustainability and harmonization of national interests towards cosmopolitan cooperation are needed, the politics of differences are cascading towards a confrontation of identities at every level. Such fragmentation is, in fact, artificial in the context of a globalization which centralized decisions in only eight countries and has only recently broadened this number to the G 20.

In such a context, the critique of universality must not mean rejecting all previous ideas but, rather, re-inventing a new conception of humankind with broader intellectual and cultural foundations. On the basis of the postmodern, postcolonial and postmulticultural critiques, the wealth of knowledge already acquired can now be transformed into new, universalizable concepts. An example of this can be found in anthropology, which began dissolving its eurocentrism in the nineties as it turned towards more interpretive approaches, dealing with emerging urban and diasporic multicultural settings and incorporating the viewpoints of diverse world anthropologies.

Ethnographies, in particular, have been strongly critiqued and yet, the history of anthropology and ethnology has been very different in different regions. In Latin America and the Caribbean, generally, anthropologists and ethnologists were the strongest advocates in assisting Indian communities to fight for the conservation of their cultures and their rights, as they still are. Of course, some Indian leaders then are critical of this protective action, yet it was the presence of museums of ethnography that gave visibility and valorization to Indian cultures, and this, as some of their leaders told me, gave them pride.

In the same way that, years later, a Filipino cultural promoter told me, as Assistant-Director for Culture in Unesco, that the inclusion of Manila in the World Heritage List gave them so much pride because "it is the pride of all", that is, of the whole world[11]. To make such pride a global recognition, it has to be placed alongside other sites chosen as exceptional or very important instances of human creation –or, sometimes, destruction--.

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[11] Arizpe, Lourdes. 1999. ……………………in **Conservation…..**Los Angeles: Getty Museum**.**

An important point is that this recognition and pride is lined with reverence. The fact that a commonality is built, by framing a tangible or an intangible cultural good in a world list, or in a national inventory. I believe that we should not forget that the silence, and the suspension of time that accompanies the illusion of permanence in traditional museums is part of the narrative that they have always offered. If anything, museums must leave in us a feeling of reverence.

One may contend that, in the case of ethnographic objects and representations this is even more important, since the prestige given by this framing and displaying I museums, in the case of many countries is a frontal attack against the discrimination and marginalization that such indigenous or minority groups may receive in the society outside.

Another, very outcome, may also a consequence of ethnographic collections. One striking example is that of urban neo-indigenous groups that have emerged in México. One of these groups, who call themselves "Concheros" –because they use the conch shells, as in ancient Mesoamerica, to bring together followers—was first made up of indigenous and non-indigenous rural migrants who needed to carve out a new identity for themselves in the city and, very importantly, to place each of them individually in a new social hierarchical community dedicated to the purpose of ritual dancing. Very interestingly, these groups went to the National Museum of Anthropology and History to copy and redesign the symbols, dress and ritual items for their dancing. Significantly, such groups have proliferated, now not only in Mexico City but also in other Mexican cities and, again significantly, are now including more and more middle-class dancers.

My own view is that ethnographic collections are important, although elements that are significant for cultural groups must be given back. Yet, even so, such collections are valuable because they were never exact representations of the cultures, which, as we now know, is an epistemological impossibility anyway. They fill in, instead, a particular intellectual and political constellation of people's ways of being. Those collections were part of a willfully defined scientific enterprise, driven by the Enlightenment, that has certainly been shared by many developing countries and that has produced the technologies that link the world in a globalized maze of communications and exchanges. Part of that enterprise was to conserve the "cultures" of other peoples around the world.

That the descendants of these groups, today, have decided to change their own names, their languages, their dress codes and their intangible heritage performances is their right. But this only means that new institutions are now needed that may keep the record, or house, or otherwise make available, these new "ways of being" in a culturally and politically redefined culturescape. It would seem that, to dismantle the former ethnographic museums while not having found, as yet, viable alternative institutions for cultural diversity runs the danger of leading to an archipielago of inward-looking culture units even more isolated in a world in which communications are rapidly leaving behind isolated cultural groups.

Understood in this new way, ethnography is still possible, but building ethnographic narratives and displays in museums without the intervention of the culture holders is no longer tenable. An in-between site, that leads to fascinating experimentation, is that of museums of intangible cultural heritage. But are they museums? As the former Director of one of the them, the National Museum of Popular Cultures of Mexico[12], I will try to summarize a few of the main challenges it posed.

Capturing the flow

Intangible cultural heritage, a term which brings in ethnography, folk art, folklore, among other activities, still a construction site, has challenged us into building museums around constantly reinterpreted, infinitely imaginative living performances. The selection of six domains in the Unesco 2003 Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage was one of the most protracted discussions among anthropologists, linguists,

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[12] The National Program of Popular Cultures was set up by a group of anthropologists, writers and cultural activists --in which I was a student-- headed by Rodolfo Stavenhagen in 1980; the National Museum of Popular Cultures was set up in 1983 and generated a new museology and a pro-active cultural center.

lawyers and cultural officials I have ever been part of. Cultural productions of all kinds in many cultures, overrun this attempt at classification and, yet, these domains have been extremely useful in establishing threads of communication that have generated most interesting debates and decisions in international arenas.

Different countries had already taken a variety of initiatives in this field, from programs of Living Treasures in Corea and Japan, to arts and crafts museums in the United States, France and other European countries. In México, the National Museum of Popular Cultures became a very successful laboratory, by giving greater flexibility in opening a space for active cultural groups in all domains and in creating a public awareness of the need to valorize certain highly marginalized cultural activities. For example, the culture of fishing communities, the world of the circus, the craft of comic books, indigenous techniques in colouring and textiles, nearly forgotten forms of Mexican cuisine and many other cultural and urban art forms. Most importantly, the Museum held open competitions to safeguard the memories of rural teachers, craftswomen, folk singers and other groups whose origins and activities would otherwise have been lost.

The idea of the Museum was premised on giving all the retrieved materials and narratives back to their producers or custodians. It was to have no collections and no vaults, since we did not want to create another "cultural bank". In consequence, all major exhibitions were donated to communities and towns around the country. Unfortunately this specific policy did not work. Neither communities nor towns, whose authorities often dismantled what previous authorities had done, and usually lacked the funds or the human resources to meet the challenge. Exhibitions slowly disappeared and their mark was forgotten. This leads to the reflection that only rich countries are able to sustain giving back to the poorer communities the cultural exhibits they have helped set up in museums.

What did work very well was to bring to an officially sanctioned cultural arena the cultural movements of people who were more than surprise to find that their creativity could be valorized against the disdain or discrimination that was generally bestowed on them. While the constantly revolving program in the Museum could not generate the reverence of other kinds of museums, the main intention was to call attention to the capacity of local peoples to create collective cultural enterprises that endured in time and were appreciated by specific segments of the urban or rural public.

The most salient feature of the museum, it soon became apparent, was innovation. While basing the guidelines for exhibit on research on past forms of each activities, the new, and mostly very recent innovations into their actual enactment and performance also had to be included. Very soon, some of the most creative music, dance and art groups, made up of young people who were not let into the more established museums, began to organize performances and exhibit at the Museum. We could see their own innovations spring out of their performances, day by day. In one instance, the small music group of "Nuevo Canto" gave rise to what became one of the most significant music trends in Mexico, branching out later into many other new musical groups.

Institutionalized agoras for identities?

Unlike ethnographic museums, however, such a museum of popular or traditional or folk cultures was not hinged into a history of knowledge that provided it with theoretical underpinning, metonymic references or threads of understanding beyond Mexican local and regional narratives and representations. Without such a framework, each exhibit became unique, and the lack of integrality with past or future exhibits reinforced the fragmentation of such activities.

The threads of understanding generated by such exhibits expanded outwards and contributed to the following: to give prestige to craftspeople in their village, town or region; to support ethnic demands; to developing small markets for their crafts or performances; and to incorporate some of the new histories or memories into educational materials.

This was, of course, part of the aim of such a museum of intangible cultural heritage. However, once the ripples of recognition, prestige and returned innovations got lost in the horizon, the Museum itself was left empty. This was by design but one must ask, is this a problem? Perhaps not. Perhaps we must define a museum for intangible cultural heritage as one whose ultimate aim is to always remain empty. But how then do you attract a regular audience? How do you create and sustain an ever-widening community of stakeholders to finance activities, now that the State can no longer support so many cultural institutions? If it cannot be defined as a museum, could we the redefine it as I have called it, as an "institutionalized agora for identities?

Three major issues come to the fore, which I will only mention here.

1. The first is that of curatorship. There is a this time a complex debate going on about the role of curatorship as museums shift towards a closer relationship with markets. In relation to intangible cultural heritage, suffice it to say that a greater degree of tension tends to arise between the professional curators and museographers, as we call them in Mexico, and the leaders of live oral or performance rituals and festivities.

2. The second issue is the difficulty that agents and performers themselves are confronted with when, after many years of performing spontaneously, they suddenly acquire an awareness of their representational power. This frequently changes their relationship to their own performance group but also mainly to the local community that sustains them and actually creates a new relationship to a general public.

3. The third issue is derived from the above, when representational power begins to be defined by ownership. Ownership of the words, dress codes, choreographies, stage directions, musical scores and all the many elements that go into a narrative or representation or performance. The defense of this ownership begins to staked against the professional staff of the museum, but also in dissidence about different interpretations of the performance among the performers or stakeholders themselves. In an ironic turn of events, it may even lead to some groups, indigenous or not, who initially suffered from the indifference or discrimination in their cultural manifestation, then claiming their exclusive ownership of that manifestation, which was also performed by other cultural groups, thus creating a reverse discrimination against other groups. For example, when the indigenous director of the National Museum of Popular Cultures refused to let the neo-indigenous "Conchero" dancers perform in the Museum on the grounds that they were not "real Indians".

4. A fourth issue is, in many cases, the non-transportability of the celebrations of intangible cultural heritage. In one case we recently recorded in a village high up in the mountains of South Mexico, 120 people were involved in the enactment of the events leading to the Mexican Independence in 1810. Such a large event involving stage acting, built fortresses, battles and a long parade of visiting dance troupes cannot be reproduced in a museum space.

5. The fifth issue is whether a digital photo and video archive can help safeguard these celebrations and, especially, provide the villagers with digital materials that they can base forthcoming celebrations on.

These last two issues would call for an institutionalized agora as a permanent space for the performing of some or part of such celebrations, with a nation-wide network of locally elected Cultural Committees in such villages that would allow them to situate themselves as part of an important movement to preserve, not only their own celebration, but those of many other rural villages and urban neighborhoods. This, in brief, is the work we are carrying out at the National University of Mexico, on the basis of a Unitwin Chair on Research on Intangible Cultural Heritage and Cultural Diversity that is being arranged with Unesco at present. On the basis of this chair, we would be very interested in coming in contact with other university researchers of other countries who are going forward with similar research programs.

One final word on the issues that the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of the 2003 Convention is facing at present. One of the problems has arisen because the Convention left aside the participation of scientific and professional associations which could provide important historical, analytical and methodological information for the assessment of candidatures to the Representative List. One

example, unfortunately about Mexico, may illustrate part of this problem. A Mexican NGO has proposed the Mexican gastronomy of a particular state of central Mexico for the Representative list. A different group, made up mainly of Mexican cultural and indigenous ngos, university researchers and cultural activists has asked that this candidature not be accepted because the NGO that is proposing it is, in fact, registered as a commercial enterprise and is financially backed by several large Mexican companies that have high investments in the market of Mexican food nationally and for export. This proposal had already been rejected once, for precisely this same reason, in the UNESCO Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage. The new decision about the candidature will be taken at Nairobi, Kenya in November.

I strongly believe that to allow the value of elements that are to be included in the Representative List of the UNESCO 2003 Convention to be dictated by money interests would be a total negation of what UNESCO and international cultural programs have meant for the world. Cultural manifestations have an intrinsic meaning and it is this meaning, and the value and prestige assigned to them by people, locally, nationally or by humankind, that make them significant. Of course they are linked, and always have been linked, to economic activities. But this statement, which comes with great depth in theoretical debates in anthropology and ethnology for decades, is very different from saying that the criteria for inclusion of an item on a List should be left to the market. This would mean, blatantly, that only the richest and most powerful, would in the end decide on the value of a cultural item, site or monument.

  UNESCO has always attempted to counter, and this I attest to, the interests of the powerful in order to give rightful recognition to those who do not have the means to make their voices heard. We need UNESCO to keep this balance, especially in the world that has become even more deeply uneven and unjust in distributing the benefits of development and the needs of sustainability. And we need science, and professionals of art, culture, museums and intangible cultural heritage to give credence and substance to the values of meaning, justice, quality and harmony.

MUSEUMS FOR SOCIAL HARMONY
– Xiejun Chen

Director of Shanghai Museum

Following the closure of the successful Expo 2010, the ICOM 22nd General Conference & 25th General Assembly is held in Shanghai, with a goal of "cooperation, creation and harmony". Just like the expo theme "Better City, Better Life", the ICOM 2010 promotes a notion of "Museums for Social Harmony" which has become a most important topic among museum colleagues, deserving the attention from both theoretical and practical arena.

1. Museum shall flash up its idea of "Social Harmony"

The idea of "harmony" is the contemporary pursuit of museums. As a global cultural institution, the museum shall shoulder an important mission: promote the dialogue between different cultures, advocated the mutual respect and understanding among various nations, and safeguard cultural diversities. The International Council of Museums explains the function of museums for social harmony as follows: the museum must enhance its cultural awareness during the rapid transformation of global culture, strengthen the recognition of national identity in a global background, and play a special role in social education. All these tasks, however, are based upon an international sense of order. ICOM 2010 will provide a platform to share and critique demonstration projects by participants from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The current urgent need for the museum to solve is to safeguard cultural diversity and bio-diversity as the common heritage of humanity. The preferred futures across the world are for Environmental, Cultural, Economic and Social Sustainability. The museum has a role to get more knowledge out of general inclusion, grow up in coordination, get mutual benefits out of interactions, and promote social harmony in transformations.

As Ms. Alissandra Cummins, President of ICOM, said, under the theme of "Museums for social harmony", universality will be celebrated and the dialogue between different cultures will be encouraged at this General Conference in Shanghai. The Conference will offer a platform to share and demonstrate projects by participants from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and provide a forum to develop innovative, interdisciplinary and inclusive conceptual frameworks in a dynamic and changing museological environment. ICOM's 28,000 members from 137 countries play an important role in the preservation and conservation of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Thanks to this Conference, they can continue to work closely together across different cultures developing a society of mutual understanding, thus more peaceful, tolerant and harmonious. ICOM 2010 will be a critical milestone for intercultural dialogue to promote mutual respect and intergenerational ethic emphasizing practices for the inclusion of young people in museums. There will be a range of opportunities during the General Conference to scope, debate and plan creative approaches to change and develop responsible future directions as we strive to facilitate social harmony during times of rapid changes and unprecedented development. The Conference will bring together a range of expertise from across the world to encourage new modes of collaboration that provide opportunities for members to contribute museum development addressing all forms of heritage: tangible, intangible, movable, immovable, cultural and natural. The evolution of the museum is a process of development, interpretation, and structural construction. There will be a special emphasis on appropriate capacity building for promoting cultural exchanges and future project development. The conference will address urgent concerns for protection and safeguarding of all forms of heritage, especially in countries and regions where heritage resources are under threat due to armed conflict, famine, climate change, illicit traffic and tensions between conservation and development. ICOM 2010 will also advocate to increase the quality of professional services in museums, giving priority to capacity building at all levels, especially in what relates to the basic museum functions: documentation, research, conservation, communication and

education, in order to stimulate better and wider access and use of the knowledge generated by ICOM. There will be a forum for developing innovative and inclusive conceptual frameworks for working across different cultures in a dynamic and changing environment. The Conference will raise the level of awareness of the importance of the purpose of museums and their role in fostering approaches and ideas to promote harmony and inclusion.

"Museums for Social Harmony" indicates rich underlying meanings. Today, there are more than 400,000 immovable cultural heritage sites in China, besides 20,000,000 movable cultural heritage, natural heritage, and natural & cultural heritage sites, which are active carriers showcasing Chinese tradition of diligence and wisdom, and promoting cultural innovations. The 2,500 museums of different types and disciplines in China, as a firm ground and rich resource of Chinese museum course, are playing an active social role harmoniously in building Chinese museums a most dynamic role in the international museum arena. There will be new needs and possibilities for the idea of "Museums for Social Harmony". Firstly, there is a need for mental communication. The information explosion and the rapid work pace in the current society have brought an increasing mental pressure on people while enlarging the distance between people. Through realizing the social education function of the museum, visitors of a museum will revere history, care for their lives, pay attention to their culture, and relax themselves, thus to promote social harmony through the form of mental communication. Secondly, there is still a need to promote the cultural diversity and embrace other cultures. Modern museums rose under a background of globalization and nationalization. Today, the museum keeps realizing its goal in sharing art treasures and upgrading the aesthetic taste of the people in the pursuit of cultural diversity. Under the general background of economy globalization and society informatization, a museum shall shoulder the task of promoting cultural diversity and embracing other cultures. Thirdly, there is a need to safeguard the "cultural rights". A museum staff must have such a notion, that the museum shall showcase the public culture in a society, and further protect the cultural rights of our citizens. Guided by this notion, the museum is experiencing a further evolution of its three functions --- acquisition and collection with the support of contemporary science and technology, research and study of its collection with discipline superiority, and museum education that targets the whole society. Fourthly, social harmony reflects four features of museum service, including nonprofit, fundamentality, equality and convenience. Through realizing these four features, the museum can further hold fast to its "spiritual home", make it more complete, improve its layout, and upgrade the level of service. Fifthly, "museums for social harmony" also involves "harmony of nature". Besides harmony of people and harmony between human and society, we also advance the harmony between human and nature. It is an inevitable topic for museum leaders that we shall avail the wisdom out of the evolution of human civilization, avant-garde ecological, environmentalist ideology, and low-carbon economy, to solve the increasingly acute contradictions of human against nature and environment. Sixthly, the theme of social harmony is also an extension of the "recreation function". In our contemporary life, there is an aspiration for keeping the natural rhythm and breeding our recreations. Therefore, the museum shall put the question of how to extend its recreational function on the agenda, and actually do it, thus to help our visitors not only get the knowledge of history, but also relax themselves by taking the museum as a tranquil harbor for their mentality.

While flashing up the notion of harmony in running a museum, its leaders shall also actively make it realized. There are many ways to practice harmony, such as sharing and integrating resources, changing of traditional time and space, experimenting the social service, joint cooperation in establishing a service system, extension of professional studies, new visions on cost accounting, and etc. If, in our eyes, the notion of "museums for social harmony" is expected, ideal, wise and glorious, the ways that helps the notion realized must be practical, multi-content, promoting social cohesion, and anticipating.

2. The Museum shall emphasizes "Human Care"

The notion of "Museums for Social Harmony" shall advance "human care", that is, "visitors first, service most, and people foremost".

"Human Care" emphasized by the Museum refers to that museum shall transform from self-enclosure to being liberal-minded and opening. Survey data shows that the percentage of curatorial staff in museums and galleries in U.K. has decreased from 40% in 1960s to 12% in 1990s. The decrease doesn't mean there are less curatorial staff than before, but means that the number of non-curatorial staff is greatly growing, in the fields of administration, management, education, service, and etc. Meanwhile, the professional studies are being transformed quietly --- not only emphasizing the curatorial studies in traditional arenas, but also pay attention to cultural diversities and society culture; concerning how to run a museum, the cultural angle of view is established to meet the social demand, and enhance its position-setting to the visitors' need.

"Human Care" is to shift the emphasis on "collection" to both people and collection, and put people foremost. It is widely acknowledged that collections are the foundation of a museum. However, if we agree with the notions of "Museums for Social Harmony" and "Museum must serve society and social evolution", the Museum shall play multiple roles --- not only an institution for collection, exhibition, and study, but also a window showcasing the intangible and tangible cultural heritage, a research facility, a platform for exchanges, an "information port", and a collecting and distributing centre for social culture that demonstrates our culture line, blood linkage and ley line.

"Human Care" means the Museum not only retrospect but also prospect. The Museum shall master the law of historical evolution, involve itself actively in social development, present our people the grand future of human civilization, summarize the relation between creative ideas and human civilization, and finally help create a brand new future.

As a cultural window and art palace located in the metropolitan Shanghai, Shanghai Museum showcases the Chinese history, the national spirit, and the human care bred by generations of museum staff. As a cultural institution of ancient Chinese art, Shanghai Museum always takes "spreading culture in our city" as its own mission, and the human care is the common pursuit for museum staff in generations. Since the completion of its new building in 1996, the Museum has become the landmark of urban civilization in Shanghai, a symbol of Shanghai spirit, and an art palace located downtown. The human care we keep practicing in our work makes the museum itself a favorite place for visitors to frequent; and in return it is the visitors' love of Shanghai Museum that gives it a forever vigor in development.

Firstly, we must construct our team with human care. The Shanghai Museum leadership has been paying great attention to its team construction, and working hard to improve the museum's scholarship by caring for its personnel. The last leadership, including Director Ma Chengyuan and Vice Director Wang Qingzheng, kept encouraging staff to improve their level of authentication, study and research, thus to have successfully trained the leading scholars of their own arena. As to academic studies, a good number of catalogues and articles have been published, which include Egyptian Treasures, Oracle-bone inscriptions, Textual study on banliang coins, the Excavation Report of Fuquan Hill, the Science in Ancient Chinese Ceramics, Complete Works of Shanghai Museum, Japanese Treasures of Art, Tibetan Treasures from Snow Mountain, Treasures from Mayan Civilization, Excavated jade through Tang, Song, Yuan and Ming Dynasties in Shanghai, Painting and Calligraphy Collection from Liang Tu Xuan, Catherine the Great, the Brightness Star of the North, Jianzhen and Kukai--- Witness to the Cultural Exchange between China and Japan, and etc. The museum leadership also inaugurated a large project titled "Collection Study for the Shanghai Museum", and meanwhile organizing a series of conferences and symposia, to encourage its curatorial study.

The growth of Shanghai Museum can not do without its cultural atmosphere. Shanghai Museum boasts its hardware --- the new museum building, and its software --- management. With such a good condition, Shanghai Museum leadership advocates their staff to surpass themselves, and proposes the tenet of the Museum --- Devotion, Creation, Top Level, Cooperation, and Pragmatism. Devotion to one's own work is the foundation of the tenet, behind which is the selfless, dedicated sense of great enterprise and duty. Creation is the soul of the tenet, which guarantees the continuous development of the Museum course. Top Level is our goal, a high standard to request the Museum staff. The Shanghai Museum staff work very hard to meet the Top Level in the following fields, including collection, management, curatorial study, exhibition, public

service, and social education. Cooperation facilitates the operation of various works in the Museum. It is not only reflected by the collaboration between the museum leaders, the higher and lower posts, and the departments, but also between the Shanghai Museum and other museums home and abroad, and between the Museum and institutions beyond the cultural heritage systems. Pragmatism is a must to ensure the stable progress of our work. In all, the tenet of Devotion, Creation, Top Level, Cooperation, and Pragmatism guides and drives the SM staff in building the museum into a first-class institution of its kind.

Secondly, serve the public to people's needs. Shanghai Museum is renowned for both its collection and exhibitions. There are amount to one million pieces of works of arts in our collection, out of which 130,000 pieces are masterpieces. The collection covers over twenty-one categories of arts, including bronze, ceramics, calligraphy, painting, jade and ivory, glassware, sculpture, bamboo and wood carvings, oracle bones, seals, furniture, and so forth. The bronze, ceramics, painting and calligraphy are the most famous in the collection. These pieces span a long period of Chinese history, from the Neolithic Age, all the dynasties, to the Republic of China. There are twelve galleries for permanent displays, each devoted to one category of art, and three temporary exhibition halls, with an exhibition area up to 11,000 square meters and a service facilities of 3,000 square meters. There are altogether over 10,000 pieces of cultural heritage works showcased in our permanent displays. The museum collection and exhibitions have provided a most appropriate service to people's needs, and thus functioned like a society class targeting the broad mass.

There is a new solution explored by the Shanghai Museum to serve the public. Early in 1998, the Museum held a Summer Camp for middle school students. From the year 2000 on, every year around May 18th, the international museum day, a week time will be used for various activities introducing cultural heritage knowledge, with a series of themes in succession, such as "Museum and Contemporary Metropolis", "Museum and Community Construction", "Museum and Globalization", "Museum and the Youth", and so forth. The activities include an essay competition in the city, a summer camp themed with cultural heritage, cultural heritage bases established in schools, exhibitions of private collections held in communities, curatorial docents for permanent displays, and special reports for news release. Through these activities in memory of cultural heritage, the Shanghai Museum conveys the idea of preservation and safeguarding cultural heritage to the public.

Thirdly, we care for donors. The Shanghai Museum has built a very close relationship with its donors. It is the generous donations from the donors and consequently their offsprings that have enriched the museum's collection. During the past fifty years, more than 1,000 donations has been made to the Museum, totaling over 110,000 pieces, and many of these donated pieces make important part of our collection. There is a donors' wall in the foyer of the Shanghai Museum, on which donors' names are put to express our heartfelt thanks.

We didn't and won't forget these donors. We care for them with concrete actions. A lady named Pan Dayu generously donated two bronze vessels, Da Ke Ding and Da Yu Ding, to the Shanghai Museum sixty years ago. To her, Shanghai Museum is like one of her relatives, and the museum leadership visits her every Chinese Spring Festival while helped solve many of her practical difficulties in life. The lady had no job, and the Shanghai Museum found her a job; the lady's house was suffocating in summers, and the Museum instantly installed her residence an air conditioner; the lady once stayed in hospital, the Museum helped move her to the best ward of the hospital, and paid all the medical care expenses; the Museum also purchased a three-bedroom apartment in downtown Suchow as a gift for her. On the one hundred year birthday of Ms. Pan, a special exhibition of the two donated bronzes and a birthday party were specially held for her, who was deeply moved. It is such concrete caring actions that have brought the Shanghai Museum more and more friends, and more donations. The donations afterwards include the painting and calligraphy collection donated by American Chinese Ms. Xu Xiang (including a fan leave with the calligraphy by a Ming-Dynasty scholar Wen Zhengmign), the 233 pieces of ancient Chinese painting and calligraphic works given by Ching Ban-Lee family from the Philippines, an Olive-shaped vase with enameled motif of bats and peaches

donated by Ms. Alice Chin, and so forth. The owners of the latter two both received a Magnolia Reward from the Shanghai Municipality for their generosity, and both of their donations have been showcased in the Shanghai Museum as permanent display apart from special temporary exhibitions had been organized exclusively in advance.

3. Museums better our urban life

The involvement of the Shanghai Museum in organizing the Expo 2010 provides a good opportunity of practices for the museum, and further inspires us on how to implement the notion of "Museums for Social Harmony".

Firstly, we need to expand the functions of the museum in a creative cultural consciousness. The museum both records and showcases urban history; however, it shall also pay attention to the city's future and prospect the forthcoming direction of its evolution. Therefore, it will be an active participant and driver who pushes the evolution of urban culture. Its functions cover not only the collection, curatorial study and exhibition, but also guiding the urban culture, advancing the urban spirit, and constructing an exchange platform for multiple cultures. A public cultural institution that attracts the eyeballs of the broad mass, the museum shall serve the society and social evolution with its unique resources and in its own unique ways, so as to form a museum culture that betters our urban life.

The museum culture interprets history, draws nutrients from the classics, exhibits civilizations, and refuses superficialness. Based on collections, the museum culture shall adapt to the local urban environment, both human and natural, and try to support the growth of urban culture both spiritually and technically. Every innovation and new measure in the museum culture will inevitably enrich and upgrade the cultural connotations of our city life. Our current society boasts globalization that features frequent, close interpersonal interactions, informatization, networking and digitalization. It is a society full of multiple cultural elements. Under such a great background, the museum culture is requested to invent and create, so as to conceive and construct new museum ideology. Such innovation and creation marks the transformation from the tradition in thought paradigm and behavior pattern. It is gradually being noticed that the museum culture is undergoing great transformation. The refreshed museum culture shall lay great emphasis on serving the society and social development, and focus on the public needs. The museum shall use their own methods to create a nice cultural atmosphere, organize popular exhibitions, and organize enlightening lectures and various activities, so as to speed up the social pace. The museum has the mission of cultural exchanges, and plays a key role of pushing cultural innovation. Influencing the city and people without being noticed, the museum spreads our national spirit and carries on the human civilization, devoted to its new social function of "Museums for Social Harmony."

Secondly, the urban culture must interact with museum culture.

Museum as indispensible part of urban culture, benefits from the interactions with urban culture. A city with museums and culture boasts a tranquil harmony, and a museum in a harmonious city will have a profound and rational atmosphere. Such a profound and rational atmosphere is normally accompanied by cultural stirs. The Shanghai Museum staff has realized that exhibitions are important for the construction of urban culture. Exhibitions organized for being a "best", "special" and "in large scale" provides a new vision and space to experience the city. The cultural innovations of a museum will not only enriched the contents of the urban culture but also upgrade the cultural taste of the city. Developing urban culture also challenges the museum culture, and pushes the museum to expand its social functions in its globalization and modernization. With the changes of the social background, the museum shall rely on science and technology, emphasize curatorial study, and improve the level of public education. The museum uses its unique cultural resources in its own modes, and forms a unique pattern of its own. The trend of

informatization, networking, and digitalization helps the transformation of the museum cultural pattern. The Shanghai Museum digital construction include establishing SM website, the collection database, and the multi-media touch screens, which greatly supports registration, curatorial studies, and social educations, and thus to have established virtuous interactions between the museum culture and the urban culture.

In the past few years, Shanghai Museum has successfully created cultural sensations for many times by organizing a variety of exhibitions. While proceeding with regular rotations of permanent displays, the Museum also makes great efforts in organizing temporary loan exhibitions. Through years of exploration, Shanghai Museum has formed its own image in organizing exhibitions, which can be explained in a "three plus one" mode. "Three" refers to three types of loan exhibitions: the first is themed with ancient civilizations of the world, such as Egyptian treasures, Mayan civilizations, Louis XIV, the Sun King: Treasures from chateau de Versailles, Ancient Assyrian Treasures, and so forth. The second is themed with collections from brother museums in provinces and autonomous regions other than Shanghai, such as Tibetan Treasure, Treasures from Inner Mongolia, and so forth. The third targets the best collections from both home and abroad. They include Painting and Calligraphic Works through Jin, Tang, Song and Yuan Dynasties, A Special Exhibition for Chun Hua Ge Tie, the Civilization of Zhou, Qin, Han and Tang Dynasties, and so forth. "One" refers to special-theme exhibitions from the museum's own collection, with themes of Oracle Bones, Bronze Mirrors, and etc. Shanghai Museum also explores new museum service through which it adds more vigor to the life of urban culture. Activities organized by the museum educational department cover a variety of experiences, such as museum exploration, hands-on programs, social investigations, parents-child activities, and future archaeology, which has created an interactive platform for citizens' experiencing culture. The education department also designs special summer programs targeting the youth of the city, which include reproducing "jade" with polymer clay, making inscription rubbings, restoring broken polychrome-glazed pottery, tye-dying, casting coins and bronze mirrors, experiencing Chinese painting, and deciphering ancient Chinese characters. Other well-received programs innovated by the Museum, include "the Night of Exemplary Calligraphy", "Creation out of the Root of China", and "Cultural Lectures for Campus".

Thirdly, the new cultural elements as seen in organizing the Expo 2010

The Shanghai Museum has been involved in organizing part of Expo 2010 and helped integrate the cultural elements into the Expo. The good interaction between cultural heritage and Expo projects greatly contribute to its successful, memorable, and fantastic image.

The museum culture, as indispensible part of the urban culture, has played an effective role in improving the cultural image of the Expo 2010, which can be seen in interpreting the Expo themes, building venues, organizing exhibitions, making out forum projects, activity operations, and running the Expo as a whole, to fully convey the Expo theme --- "Better Life, Better City". Expo 2010 has provided Shanghai a very good opportunity to showcase itself, and the Expo spirit can be reduced to the following words --- "Happy Reunion, Communication, Exhibition, and Cooperation". The Expo spirit is a spirit of cultural diversity and fusion, which indicates the spirits of science, humanism, nation, innovation and our era. As a stage for various cultures in the world, Shanghai introduces Chinese culture to the world, and actively promotes the cultural exchanges among different countries. Expo 2010 has successful embraced the cultural elements, combining the past into the present, memory into fashion, heritage into innovation, parts into wholeness, diversity into commonness, and nations to globalization. Through holding the World Expo, we hope to create a better future. The cultural elements have fully revealed the active role of the urban culture in Expo 2010.

Aristotele, the ancient Greek philosopher, said, "People come to live in cities and they associate in cities for the sake of good life, for living well and nobly." To fully convey the Expo theme "Better Life, Better City" to visitors, the Shanghai cultural heritage professionals have explored the possibility of special-theme exhibitions in two museum projects on expo site, the City Footprint Museum and the Expo Museum, integrating various elements into it, including history, art, science and technology, and various contents. The idea of the exhibition design focuses on "on-site" atmosphere, and a logical, attractive visiting route in exhibition halls. The architecture of both museums was co-designed by Shanghai Museum, Shanghai

University, Tongji University, East China Normal University, and so forth. Both museums are recognized as one of the best pavilions among all the pavilions and exhibition halls on Expo site, which has provided an exemplary case for cultural institutions involving in Expo project.

The notion of "Museums for Social Harmony" aims for better life in cities and more harmony in society. In return, a harmonious society and better urban life will further the development and prosperity of museums, and thus ensure the sustainable progress of human civilization.

OFF-CENTERED: MODERNITY AND POSTCOLONIAL AMBIVALENCE
– Okwui Enwezor

Nigerian-born American educator, poet, writer, art critic and curator specialising in art history

From *Grand* Modernity to *Petit* Modernity

There is a dual narrative that is often taken to be characteristic of modernity: the first is the idea of its unique Europeanness, and the second is its translatability into non-European cultures. This narrative argues for the mutability of modernity, thus permitting its export and enhancing its universal character while putting a European epistemological stamp on its subsequent reception. The traveling character of this dimension of modernity as export understands modernity as emerging from Europe, say from the mid-15th century, and slowly spreading outward like a million points of light into the patches of darkness that lie outside its foundational center. Modernity in this guise was projected as an instrument of progress. The guiding concepts often associated with it—instrumental rationality, the development of capitalism— emerged in the debate between theological and scientific reason, and provided the foundation for the period of European Renaissance and Enlightenment, in which two structures of power and domination that marked the Middle Ages—feudalism and theological absolutism—collapsed. Scientific rationality and individual property that formed the basis of capital accumulation were triumphant. This collapse shifted the scales of sovereign power from the theological to the secular.

The chief principles of secularism—individual liberty, political sovereignty, democratic forms of governance, capitalism, etc.—defined its universal character and furnished its master narrative. Thus emerged the rightness of the European model, not only for its diverse societies, but also for other societies and civilizations across the rest of the world. Most importantly, the export of European modernity became not only a justification for, but a principal part of global imperialism. Among serious critics, the master narrative made the claims of universality susceptible to epistemological and historical distortion when deployed in the service of European imperialism. There is good reason for the criticism. Some historians on the right, such as Niall Ferguson, have actually argued that modern European imperialism, specifically that of the British Empire, was actually a good thing, not to be regretted, as it bestowed a semblance of modernity on those privileged enough to have been recipients of the empire's civilizing zeal.[1] So on the one hand there is *grand* modernity in all its European manifestations in reason and progress, and on the other is what could be called *petit* modernity, which represents the export kind, a sort of quotation, which some would go so far as to designate a mimic modernity through its various European references.

It is this relation between *grand* and *petit* modernity that has contributed to the widespread search for facilities of modernity that represent what the Indian Marxist historian Dipesh Chakrabarty would call modernity's heterotemporal history.[2]

Chakrabarty argues that the various scenes of modernity observed from the point of view of a heterotemporal composition of history reveals the extent to which experiences of modernity are shot through with the particularities of each given locale, therefore deregulating any idea of one dominant universalism of historical experience. Such experiences, he argues, are structured within specific epistemological conditions that take account of diverse modes of social identity and discourse. Throughout the 20th century, all across the world, diverse cultural contexts made adapting or translating modernity into specific local variants a pathway towards modernization, by acquiring the accoutrements of a modern

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[1] See Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2004). In a subsequent work, *Colossus: The Price of American Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004), Ferguson actually argues for an expanded American adaptation of the British model.
[2] Dipesh Chakrabarty, preface to the 2nd edition, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), xvii.

society. Because of colonial experience this resulted in what could be referred to as grand modernity writ small in cultures—Chakrabarty's case study was India—perceived to be in historical transition from colonialism to postcolonialism. In comparing different types of modernity, and in our attempts to describe their different characteristics we are constantly confronted with the persistent tension between *grand* modernity and *petit* modernity. How can this tension be resolved? And how can the fundamental historical experiences and the particularities of locale that attend them be reconciled or even compared? It strikes me that all recent attempts to make sense of modernity and bend it toward the multiple situated *petit* modernities—again Chakrabarty would have called these "provincialities"—are premised on finding a way to render the divergent experiences and uses of modernity, namely the necessity to historicize and ground them in traditions of thought and practice.

Forms of Transformation: Modernity as Meta-Language

To historicize modernity is not only to ground it within the conditions of social, political, and economic life, it is also to recognize it as a meta-language with which cultural systems become codified and gain modern legitimation. The idea of modernity as a metalanguage has been particularly acute for me over the past year. To travel in China and South Korea recently is to encounter this meta-language in action and in many guises. All around cities like Seoul, Busan, Shanghai, Beijing, Chengdu, Hangzhou, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, and Taipei, etc., the clatter of machinery erecting impressive infrastructures sounded like the drill of the Morse code typing out the meta-language of modernization. These structures—from museums, opera houses, and theaters to stadiums, sporting centers, high-speed train lines, airports, stock exchanges, shopping malls, and luxury apartments—bring alive to our very eyes brand new urban conditions and cultural spheres that were not remotely imaginable a generation ago. The cities of East Asia have become the playground of global architects enjoying the patronage of both public and private developers.

In fact, over the course of the last sixteen months,[3] I have had occasion to travel repeatedly to South Korea and China. On numerous trips, as part of my research work as a curator, this situation of urban transformation and social renewal was visible everywhere. Underscoring the experiences of these trips is an observation of the scale of growth of the contemporary art world: artists, galleries, collectors, exhibition spaces, museums, and art fairs all are making their way to Beijing and Shanghai. In China alone, the restless imagination and ambition shaping the landscape of contemporary art is breathtaking. Along with this shift, especially among intellectuals and artists, a reverse phenomenon of migration is occurring, namely the relocation back to an Asian context from which many of them had emigrated years before. Yet it is not only the infrastructures of the state and private speculation that are being revived, but the artistic and intellectual cultures of many cities are also being remapped. New centers are definitely emerging, but rather than cultural and intellectual capital being concentrated in a limited number of cities, it is being dispersed in many cities as the reverse migration of ideas continues to explode and expand the cultural parameters of new China and South Korea.

The Bazaar or World's Fair of Modernization

I have witnessed and marveled at the breathtaking speed and scale of the modernization occurring in both countries. Of course, the economies of these two countries —along with their modernization, both in depth and in breadth—pale in comparison to Japan's, the immediate East Asian reference that lies equidistant to its two newly modernizing neighbors. Both China and South Korea's financial strengths derive from a massive export economy. China, of course, is known as the factory of the world, a designation made possible by the fact that its factories are disproportionately the production centers of cheap global consumer goods

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[3] These trips, totaling around 15 visits—4 to China and 11 to South Korea—took place between June 2007and early November 2008. They were made while I worked in Gwangju, South Korea, as artistic director of *Gwangju Biennale*, an event founded in 1995, in the wake of South Korea's transition to democracy in the1990s. The biennale form, an exhibition model that combines massive scale with unabashed theatricality, is itself a product of a certain idea of cultural modernity that has made its way from the late 19th century in Europe to the explosion it presently enjoys all over the world, and more so in Asia in the 21st century.

that have transformed the "Made in China" brand into a ubiquitous logo of global commerce. South Korea's industrial power, on the other hand, is characterized by a focus on advanced technology and heavy industry. Each of these two countries has built up its infrastructure through the combination of *grand* and *petit* modernity, bringing together successful models from both East and West. That is, they are both undergoing modernization based on the acquisition of instruments and institutions of Western modernity—I mean this in a superficial sense—within a relatively short span of time, yet without the wholesale discarding of local values that modify the importations.

The ongoing, large-scale process of modernization in China and South Korea underscores part of the energy, excitement, and sense of newness coursing through the various strata of each country, making them contemporary emblems of a new modernity. Traveling in Europe, on the other hand, conveys no such sense of energy, excitement, or newness. Europe, on the contrary, feels old and dour in its majestic petrification. In fact, many European cities feel less like part of our time. With their miles of imperious ceremonial architecture and in the quaintness of the narrow, tourist-friendly cobble-stoned streets, walking through these cities feels like being in a museum of modernity. The museumification of Europe is in fact the intention: the display of heritage, historical glory, and dead past. Preservationists of this heritage and glory play the role of morticians of modernity.

Yet ancient cities like Beijing and Hangzhou—in a country that possesses a very old civilization and society— in contrast feel nothing like museums. Where vestiges of the past exist, they tend to be peripheral rather than central to modern Chinese cities. These cities, if anything, could be likened to temporary exhibitions of city-making, a succession of dizzying obsolescence; a bazaar or world's fair of modernization. The cities' skylines are full of glass boxes crowned with the pitched green roofs of the classical Chinese pagoda. This hybridization may appear absurd to us now, until we remember that, not too long ago, postmodern architecture in the West was busily inventing these trumped-up styles of the classical and the modern based on a similarly invented autochthonous Western past. Like latter-day biennales, Chinese cities are theaters of the grand statement, a lot of which have no other purpose than to impress and inspire awe. This has been achieved by what some have argued as indiscriminate modernization and urbanization schemes that have erased much of the cultural heritage of old China, sweeping out and destroying many old neighborhoods and putting in their place unremarkable architecture.[4] Chinese bureaucrats, urban planners, and developers, like latter-day Baron Hausmanns, are simply unsympathetic to any idea that cities like Beijing need to be historicized, that is to say museumified. Modernity is a continuous project. Its principal features, they may reason, are at best contingent. By this conjecture, I want to seek out what is currently at play in the relations of discourse in which the particularities or provincialities—I take this to mean the conditions and situations that generate them—of modernity are situated through the practice, production, dissemination, and reception of contemporary art, far from any claims to a *grand* heritage or an arriviste, mimic *petit* translation.

The Altermodern and Habitations of Contemporary Art

If the current spate of modernization in China effectively lays waste to heritage and historical glory and instead emphasizes contingency, might it not be reasonable to argue for the non-universal nature of modernity as such? This certainly would be true when applied to contemporary art. We are constantly entertained and exercised in equal measure by the notion that there is no red line running from modernism

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[4] The *New York Times* architecture critic Nicolai Ouroussoff recently wrote a series of articles on thechanges taking place in Beijing, paying particular attention to how new developments are rapidly remakingand recomposing the historical character of the city, especially with the demolition of large swaths oftraditional *Hutong* (courtyard) houses that were part of the city's architectural heritage. See Nicolai Ouroussoff, "Lost in the New Beijing: The Old Neighborhood," *New York Times*, July 27, 2008; and "In the Changing Face of Beijing, a Look at the New China," *New York Times*, July 13, 2008. In a comparative analysis of China and Persian Gulf cities like Dubai, Ouroussoff explored how the idea of modernization on a massive scale has shifted visionary architecture that, in the past, was largely viewed skeptically byarchitects and was, for the most part, peripheral to new theories of urbanism. With the advent of thesechanges in China and in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, and Doha, etc., the new frontier of urbanexperimentation has moved to the East and declined in the West. See Ouroussoff, "The New, New City,"*New York Times*, June 8, 2008.

to contemporary art. For the pedagogues of the existence of such lineage, the chief emblem of this unbroken narrative can be found in the attention given to the procedures and ideas of the Western historical avant-gardes by contemporary artists. On the other hand, I take the view of this claim, *pace* Chakrabarty, as a provincial account of the complexity of contemporary art. To understand its various vectors, we need then to *provincialize modernism*. There is no one lineage of modernism or, for that matter, of contemporary art. Looking for an equivalent of an Andy Warhol in Mao's China is to be seriously blind to the fact that China of the pop art era had neither a consumer society nor a capitalist structure, two things that were instrumentalized in Warhol's critique and usage of its images. In that sense, pop art would be anathema to the revolutionary program—and, one might even claim, to the avant-garde imagination—of such a period in China that coincides with the condition and situation that fostered Warhol's analytical excavation of American mass media and consumer culture. But the absence of pop art in China in the sixties is not the same as the absence of "progressive" contemporary Chinese art during that period, even if such contemporary art may have been subdued by the aggressive destruction of the Cultural Revolution.

If we are to make sense of contemporary art during this period in China and the United States, then we have to wield the heterotemporal tools of history-writing; in so doing, we will see how differently situated American and Chinese artists were at this time. Despite the importance of globalization in mediating the recent accounts of contemporary art—a world in which artists like Huang Yong Ping, Zhang Huan, Xu Bing, Matthew Barney, Andreas Gursky, and Jeff Koons, for instance, are contemporaries—we can apply the same mode of argument against any uniform or unifocal view of artistic practice today. When Huang Yong Ping, in the work "A History of Chinese Painting and a Concise History of Modern Painting in a Washing Machine for Two Minutes" (1987), washed two art historical texts—*A History of Chinese Painting* by Wang Bomin and one of the first books of Western art history published in China, Herbert Read's *A Concise History of Modern Painting*—in a washing machine, the result is a mound of pulped ideology, a history of hybridization rather than universalism.[5] If we apply the same lens, say, to the work of Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare working in London, we will again see how he has made the tension between histories, narratives, and the mythologies of modernity, identity, and subjectivity important ingredients in his continuous attempts to deconstruct the invention of an African tradition by imperialism. The locus of Shonibare's theatrical and sometimes treacly installations is the fiction of the African fabric he employs. These fabrics and their busy patterns and vivid colors are often taken to be an authentic symbol of an African past. But they are in fact, products of colonial economic transactions that moved from Indonesia to the factories of England and Netherlands, to the markets of West, East, and Central Africa, and ultimately to Brixton. These artists inhabit what could be called the provincialities of modernity and have incisively traced diverse paths of modernity through them. By examining these different locales of practice, as well as the historical experiences that inform them, we learn a lot more about the contingent conditions of modernity than about its universalism. Here again, Chakrabarty offers a useful framework in this regard by dint of what he refers to as "habitations of modernity."[6]

What could these habitations of modernity be? On what maps do they appear? And in what forms and shapes? The search for the habitations of modernity seems to me the crux of the "Altermodern," the subject of the 2009 Tate Triennial exhibition and the accompanying discursive projects organized by Nicolas Bourriaud, its curator. In his outline to the "Altermodern" project, Bourriaud lays out an intellectual and cultural itinerary, a jagged map of simultaneity and discontinuity; overlapping narratives and contiguous sites of production that form the basis of contemporary art practice globally. The chief claim of the "Altermodern" project is simple: to discover the current habitations of contemporary practice. Thus the altermodern proposes the rejection of rigid structures put in place by a stubborn and implacable modernity and the modernist ideal of artistic autonomy. In the same way, it manifests a rebellion against the

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[5]In a commentary about the intention of the work, Huang Yong Ping says, "In China, regarding the twocultures of East and West, traditional and modern, it is constantly being discussed as to which is right,which is wrong, and how to blend the two. In my opinion, placing these two texts in the washing machinefor two minutes symbolizes this situation and well solves the problem much more effectively andappropriately than debates lasting a hundred years." Quoted in Gao Minglu, *The Wall: Reshaping Contemporary Chinese Art* (Buffalo and Beijing: Albright Knox Gallery and Millennium Museum, 2005), 129.
[6]Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

systematization of artistic production based on a singular, universalized conception of artistic paradigms. If there is anything that marks the path of the altermodern, it would be the provincialities of contemporary art practice today—that is, the degree to which these practices, however globalized they may appear, are also informed by specific epistemological models and aesthetic conditions. Within this scheme, Bourriaud sets out to inquire for us the unfolding of the diverse fields of contemporary art practice that have been unsettled by global links. But, more importantly, these practices are measured against the totalizing principles of *grand* modernity.

At the core of the altermodern's jagged map is its description of what its author refers to in his introductory paper as the "off-shore"[7] location of contemporary art practice. However, I will foreground the location of these contemporary practices as indicative of a drive toward an off-center principle, namely the multifocal, multilocal, heterotemporal, and dispersed structures around which contemporary art is often organized and convened. This multiply located off-center—which might not be analogous to Bourriaud's notion of offshore-based production—is not the same as the logic of decentered locations. Rather, the off-center is structured by the simultaneous existence of multiple centers. In this way, rather than being the decentering of the universal, or the relocation of the center of contemporary art, as the notion of the off-shore suggests, it becomes instead, the emergence of multiplicity, the breakdown of cultural or locational hierarchies, the absence of a singular locus or a limited number of centers.

Toward the Excentric: Postcoloniality, Postmodernity, and the Altermodern

To a large extent, the discursive feature of the "Altermodern" project seems to me a return to earlier debates that shaped postcolonial and postmodernist critiques of modernity and the aesthetic principle of the universal. At the same time, they launched an attack on modernism's focus on a unifocal rather than dialogic modernity. Embracing these critiques, Bourriaud's project sets out to explore the excentric[8] and dialogic nature of art today, including its scattered trajectories and multiple temporalities, by questioning and provincializing the idea of the center, by decentering its imaginary, as Chakrabarty posits in his provocative book *Provincializing Europe*.[9] Yet this excentric dimension of modern and contemporary art is not necessarily a rejection of modernity and modernism; rather it articulates the shift to off-center structures of production and dissemination; the dispersal of the universal, the refusal of the monolithic, a rebellion against monoculturalism. In this way, what the altermodern proposes is a rephrasing of prior arguments. The objective is to propose a new terminology, one that could succinctly capture both the emergence of multiple cultural fields as they overspill into diverse arenas of thinking and practice, and a reconceptualization of the structures of legitimation that follow in their wake. In his text, Bourriaud makes concrete what he sees as the field of the "Altermodern," describing his model as

> an attempt to redefine modernity in the era of globalization. A state of mind more than a "movement", the Altermodern goes against cultural standardization and massification on one hand, against nationalisms and cultural relativism on the other, by positioning itself within the world cultural gaps,putting translation, wandering and culture-crossings at the centre of art production.Offshore-based, it forms clusters and archipelagos of thought against the continental "mainstream": the altermodern artist produces links between signs faraway from each other, explores the past and the present to create original paths.
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> Envisioning time as a multiplicity rather than as a linear progress, the altermodern artist considers the past as a territory to explore, and navigates throughout history as well as all the planetary time zones. Altermodern is heterochronical. Formally speaking,

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[7]Nicolas Bourriaud, *Altermodern* (London: Tate Britain, 2008).
[8]In 2001, the first African Pavilion in the *Venice Biennale* in the exhibition "Authentic/Excentric," curatedby Salah Hassan and Olu Oguibe, argued for this sense of a dispersed zone of practice. For a productivecuratorial and critical exploration of the idea of the excentric nature of contemporary, see theaccompanying catalogue, Salah Hassan and Olu Oguibe, eds. *Authentic/Excentric: Conceptualism in Contemporary African Art* (Ithaca: Forum for African Arts, 2001).
[9]Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 4.

altermodern art privileges processes and dynamic forms to unidimensional single objects, trajectories to static masses.[10]

The Offshore, Off-Center, and Procedures of Relation

The formulation of the altermodern reflects precisely Eduoard Glissant's theory of the "poetics of relation,"[11] an idea predicated on linkages and networks of relations rather than on a singular focal point of practice. Bourriaud's idea of the altermodern addresses the cultural geography of relations of discourse and practice. He rightly reads contemporary art as that which always exceeds the borders of spatial confinement, beyond the limited geography of the nation and its totalized identity. The altermodern is structured around trajectories, connections, time zones: heterochronical pathways. Such relations suggest that the project is strongly in accord with a large corpus of scholarship and literature that has made conceiving an alternate system for evaluating modernity, one in which the off-center contexts of contemporary art are a core intellectual principle. But have not the practices of art always been predicated on trajectories and detours, on dynamic forms and modes of production and dissemination? Is the role of contemporary art not always the constant refusal of orthodoxy; to display attentive vigilance against closure; to challenge all doctrinaire, unitary discourses on which some of the most powerful theses of classical modernism rest?

While Bourriaud identifies the shift in recent art as the desire to mobilize new localities of production, which he perceives today as proper to the field of artistic practice, a related field of historical research (as I have noted several times) has been examining the dimension of the off-center principle of art-historical discourse for some time. The result of these research projects is slowly entering mainstream art-historical production. In the last decade, several scholars have explored the structure of the heterochronical (think, for instance, of Chakrabarty's notion of the heterotemporal method of organizing historical frames) conception of modern and contemporary art history.

One such project is a recent exhibition, *Turns in Tropics: Artist-Curator*, developed for the *7th Gwangju Biennale* by the Manila-based Filipino art historian and curator Patrick Flores. In his exhibition project, he proposes an agenda of experimental and conceptualist practices from the late 1960s to early 1980s in Southeast Asia by four artists[12] working in contexts in which the spirit of modernity was not only transforming the splintered identity of the nation, but rapid modernization was also recalibrating the canons and languages of artistic practice. Flores's emphasis of location represents a distinct cultural ecology, as it were, a habitation of modernity. His research explores not only the shifts in the language of artistic modernity—between the traditional and the experimental, from academic painting to conceptualism—it also interrogates the effects and receptions of modernity by these postcolonial artists in relation to their belonging to the nation.

In doing so, he directs attention to a text stenciled on a sculpture by the Malaysian artist Reydza Piyadasa, which states that "Artworks never exist in time, they have 'entry points.'"[13] In this text Piyadasa's sculpture declares the contingency of its own history. In fact, it historicizes its own ambivalence towards canonical epistemology. What the stenciled text seems to be questioning is the idea of art as a universal sign that is a frozen historical data. Instead, artworks are dynamic forces that seek out relations of discourse, map new topologies, and create multiple relations and pathways. Piyadasa's statement anticipates and echoes Bourriaud's own suggestion for altermodernist art, both in its claim for the trajectories of art, but also in the shifting historical and temporal dimension of the apprehension of such art. While none of the four artists whose works were examined in the exhibition have appeared in standard, so-called mainstream surveys and

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[10]Nicolas Bourriaud, published statement from a brochure outline for the "Altermodern" program(London: Tate Britain, April, 2008).
[11]See Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, translated by Betsey Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).
[12]The four artists in the exhibition: Raymundo Albano (Philippines), Reydza Piyadasa (Malaysia), JimSupangkat (Indonesia), and Apinan Poshanyanda (Thailand). All played multiple roles as influential artists, curators, critics, and historians in each of their individual national contexts in the development of the discourses of modernity and contemporary art.
[13]Patrick D. Flores, "Turns in Tropics: Artist Curator" in Okwui Enwezor, ed., *Annual Report: A Year in Exhibitions* (Gwangju: Gwangju Biennale Foundation, 2008), 263.

accounts of experimental art and conceptualism of the late 1960s to the present, new offcenter historical research such as Flores's consistently drives us to the harbors of these archipelagos of modernity and contemporary art. The work of Raymundo Albano from the Philippines, Jimmy Supangkat from Indonesia, Piyadasa and the younger Thai artist, curator, and art historian Apinan Poshyananda, have clear structural affinities with the work of their contemporaries practicing in the West. Yet their work—made with an awareness of, and in response to, specific historical conditions—shares similar objectives with the work of other postcolonial artists from different parts of the world, including those living and practicing in Europe.

These objectives would be familiar to emerging scholars such as Sunanda Sanyal, whose research focuses on modernism in Uganda;[14] Elizabeth Harney, who has written extensively about negritude and modernism in Senegal;[15] or the magisterial writing on modern and contemporary Indian art by the eminent critic Geeta Kapur.[16] Art historian Gao Minglu has engaged equally rigorously with contemporary Chinese art, and with the same objective.[17] In a similar vein of historical archaeology, the Princeton art historian Chika Okeke-Agulu has studied and written persuasively on the generative character of young modern Nigerian artists in the late 1950s during the period of decolonization.[18] But by no means am I suggesting that many of the artists examined in these various research studies are obscure in their own artistic contexts. Their artistic trajectories belong exactly in the heterotemporal frames of historical reflection and the chronicles of their art are part of the heterochronical criticism and curating that has been part of the discourse of 20th- and 21st-century modernity. However, viewed with the lens of a univocal modernist history, one that is predicated on the primacy of centers of practice—what Bourriaud refers to as the "continental 'mainstream'"—can these practices be understood as forming more than an archipelago, and in fact exceed the altermodernist impulse? They certainly do expand the purely modernist notion of artistic competence. These issues are at the core of recent writings and research by the British-Ghanaian art historian and cultural critic Kobena Mercer, who explores the diverse off-center contexts of late modernism and contemporary art in a series of anthologies focused on artistic practices and artists in Africa, Asia, and Europe.[19] Similar issues were mapped in the seminal exhibition: "The Other Story" (1989), a project curated by the Pakistan-born British artist and critic, Rasheed Araeen at the Hayward Gallery, wherein he examined the contributions of hitherto unrecognized non-western modernist artists to European modernism.[20]

These surveys and situations of off-centeredness are emblematic of the large historical gaps which today, in the era of globalization, need to be reconciled with dominant paradigms of artistic discourse. In seeking to

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[14] See Sunanda K. Sanyal, "Transgressing Borders, Shaping an Art History: Rose Kirumira and Makerere'sLegacy" in Tobias Döring, ed., *African Cultures, Visual Arts, and the Museum: Sights/Sites of Creativity and Conflict*, in *Matatu* 27 (Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi, 2002), 133–159.

[15] See Elizabeth Harney, *In Senghor's Shadow: Art, Politics, and the Avant-Garde in Senegal, 1960–1995* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

[16] See Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India* (New Delhi: Tulika, 2000).

[17] See Gao Minglu, *The Wall: Reshaping Contemporary Chinese Art* (Buffalo: Albright Knox Gallery and Beijing: Millenium Museum, 2005); and *The Ecology of Post-Cultural Revolution Frontier Art: Apartment Art in China, 1970-1990s* (Beijing: Shuimu Contemporary Art Space, 2008).

[18] See Chika Okeke-Agulu, "The Art Society and the Making of Postcolonial Modernism in Nigeria,"unpublished lecture at Princeton University, 2008. See also the remarkable study of the relationshipbetween negritude, postcolonialism, and modernism by Elizabeth Harney, *In Senghor's Shadow* and, Gao Minglu, *The Wall*. These studies are among a growing list of scholarship directed at excavating themultifaceted tendencies, narratives, and structures of practice that do not easily conform to the teleological construction of modern and contemporary art. These histories, at the same time, reveal the diverse temporalities ofmodern art by showing that there is no single genealogy of artistic modernity or sense of innovation. Yet whatever lacunae these histories inhabit, they do reveal modernity as a series of trajectories moving inmultiple directions, and they are equally informed by cultural, ideological, formal, and aesthetic logics.histories of modern and contemporary art across divergent historical and cultural geographies.The studies illuminate the basic fact that buried within official Western mainstream art history are complex

[19] See the four-volume anthology covering a variety of critical issues related to the expansive network ofmodernism edited by Kobena Mercer (all published by MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.): *Exiles, Diasporas and Strangers* (2008); *Pop Art and Vernacular Cultures* (2007); *Discrepant Abstraction* (2006); and *Cosmopolitan Modernisms* (2005).

[20] See Rasheen Araeen, *The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-War Britain* (London: South BankCenter, 1989). This landmark exhibition and its accompanying catalogue was one of the earliest attempts toemploy postcolonial and postmodern critiques to examine the institutional exclusions of the practices ofartists who were not deemed to properly belong within the mainstream canon of historical legitimation.

historicize these contexts of production and practice, a dialogic system of evaluation is established. It resolutely veers away from the standard and received notions of modernity, especially in the hierarchical segmentations that have been the prevailing point of entry into its review of off-center practices.

Modernity, Postcoloniality, and Sovereign Subjectivity

Whatever the entry point for the altermodern artists, there remain some boundaries between the locations of contemporary artistic practice and the historical production of modern subjectivity. These boundaries are tied up with the unfinished nature of the project of modernity. Consequently, I want to examine in more detail some ideas of modernity that could be related to the way hierarchies operate in the recognition and historicization of artists and their locations of practice. The course I will follow could be likened to navigating the different levels and segments of *grand* and *petit* modernity, albeit with degrees of separation designating stages of development, movements, breaks in cultural logics, ossification of epistemological models, and transitions to which we ascribe the norms of the modern world. One logic of modernity to which the altermodern responds is globalization, a series of processes synonymous with the emergence of a worldwide system of capitalism. We could understand this modernity, in its teleological unfolding, as part of the current manifestation of globalization as a force-field of winners, near winners, and losers. (The losers being, obviously, those thoroughly subordinated and utterly disenfranchised by modernity's centuries-long progression from the worlds of indenture, slavery, imperialism, and colonialism, to the aggressive, retributive wars of recent memory.)

This field of retributive conduct has at its disposal the overwhelming capacity to erase and deracinate subjectivities that inhabit the cultural localities of *petit* modernity. This makes the large claims ascribed to *grand* modernity less an avatar of enlightened cultural and material transformation, and more a structure with a dark core. It seems fairly impossible to think of modernity without linking it to concepts such as sovereignty, equality, and liberty as they have been developed across domains of life and social practices. *Pace* Michel Foucault's theory of biopower,[21] a range of thinkers have focused on this dimension of modernity, a space in which the master and slave dialectic is writ large. This dialectic, developed by Hegel, dissociates sovereignty from the practice of self-governance, and instead embeds it in the interrogation of the relations between power and subordination.

However, subordination is directly linked to how power exposes the subordinated to structures of violence, to acts of historical erasure. In this area of analysis, Giorgio Agamben's extension of biopower and *biopolitics* was an attempt to sketch out the conditions around which what he calls *naked life* is summoned: a state of living in which individual sovereignty is exposed to its most basic, barest dimension, to execution.[22] In terms of ideas surrounding modernity and colonialism, this thinking has been singularly illuminating, and has been taken up by other thinkers. The feminist literary scholar Judith Butler, for example, in a recent reflection on the prosecution of the war on terror and the hopelessness of prisoners caught in its principal non-place, Guantanamo Bay, addressed the issue of naked life in the essay "Precarious Life."[23]

Pushing further the frontier of this thinking is the powerful writing of theorist Achille Mbembe, especially in an essay in which he summarizes the dimensions of biopower, bare, and precarious life as the zone of *necropolitics*. In the essay Mbembe explored the fundamental relationship between modernity and violence, particularly in the apparatuses of the colonial regime, such that "To exercise sovereignty is to exercise control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power."[24]For Mbembe, *necropolitics* is the condition under which conducts related to sovereignty—as he amply demonstrates with the policy of apartheid in South Africa or the predicament of the Palestinians in the occupied territories—are

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[21] See Michel Foucault, "Right of Death and Power Over Life," in *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction,* vol. 1, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 135–159.

[22] Giorgio Agamben, *Homer Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

[23] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London and New York: Verso, 2004).

[24] Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," translated by Libby Meintjes. *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 12.

inextricably bound up with exercises of control over existence, of individual lives, and their narratives. Most examinations of the artistic work coming out of South Africa during the apartheid era confirms how artists were overwhelmingly preoccupied with the structures of violence and its direct manifestation as part of the condition of colonial modernity and thereby establishes art as one exploration of the question of sovereignty. Here, resistance to violence and the rigorous assertion of sovereign subjectivity becomes in itself the subject and narrative of art and cultural production.

Facing away from culture, Mbembe in his critique, for example, sees political theory as tending to associate sovereignty with issues of autonomy, be it that of the state or of the individual. He argues however, that

> The romance of sovereignty, in this case, rests on the belief that the subject is the master and the controlling author of his or her own meaning. Sovereignty is therefore defined as a twofold process of *self-institution* and *self-limitation* (fixing one's own limits for oneself). The exercise of sovereignty, in turn, consists in society's capacity for self-creation through recourse to institutions inspired by specific social and imaginary significations.[25]

To distinguish this relation of *self-institution* and *self-limitation*, the central concern he notes targets instead "those figures of sovereignty whose central project is not the struggle for autonomy but *the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations*."[26] Two of Mbembe's historical examples are South Africa and Palestine. In the fate of these two spaces, he identifies the fundamental rationality of modernity, arguing, "that modernity was at the origin of multiple concepts of sovereignty—and therefore of the biopolitical."[27] Artworks such as those by William Kentridge, in films such as *Ubu Tells the Truth* (1997), and Paul Stopforth, in his 1980 drawing series *Death of Steve Biko,* to name only two instances from South Africa; and by Emily Jacir in her exhibition *Where We Come From* (2003), dealing with the emotions of separation, confinement, banishment, and exile experienced by Palestinians—all form part of the artistic responses to the concepts of sovereignty and the biopolitical.

It strikes me that the idea of the altermodern, as it deviates from the limits placed on life and subjectivity by the instrumental violence of modernity, cannot be captured by focusing alone on shifts in locales of practice or by strategies of resistance against domination. The altermodern is to be found in the work of art itself; the work of art as a manifestation of pure difference in all the social, cultural, and political signs it wields to elaborate that difference. It is the space in which to fulfill the radical gesture of refusal and disobedience, not in the formal sense, but in the ethical and epistemological sense. Such stances, of what I take to be altermodern, with their difference writ large as the fundamental quest of the object of art, can be identified in such diverse works as the installations of Thomas Hirschhorn, the radiant paintings of Chris Ofili, the splayed anatomies of Marlene Dumas, the paintings on animal sacrifice as a metaphor for human suffering by Iba Ndiaye, the 2008 film *Hunger* by Steve McQueen, and many more.

Four Modernities

In navigating the different segments of modernity, one could well imagine the different levels of its development or in the hierarchical layers of its construction, as the zones of differing concepts of life and death, subject and non-subject, as the sites of the biopolitical, as the scenes of struggle of sovereignty, as domains of exception. Here I am employing the segments metaphorically to situate the hierarchies of modernity, and in so doing to catch its over-spill into domains of everyday practice, crucially art.

Considering this over-spill, and following the schema of the hierarchies of modernity, especially as it bears on cultural and artistic practice, I want to conceptualize what I see as the four domains of modernity. The first three domains lays out the architecture for thinking the link between differing zones of life and, indirectly, cultural practice. The fourth and last is skeptical of attributes of modernity as such. It is obvious

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[25] Mbembe, 13.
[26] Ibid., 14.
[27] Ibid., 13.

that when the concept of modernity is broached in recent scholarship, the defining characteristic is overwhelmingly skewed toward the idea of one single modernity, that being the idea that modernity is essentially a project fundamentally connected to the development of Western capitalism and imperialism. Fredric Jameson's book, *A Singular Modernity*,[28] partly suggests this. In fact, he was brutally skeptical of recent attempts to expand the definitions of modernity into such things as "alternative modernity" "African modernity" "subaltern modernity" or other such designations. To him modernity is inextricably bound to capitalism, and globalization is its current and main feature. But by perceiving all other modernities as flowing from this one single, grand narrative as the fount of historical development, what emerges is a narrower, unifocal, monocultural, and less heterochronical perspective of modernity.

However, new debates have been historicizing the discourses of modernity in other to propose a more heterogeneous, multifocal, polycentric, broader interpretation of categories of modernity. Many of the recent scholarship do insist that there has never been a single modernity but multiple modernities, as S. N. Eisenstadt has argued.[29] The economist and philosopher Amartya Sen also applies a multifocal interpretation of modernity as he lays out and describes the changing modalities of modernity based on a broad view of the human community and identity.[30] Björn Wittrock develops a comparative analysis of early modernity, examining particularly the dimensions of the public sphere in the Indian subcontinent, Europe, China, and Japan.[31] The French *Annales* historian, Fernand Braudel, also argues for the diachronic dimension of modernity as a long process of slow evolution in which there are no linear, unidirectional flows of time. Rather than a singular causality, he places a strong emphasis on the study of microsystems and events—on trade and cultural exchanges among competing interests in the Mediterranean, for example—that provide a more complex, but overarching world picture.[32] In the context of 20th-century globalization, Arjun Appadurai argues for a modernity seen and experienced predominantly through a scalar analysis of mediated exchanges telegraphed by representations such as images, sound, technology, and ideas.[33] The philosopher Kwame Appiah has recently examined modernity through the lens of cosmopolitanism,[34] a view that appears to be in accord with some of the objectives of the altermodern conception of contemporary art.

There are four categories that I identify as emblematic of the conditions of modernity today: *supermodernity*, *andromodernity*, *speciousmodernity*, and *aftermodernity*. For the sake of our focus on visual modernity, my categories may simplify the point. But they will nonetheless serve as points of entry for the photographic images I will reference later.

A. Supermodernity

The first category postulates the essential forms of modernity through the general character and forms it has taken in European and western culture. This category of modernity emerges directly from the grand narrative of modernity. It is the zone of what I call *supermodernity,* to borrow Marc Augé's term. *Supermodernity* represents the idea of the "center." It is a domain of power, and is often understood as greatly evolved, or highly "*advanced*" or "*developed*." It is generally acknowledged as fundamental to the development of the entire framework of global modernity, namely the world system of capitalism. Therefore, it is foundational to all other subsequent claims and discourses of modernity. All of them follow in the wake of *supermodernity*. The main coordinates of *supermodernity*, as developed through the Enlightenment, are marked by notions such as *freedom, progress, rationality,* and *empiricism*. It is through

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[28] See Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London and New York: Verso, 2002).

[29] See Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," in *Daedalus* 129, no.1 (Winter 2000): v–xii.

[30] See Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusions of Destiny* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006).

[31] See Björn Wittrock, "Early Modernities: Varieties and Transitions," *Daedalus* 127 (Summer 1998): 19–40.

[32] See Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II*,translated by Sian Reynolds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); for a more overarching studyof the historical development in relation to modernity, see Fernand Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*,translated by Richard Mayne (London and New York: Penguin, 1993).

[33] See Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity At Large: The Cultural Dimension of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

[34] See Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007).

these ideas that the concepts of sovereignty and autonomy emerge.

To understand the nature of the next two categories of modernity requires paying close attention to the four coordinates exemplified in *supermodernity*, because they are the framing devices that allow us to describe whether a cultural sphere is pre-modern, modern, or anti-modern, insofar as it concerns the world of modernity that we have inherited since the ages of discovery and imperialism. *Supermodernity* is deeply embedded in structures of power and has at its disposal superior and formidable infrastructures of force to continuously maintain and advance its agenda. More importantly, it tends to represent our view of modernity in relation to cultural positions and political contexts that may subscribe to the idea of modernity for which Bourriaud has gone searching for new possible artistic imaginaries that deviate from or may even blaspheme its suppositions. For six centuries, *supermodernity* has been stubbornly resilient and has remained the example towards which other modernities respond. This is the modernity that is well-captured in Mbembe's *necropolitics*, because of its capacity to standardize zones of living and practice.

B. Andromodernity

This brings us to the next category of modernity, its second level. If *supermodernity* understands and claims for itself the sole category of the developed and advanced, we can designate the next level, which—because of historical circumstances—is imagined as not to have evolved to the same tertiary degree, as *developing* modernity. It is not difficult to guess which segments of the global order occupy this circle of modernity. Specifically, developing modernity today refers to broad swaths of Asia, especially China, India, South Korea, etc. In a true sense, this circle of modernity is caught in a cycle that I designate as *andromodernity*, meaning that it is a hybrid form of modernity, achieved through a kind of accelerated type of development, while also devising alternative models of development. *Andromodernity,* as such, is a lesser modernity since its principal emphasis is development or modernization, as Jurgen Habermas would have it.[35] Because it is still modernizing, *andromodernity* has neither the global structure of power nor the infrastructure of economic, technological, political, and epistemological force to promulgate its own agenda independent of the systems (museums, markets, academies) of *supermodernity*. It therefore lacks, for the moment, the capacity for world dominance. Moreover, much of its development is seen to be based principally on the affective elements of modernity, that is they are deeply embedded in the process of modernization; in the way things appear to be modern (hence the obsession with acquiring the accoutrements of a modern society, even if socially, there are distinctive differences between various zones of life.)

C. Speciousmodernity

This brings us to the next circle, which relates to the state of Islamic modernity today, especially in the present state of rebellion into which it is plunged. According to some detractors of the rise of political Islam and the extremist strains that have emerged out of the radicalization of politics in Muslim societies, the problem of this rebellion is essentially one of modernity, the idea that these societies have never been modernized. One reason given for this state of affairs within Islam is the lack of democratic participation, which encourages and, in fact, foments authoritarian rule by either the clergy in theocratic Iran or the absolute monarchies in the Arabian peninsula or dictatorships such as Saddam Hussein's Iraq and Bashar Al-Assad's Syria. The absence of democratic participation, the argument goes, makes it impossible to bring into existence modernizing forces that would bring about modernity. When it is pointed out that countries like Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, and Turkey, have each undergone periods of radical secularization throughout the 20th century, such instances are often dismissed as superficial attempts at modernization; therefore what they left in their wake is a kind of *speciousmodernity*. On the inverse, the long process of reform taking place within Muslim societies today is just as often labeled as a nihilistic, anti-modern movement. Whether specious or not, anti-modern or not, it is nevertheless the case that Muslim societies

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[35] See Jurgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Essays*, translated by Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987).

are radicalized, and within that radicalization lies the seed of a biopolitical gesture that is a response to the programs of colonial modernity. Political Islam is thus not a consequence of a *speciousmodernity* that never assimilated into its structures an authentic modernity based on the four rationalities of *supermodernity*, but part of a postcolonial form of address seeking new models and political cultures.

The rise of Islamic radicalism throughout the Middle East, and the incipient revolution that exploded with the overthrow of the Shah Reza Pahlavi and the Peacock Throne in Iran, and with it, the sacking and occupation of the American embassy in Teheran by university students, unleashed a radical postcolonial force that is distinct from the forces of decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s. The overthrow of the Shah not only revived political Islam, it placed it at the center of global discursive formations in which it has remained since the founding of Al Qaeda in the 1990s. Though political Islam was already well financed— both ideologically and intellectually with the formation of the Muslim Brotherhood by Hassan Al Bana in Egypt in the 1920s, and its intellectual transformation by its chief ideologue Sayyed Qutb—the first demonstration of political Islam's will to globality was the theocratic organization of its power in Iran in 1979.[36] The Islamic revolution in Iran signaled the changed context of superpower politics or *pace* Mbembe *necropolitics*. It not only introduced a new actor on the ideological landscape—an actor who decides on the limits of life and controls and mobilizes the organizations of death—it also imagined a new political community separate from and permanently antagonistic to structures of power and infrastructures of force specific to *supermodernity*. As such, the early 1980s inaugurated a remarkable cultural and political shift in global terms.

The signal event of this historical shift was the return of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to Teheran from exile in Paris after the triumph of the resistance against the Shah. As the spiritual leader of the Islamic theocracy that has governed Iran to date, Khomeini presided over the radical ideological repositioning of Iran away from the epistemological and cultural dominance of the West to Islamic ethics, not only as a system of governance but as a worldview based on the Koran as the supreme tool of religious, political, cultural, social, and economic conduct and identity. The revolution in Iran was not just an act of insurrection against *supermodernity*, attacking the dominant assumptions of imperialism that accompany it; the revolution posited itself as an instrument of spiritual and therefore social and cultural purification from the stain of Western, godless decadence. In the end the revolution, though political in the pedestrian sense, was in fact, about culture and identity: Islamic modernity as a counter-model and real alternative to *supermodernity*. This position of political Islam is in remarkable accord with the idea of the altermodern.

Thus, the test for the power of persuasion of *supermodernity* can be partly analyzed through the sanguine postcolonial lessons of the Islamic revolution and the various struggles—for better or worse—that have been undertaken by social and political forces radicalized by their resentment of the machinations of the West in Muslim societies. Structuring this radicalization, and all the splintered cultural ideas and ideologies that rise from it, is the collision of two irreconcilable positions: on the one hand a Western ethnocentric exceptionalism that continues to prescribe a civilizing ethos for the Muslim world, and on the other, an Islamic fundamentalism that mercilessly attacks the West and its allies with nihilistic violence. This meeting is a collision of political forces and cultural logics, an altermodernist relation marked by a face-off between colonial modernity and postcolonial modernity. However, the distance between colonial modernity and postcolonial modernity is one of degrees, for each incorporates and contradicts the other. Each is the mirror of the other. Their strained interpretation of the other is what has produced the kind of cultural antagonism that currently bedevils Western and postcolonial discursive formations, further enervating the competing institutional structures, epistemology, ideals, faith, and identity.

D. Aftermodern

So far, we have addressed the three dominant ideas of current thinking about modernity. The fourth idea concerns an area of the world—Africa—seen to be the most opaque to the persuasions of *supermodernity*.

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[36] The Iranian revolution marked a shift from the modern politics of Gamel Abdel Nasser's pan-Arabism.

Africa is located in the nethermost part of modernity, relegated to an epistemology of non-existence that has never been modern, to literalize Bruno Latour's idea that the world has never been modern.[37] Africa shares part of the scorn about its non-modernity that is also directed at the Muslim world. But Islamic societies do enjoy greater respect than Africa, because, there is a classical Islamic past which Africa is said to lack. German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel made this explicit, when he wrote:

> Africa proper, as far as History goes back, has remained—for all purposes of connection with the rest of the world—shut up; it is the Gold land compressed within itself—the land of childhood, which lying beyond the day of self-conscious history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of Night. Its isolated character originated, not merely in its tropical nature, but essentially in its geographical condition.[38]

If Africa is no part of historical consciousness, thereby lacking "Spirit," how can it lay claim to any experience of modernity if not from an education derived from the master narrative of *grand* modernity? If the Muslim world is speciously modern and Africa not yet modern, then the two societies exist in anti-rational systems of theocratic fundamentalism or tribal ethnocentrism. Each of these societies is reduced to cultural spheres whose experience of modernity have been developed out of oppression and violence and therefore in need of reconciling to modernity. However, Islamic societies tend to fare better than African ones in debates around modernity. Africa is a zone which many reflexively and categorically declare as the antithesis of the modern imagination, a place of the absence of modernity, where every aspect of the conditions of living specific to modernity has been effaced or erased. By this thinking, Africa is the true epigone of modernity. If Bourriaud posits the entire structure of his project as *altermodernist*, Africa, it may be said, at the very least is *aftermodern* not only because the narratives of modernity in Africa are predicated on an encounter of antagonism but also in the invention of a new African character of modernity that emerges after the end of modernity. The modernity to which Africa responds, and which it struggles to disaggregate from its social context, is the architecture of colonial modernity. It is in this sense that situations of modernity in Africa are *aftermodern*, because, having no relation to history-making, its modernity can only emerge after the end of the modern. Such modernity, more than in other parts of world, would be based in large part on a project of disinheriting the violence of colonial modernity.

This is partly what the recent images produced by South African photographer Guy Tillim seem to suggest: that parts of Africa—Congo, Angola, Madagascar, Ghana, and Mozambique —have undertaken inconclusive projects of modernization. Tillim's photographs depict processes of anomie. Viewed through a conventional lens, these images tend to convey and confirm the idea that modernization has been marked by failure in Africa. To a large extent, the images are products of a certain ethnography of modernity, in the same way that my perception of European cities evokes the spectral nature of a museum of petrified modernity.

Tillim has been photographing in Africa for more than a decade now. His images can be superficially described as reportage, a mode of photographic production that can either oversimplify complex situations or may illuminate aspects of such situations as worthy of examination. Working with the verve of a photojournalist and an aid worker, over the years Tillim has carefully inserted himself and his camera into spaces that would normally be off-bounds for most photographers. He has made various African cities the haunt of his photographic enterprise, for instance photographing over a period of six months in the tough tenements of Johannesburg, in modernist buildings that have entered a state of ruin as the urban context of the post-apartheid city became replaced by a sense of siege. Likewise, Tillim has roamed all over Africa, to various regions of conflict, searching or, as some would say, scavenging for images of societies in near-collapse. On first encountering many of Tillim's images, the tendency is to view his photographs as the work of a zealous sensationalist or an ethnographer inscribing fantasies of visual frisson against the backdrop of social collapse.

The recent series of work by Tillim, like his Jo'burg series, initially gave me pause, but looking more carefully

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[37] See Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, translated by Catherine Porter (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).
[38] G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, translated by J. Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 91.

at the selection of scenes and the organization of the larger compendium, the logic of his approach revealed a study of contrasts between postcolonial state failure in Africa and the notion of a continent in the throes of entering *aftermodernity*. To my mind it is in the intersection between these contrasts, the promise and failure of decolonization, and the slow process of a counter-modernity that is about to take root in Africa. Tillim summarizes this vision of a yet to come modernity, writing about his images:

> These photographs are not collapsed histories of post-colonial African states or a meditation on aspects of late modernist era colonial structures, but a walk through avenues of dreams. Patrice Lumumba's dream, his nationalism, is discernible in the structures, if one reads the signs, as is the death of his dream, in these de facto monuments. How strange that modernism, which eschewed monument and past for nature and future, should carry such memory so well.[39]

Throughout different parts of Africa new discourses and patterns of modernization are not only rethinking the entire agenda which colonial modernity bequeathed the continent, but social scientists and researchers have also been articulating possible theories for a type of modernity and a structure of modernization that can take hold in Africa. This modernity, it is hoped, is one that will emerge at the end of the project of *supermodernity*. It will perhaps mark not only an ideal of the altermodern, but will initiate a new cycle of the *aftermodern*.

Tillim succinctly articulates that spirit of the yet-to-come: "In the frailty of this strange and beautiful hybrid landscape struggling to contain the calamities of the past fifty years, there is an indisputably African identity. This is my embrace of it."[40] His photographic project is an expression of the hope that showing the decaying legacy of colonial modernity in Africa is not an attempt to mourn the loss of some great past, but a possible *tabula rasa* for a future composition. It disarms and dispossesses the colonial inheritance, and shows, as Jurgen Habermas argues, that modernity is an incomplete project.[41]

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[39] This is an excerpt from a statement sent to the author by Guy Tillim in an email correspondence sent on September, 25, 2008.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity.*

EUROPE, MUSEUMS AND INTERCULTURAL ACTION
– Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni

Director General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport and Coordinator for Intercultural Dialogue, Council of Europe

Ladies and Gentlemen, honoured guests

In a changing world, rethinking the role of art and culture, and of museums in particular, is an essential task. The way cities are laid out; the style of architecture; public squares, avenues and statues; and their representations in pictures, museums or schoolbooks, all contribute strongly to our sense of belonging, our sense of identity.

The Council of Europe, an intergovernmental organisation covering the entire European continent, has been engaged for many years in promoting this reflection process in a very practical way. In 1954, the Council of Europe initiated a series of exhibitions to demonstrate that belonging to a wider European culture transcends the more narrow national feelings. Starting from a fairly classical art-historical approach, we soon developed new trends: to look at the influence of great historic figures on the entire continent; to retrace and re-examine the movement of people and ideas across Europe; and to explore the powerful interplay between society and art, between political and economic power and artistic creation.

I mention this to underline that the international community is very well aware of the important role museums play.

Looking at the 21st century, one often wonders how big the challenges for creating "social harmony" really are. Conflict, unrest and frustration seem to have the upper hand, whereas we know that what we really need is knowledge, co-operation, dialogue.

In its landmark "Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity", the General Assembly of UNESCO affirmed back in 2001 that "respect for the diversity of cultures, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation, in a climate of mutual trust and understanding are among the best guarantees of international peace and security." The headlines of that declaration are a valid roadmap still today: Cultural diversity is the common heritage of humanity; cultural diversity is a factor in development; human rights are the guarantees of cultural diversity; we need access for all to cultural diversity; cultural heritage is the wellspring of creativity.

Together with UNESCO and many other public and democratic institutions throughout the world, the Council of Europe is deeply engaged in creating a culture of dialogue. We know that human rights, democracy and the rule of law are prerequisites of peace and security. But we have also learned over the last few decades, that the increasing cultural diversity of the social and political environment we live in holds specific challenges for all of us.

In May 2008, the Council of Europe launched a significant White Paper called ***"Living Together As Equals in Dignity".*** The purpose was to frame a platform for collective action. The subject was intercultural dialogue. One of the key themes of the White Paper was the importance of developing an increased focus on shared space for dialogue.

In order for us to share a space, we must first frame it, clarify it, map it. We must see the big picture and at the same time explore the details. We must both observe and inter-act.

Intercultural dialogue requires mutual transformation. We are confronted by the Other, and we allow ourselves to be changed through our meeting. If we remain in locked positions and unchanged, then no development is possible.

The Senegalese actor and director Mandiaye N'Diaye calls this "re-creating the circle". He refers to the community act of gathering in a circle, in order to establish our own position in relation to others, to see the faces and bodies of all those with whom we share a space. We both observe and participate.

This concept of shared space is essential for the development of dialogue. Although our personal histories are different, our playing field is common. To better understand ourselves we must learn to know the Other.

There are a number of essential spaces shared throughout the world: the school, the workplace, the sports arena, media networks, the town square and other urban gathering places. And among the most important and widely used, there are museums and heritage sites.

These centers of collective cultural memory are going through rapid changes today, throughout Europe and across the world. New technology offers us greater opportunities for sharing experiences and perspectives. We are no longer limited to remaining within the walls of a building or the fences of a public park or heritage site. We can transfer these images to visitors all over the world. The raw material of mutual understanding is accessible in ways never before imagined. But this capacity for increased distribution is not enough to generate true intercultural dialogue.

Museums have progressed during the last two centuries on a constantly shifting timeline.

They began as platforms for ethnocentric collection and display, in order to glorify the building of a nation and to define a people. They served to cement our self-image.

They moved through exoticism, exploring the world and bringing back traces of the Other into our own backyards, enclosing them, boxing them in, entertaining us with the diversity of the world but at the same time affirming our own superiority.

They moved slowly into a post-colonial "bad conscience syndrome", grounded in self-criticism and even self-hate.

And sometime during the past couple of decades, a deeper understanding evolved of the role that museums can play in mutual understanding . Intercultural exchange has replaced multicultural archiving. The European museum has become a laboratory and a playground for shared experience.

Major national museums have re-invented themselves. Traditional spaces like the **Tropenmuseum** in Amsterdam (The Netherlands) or the **World Museum** in Liverpool (UK) have become intercultural meeting places, where we explore ourselves in relation to others, where we enter into a dynamic exchange between "our" history and narratives from around the world. The exhibitions are created in collaboration with historians and museologists from the target regions. We gather, share, compare and thereby re-create our narrative, confirming the best of European competences: healthy curiosity and the capacity to adapt.

At the same time, new museums of world culture are being commissioned and built, like **Världskulturmuseet** in Gothenburg (Sweden), where the physical space is given the same value as the collection. We are not only what we own or buy or steal, but we are also defined by where we gather and how we learn.

This is the intercultural learning curve. It is formed by a mosaic of experiences, interdisciplinary and inter-ethnic, both educational and recreational. Such dynamic museums most often combine exhibitions with other kinds of activities, gathering a broad spectrum of visitors, mixing generations, cultural backgrounds and sub-cultural interests.

The result is, naturally, increased participation by and with citizens, regardless of ethnic background, age or class. The museum dares to enter into a direct encounter with clearly defined target groups. The number of visitors increases, but more importantly the experiences they bring with them are welcomed and incorporated into the life of the museum. The immigrant populations in urban areas throughout Europe find their own stories reflected and reflected upon in their new community. They are no longer marginalized but rather made visible. They are no longer objects but subjects.

The 2007 European Museum of the Year Award, chosen by the European Museum Forum with the support of the Council of Europe, was given to the **Emigration Centre in Bremerhaven** (Germany). This stylish museum, in a purpose-built building on the site of the dock from which more than seven million emigrants from Germany and Eastern Europe departed, pays tribute to those who left for a variety of reasons, bound for the New World. Theatrical techniques and effective multimedia installations transport the visitor from dock to ship to shore, experiencing the uncertainty of the emigrants' arrival in the Promised Land. The Gallery of Seven Million, containing documentation on all the emigrants from the port, leads visitors towards a substantial modern research section, where they have the opportunity to follow their own lines of inquiry right up to the present day.

Sharing these experiences with visitors who themselves have recently emigrated in the opposite direction, to Germany, is a way of confirming their own lives and trials, their own risks and fears.

This is a significant act of practical intercultural dialogue.

Something else quite exciting is also occurring in European museums in recent years. They are moving beyond limited disciplines and collaborating with other knowledge sectors. Natural scientists, historians, ethnologists and cultural anthropologists share their research, cross-fertilizing one another and finding new connections between apparently radically different points of observation. Social scientists and poets are comparing notes and linking human endeavor.

This tendency reflects a pluralism of people and approaches. It connects formal academic excellence with non-formal and informal learning skills, combines emotional narrative with scientific research. In short, it re-weaves the multiple experiences of the human race into a sustainable fabric of experience, respecting both the intuitive and the learned.

I would like to focus for a moment on the specific responsibilities of national museums and major state institutions in fostering dialogue. National museums in Europe are often recipients of significant subsidies from the state, and our view is that such national institutions must accept a responsibility for promoting intercultural dialogue. Current museology, as this applies to national collections, has identified a considerable shift in emphasis from the museum as a place for the care and storage of objects, where the dialogue between the visitor and collection is one-way, to that of a more learning-oriented experience, where the public engages with cultural history through participative dialogue. This has meant that national museums have had to re-examine their relationship with the public. Major European museums have had to re-position to take into account modern thinking about culture and society, and respond to changes in government policy, including the wider issues of addressing social inclusion, such as meeting the challenges of diversity caused by migration and other demographic shifts.

Many European national museums are now active in promoting dialogue by using their collections to put together different cultural narratives. The diverse and encyclopedic nature of a national museum collection is a distinct advantage when developing multiple approaches to intercultural dialogue. However, this can also be problematic in terms of ensuring that audiences feel both fully engaged with the objects on display, and are also empowered through their relationship with the museum. There is a complex relationship between the visitor, the objects, the curator, exhibitions, interpretation and learning. Through activities of display, interpretation, using objects, paintings, photographs, models and texts national museums construct a view, present a story and produce resources for learning. These interpretative processes involve the attribution of meaning, where different interpretations can be made, debated and discussed.

In Europe, our understanding of objects in museums and the values we place on them have evolved a great deal from the origins of the museum "as a collection". Museums have become places where personal connections are made with objects. The ways we use objects to create different meanings are extremely important in a world where there are sometimes different interpretations of history.

The British Museum, for example, in the UK, has a vast collection of art and antiquities from ancient and living cultures. One of the principles behind the British Museum is that through a dialogue with the objects in the collection, humans can, despite their differences, understand one another through mutual engagement. The founding principle that engagement with the collection should stimulate an open discourse about humanity remains at the core of the British Museum's audience strategy today. The British Museum holds over seven million objects and is one of the few collections where the history of mankind can be told through material culture over a span of two million years; where the nature of objects may be investigated and understood from many different perspectives; and where connections with the past may illuminate the present and show the potential future. The British Museum distinguishes itself as an institution which relishes its role as a forum for discussion and as an environment for the development and encouragement of intercultural dialogue. That is only one example. There are many others.

All national museums have the potential to be "museums of the world" at the heart of their thinking and operations: priding an environment where intercultural dialogue can take place, and where visitors can uncover the rich tapestry of human history through their collections and activities.

And finally, European museums are beginning to engage in multi-scale collaborations, confirming a "cultural ecology" and a pluralistic concept of learning and translation. Small scale (local/regional) museums are co-producing and sharing with large scale (national/international) museums. This offers visitors valuable learning experiences at the community level and provides a solid ground for international and intercultural analysis. What is grown and distilled at home becomes common property - we are both local and global, both individually motivated and collectively connected. Rather than seeing museums from a hierarchical perspective (small is poor, large is enriching), we are beginning to see the value of multiplicity and variation.

There are a number of significant European museum networks engaging both small and large scale museum projects. Both **RIME (International Network of Ethnographic Museums)** and **MigrationInstitutions** are examples of this kind of cross-referencing.

This reflects the most important factor for constructive intercultural dialogue - that to be seen is the first step to being understood. That to be recognized is to be heard. That our shared space is made up of many small and powerful spaces, in continuous negotiation leading to mutual understanding.

And in this way we may succeed to re-invent the role of museums and heritage sites throughout the world: not as a series of disconnected and ethnocentric collecting institutions but as agents of change, based on multiple identities, diverse experiences and constantly transforming knowledge.

When museums become true spaces for intercultural exchange, a whole new world opens up to us and we can define ourselves as part of an ongoing process rather than from fixed cultural positions.

And that is one of the most solid of foundations for conflict resolution and intercultural respect.

Thank you for your attention.

PRESERVATION AND UTILISATION OF CULTURAL RELICS AND EXPLORATION OF HARMONIOUS DEVELOPMENT
– Jinshi Fan

Vice-Chairperson of ICOMOS China, Professor of Archaeology at Lanzhou University, and former Director of the Dunhuang Academy of China

对文化遗产保护与利用和谐发展的探索——基于敦煌莫高窟的保护实践

樊锦诗

各位来宾，女士们，先生们：

很高兴能够参加此次大会，与来自全世界100多个国家的代表们共同探讨有关文化遗产的话题。我报告的题目是：对文化遗产保护与利用和谐发展的探索——
基于敦煌莫高窟的保护实践。

一、多元、交流与积淀：敦煌莫高窟文化遗产的价值

敦煌莫高窟作为全世界众多文化遗产中的杰出代表之一，是中国乃至世界上规模最大、绵延最久、内涵丰富、艺术精湛、保存良好的石窟群。1987年经联合国教科文组织世界遗产委员会批准列入《世界文化遗产名录》。

莫高窟自公元366年创建，至公元14世纪，连续千年开窟造像不止，至今在全长1700余米的断崖上，保存有不同建筑形制的735个洞窟、45000平方米壁画、2000多身彩塑和5座唐宋木构窟檐。1900年在莫高窟发现的藏经洞，出土了约50000多件文献和艺术品。洞窟中大量的壁画和塑像展现了敦煌独特的艺术风格，它既继承了中国伟大的艺术传统，又吸收了古印度、西亚、中亚佛教艺术的精华，融入我国少数民族艺术的营养，代表了公元4～14
世纪中国佛教艺术的杰出成就；莫高窟艺术和被称之为世界上古代东方文化最大发现的藏经洞出土文物，为研究中世纪政治、经济、文化、宗教、民族关系、中外文化交往等提供了珍贵资料，具有很高的历史价值。

二、抢救、保护和预防：敦煌莫高窟的保护历程

对敦煌莫高窟这样珍贵的遗产而言，保护是永恒的主题。无论是要保存人类文化多样性，还是要发挥它促进社会和谐的应有作用，都必须首先保护它。多年来，敦煌研究院遵照世界遗产公约精神与"保护为主，抢救第一，合理利用，加强管理"的中国文物工作方针，经过不断探索，逐步使莫高窟的保护，从最初单纯的"抢救性保护"发展到今天集"抢救性保护"、"预防性保护"和"永久性保护"于一体的保护体系，为传承、弘扬莫高窟的珍贵价值奠定了坚实基础。

（一）通过适当的工程干预和科技保护措施，遏制了病害蔓延势头。石窟所在崖体裂隙和风沙肆虐是影响莫高窟文物保存的两大自然因素。为此国家数次投入巨资，对石窟危崖进行抢救性保护加固，解除了莫高窟面临崩塌的威胁；经过多年采用综合措施的风沙防护工程，使窟区流沙减少70%，有效遏制了风沙对环境和文物的严重危害。与此同时，利用传统工艺和现代科学技术手段，对莫高窟病害文物加固和修复，使文物病害得到较大缓解，莫高窟本体文物得到有效保护。

（二）应用成熟的技术和管理手段，开展遗产的预防性保护。目前，我们从石窟环境、石窟本体、安全防范和游客管理4个方面对莫高窟进行全方位的连续监测。做到及时掌握监测数据，及时发现问题，及时研究评估，及时采取保护措施，防患于未然。从而使莫高窟的保护从科学保护上升到预防性保护的更高层次。（三）实施"数字敦煌"项目，永久保存文物信息。任何先进的保护技术，只能延缓，而无法扼制壁画和彩塑的退化趋势。为了永久地保存莫高窟文物信息和文物的珍贵价值，使它得到永续利用，20世纪80年代末，我们提出了"数字敦煌"的理念。开展了敦煌数字储存技术的研究与实践，利用先进的数字技术，记录和保存敦煌石窟艺术，建立了莫高窟文化遗产的数字档案。在此基础上，又进一步做了石窟数字展示的探索。

三、和谐发展之路：敦煌莫高窟的有效保护与可持续利用

联合国教科文组织的发展纲领中指出：文化遗产和文化记忆是对于个人和各民族极为重要的创造力源泉，既具有传统的和大众的丰富性，也将对现代文化作出新的贡献。今天，莫高窟仍然对现代学术研究、艺术创作、教育传播、经济发展具有重要的意义。保护好、利用好这项文化遗产，是构建和谐社会的重要内容。

作为莫高窟的管理机构，敦煌研究院不断思考保护与利用协调发展这一课题。在长期的实践探索过程中，始终以"在保护中做好开放，在开放中坚持保护"为原则，并确定了以法律为依据、以研究为基础、以人为本，确保莫高窟有效保护和合理利用的发展思路。

（一）**以法律为依据。**中国作为负责任的文化遗产大国和《保护世界文化与自然遗产公约》的缔约国，在认真履行公约的责任和义务的同时，结合中国实际，颁布了一系列文化遗产保护的法律、法规、规章和规范性文件，充分体现了国家的重视。在此基础上，地方各级政府也不断加大对文化遗产保护管理的法规建设，结合本地实际制定了一系列保护管理条例或办法。2002年，甘肃省人大常委会制定颁布了《甘肃敦煌莫高窟保护条例》，对相关主体职责义务、莫高窟保护范围的界定和管理、洞窟开放与旅游发展等方面做出了明确的规定，为处理好经济建设、社会发展和莫高窟保护的关系，确保敦煌莫高窟及其历史风貌和自然环境的真实性、完整性提供了重要法律依据，成为莫高窟有效保护与合理利用的坚实基础和重要保障。

（二）**以研究为基础。**《中国文物古迹保护准则》中明确提出："研究应当贯穿在保护工作全过程，所有保护程序都要以研究的成果为依据。"
保护和利用的过程中存在着各种各样的复杂问题，这种复杂性决定了我们不能盲目决策和任意而为，而是必须在研究的基础上提出科学、合理的解决方案。

敦煌研究院以保护和利用的现实需求为导向，积极开展多方面的研究。在价值研究方面，建立了以敦煌学为核心的研究体系，开展敦煌石窟考古、敦煌艺术、敦煌文献等方面的研究。在保护研究方面，确立了壁画彩塑保护、土遗址保护、风沙防治、崖体加固、文物数字化技术等研究方向，近20年来，我院与美国盖蒂保护研究所等国际机构以及国内外的高等学校、科研院所广泛合作，在石窟壁画和彩塑病害形成的原因和机理研究，保护的新技术、新

材料和新工艺研究，以及防沙治沙等环境控制研究方面取得了重大进展。此外，还开展了游客承载量及游客需求结构研究，为游客管理提供了科学依据。

在上述研究的基础上，敦煌研究院制订了《敦煌莫高窟保护总体规划》（2006～2025），明确了敦煌莫高窟保护、研究、利用和管理的中长期目标与规划内容，为敦煌莫高窟的保护和利用发挥了重要支撑和引领作用。

（三）以人为本。是构建和谐社会的必然选择，也是文化遗产保护和利用的必然要求。文化遗产保护和利用的以人为本，体现在3个方面：一是从人的需求出发，满足人民群众的精神文化需要；二是充分考虑当代人和后代人的文化权益，兼顾代内公平和代际公平；三是全社会的共同参与，即文化遗产保护人人参与，保护成果人人共享。在敦煌莫高窟的保护和利用工作中，我们将"以人为本"贯穿始终，实事求是地制订可操作性方案，经过科学统筹安排，最大限度地实现了莫高窟有效保护与合理利用。

比如说，在参观方面，为尽可能降低对开放洞窟安全的影响，并使游客获得更好的体验，我们制定了开放洞窟标准，规定了每次进洞参观的游客数量，实行洞窟轮流开放制；同时规划出12条不同的参观线路，带领游客分组参观，并无偿提供无线调频耳机、讲解服务和莫高窟参观导览。在开放洞窟中设置了监测温度、湿度和二氧化碳的传感器，实行动态调控，使环境数据超标的洞窟及时得到调整，让它恢复常态环境。与此同时，建立参观预约制度，提前做好旅游接待计划和预案。利用执行淡旺季门票价格浮动制度，避免游客过度集中。为满足多样化的需求，我们培训了近百名讲解人员，能够以中、英、法、日、韩、德等6种语言，熟练、出色地讲解和引导游客充分欣赏敦煌艺术。

此外，为了让更多的人体验到莫高窟的重要价值，更大地发挥其社会效益，我们不断探索多种方式，丰富展示内容，扩大展示范围。如免费开放了陈列中心等4个专题博物馆，展出丰富的文物藏品；多次在外地举办展览，使敦煌文化艺术和中国文物保护成果走出敦煌、走出国门，扩大莫高窟艺术的传播力度，带给更多人以美的享受；出版敦煌艺术通俗读物，拍摄发行音像制品，推动敦煌文化普及；支持开展文化遗产知识进校园、进课堂活动，吸引青少年的参与；努力承担社会公共服务职能，大力配合当地社会经济发展，服务社区民众。

近年来，为鼓励全社会参与文化遗产保护，我们努力探索洞窟壁画修复现场的开放展示，使游客直观了解文物保护工作的重要性与复杂性，以及不当旅游活动的危害性，传播文物保护知识，增强公众的文物保护意识。

（四）借助现代科技，实现保护与利用的长久和谐。从长远来看，要充分满足游客多元化的需求，真正做到保护与利用和谐发展，必须要变革传统进入窟内参观的单一模式，进一步拓展莫高窟游客接待的展示方式和展示能力。为此，我们积极吸收国际文化遗产保护利用的先进经验，利用多年来的敦煌数字化成果，在远离莫高窟核心保护区，不影响其本体价值与风貌的前提下，建设敦煌莫高窟数字展示中心。

游客在数字展示中心，能更加细致地欣赏到精美的敦煌石窟艺术，获取更多文化遗产的历史文化信息，满足在真实洞窟中无法实现的体验需求。同时，数字展示中心也能够在一定程度上缓解洞窟的游客承载压力，并展示出一些因保护需求而无法开放的洞窟，使游客能够获得更多艺术上的享受和精神上的满足，也为更大限度地满足各类观众的多样化需求提供了可能。

总之，敦煌研究院在科学保护、研究的同时，拓展了莫高窟文化遗产资源的多载体性、多渠道性、多服务性，在保护的同时，更大程度地实现人类文化遗产资源的共享。

结　语

文化遗产的保护管理是一项复杂而庞大的系统工程，协调文化遗产的保护与利用，更是一项持久艰巨的工作。联合国教科文组织"组织法"强调："文化的广泛传播，以及为争取正义、自由与和平对人类进行的教育，是维护人类尊严不可或缺的举措，也是一切国家本着关切互助的精神，必须履行的神圣任务。"我们相信，在中国政府和人民的支持下，在全世界的关心帮助下，我们会倍加珍惜所拥有的敦煌莫高窟这项世界遗产，有决心和能力瞄准"一流的遗产、一流的保护、一流的管理、一流的展示"目标，努力实现敦煌莫高窟"永久保存"与"永续利用"的理想，为全人类珍藏和弘扬这项世界遗产。

借此机会，欢迎各位嘉宾对莫高窟的保护、研究、利用和管理工作提出宝贵意见。欢迎各位嘉宾前来敦煌参观考察！

VERS UN ENRICHISSEMENT DE LA MUSEOLOGIE
– Alpha Oumar Konaré

Former President of Mali, former President of African Union and former President of ICOM

C'est un plaisir, un immense plaisir pour moi de me retrouver dans cette famille qui m'a ouvert ses portes pour la première fois il y a déjà de celà bientôt 40 ans et qui a su m'élever.

Moi et tant d'autres venus de partout.

Je retrouve avec émotion tant de visages connus, certains naturellement sous le poids des âges et de la sagesse, toujours sur la brèche, le témoin à la main.

Je revois des silhouettes connues de grands et illustres disparus qui seront à jamais parmi nous à cause de leurs contributions.

Je sens ces présences.

Et, à travers de nouvelles générations, la même foi, la même passion, le même engagement, la même curiosité.

Excellences,
Honorables invités,
Mesdames et Messieurs,

Je ne saurai jamais assez remercier Madame la Présidente de l'ICOM, Monsieur le Président du Conseil Consultatif de l'ICOM, Monsieur le Directeur Général de l'ICOM, Monsieur le Président du Comité d'Organisation de la Chine de l'honneur qu'ils me font de m'inviter à cette grande rencontre des professionnels et des amis des Musées, à cette 22ème Conférence générale de l'ICOM, grand moment de communion

- en cette année 2010, Année internationale du rapprochement des Cultures, cette année 2010 aussi Année internationale de la diversité biologique, cette année 2010, également Année internationale de la Jeunesse ;

- dans cette ville de Shanghai, porteuse du patrimoine du futur, qui vient de clore la Grande Exposition Universelle, 73 millions de visiteurs en 6 mois, sous le thème : « Meilleure Ville, Meilleure Vie », sous le signe de l'harmonie sociale fondée sur le respect harmonie sociale entre les ethnies et les cultures, entre les différentes religions, entre l'Humanité et la Nature.

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Je sais la somme de travail, d'efforts, de sacrifices de tous ordres consentis par nos milliers de membres des Comités nationaux, des Comités internationaux, des Organisations affiliées et amies pour que notre rencontre triennale réponde à nos attentes.

Shanghai 2010 ne fera pas exception parce que vous l'avez voulu ainsi par le choix du thème, par la façon dont ce thème a été décliné durant de longs mois dans les réunions de toutes nos structures.

Shanghai 2010 ne fera pas exception parce que vous avez tenu à célébrer partout le 18 mai 2010, 43ème anniversaire de la Journée Internationale des Musées sous le signe, cette année, des « Musées pour l'Harmonie Sociale » en plaçant ainsi encore au cœur de nos réflexions le public des muées dans sa diversité et dans ce qui l'unit.

A n'en pas douter, Shanghai 2010 sera une de ces dates importantes, une de ces étapes importantes des « musées en mouvement » ou du « mouvement des musées » :

- comme en 1929 avec les Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire de Bruxelles (Belgique), la création du premier service éducatif au sein du Musée ouvrant la voie à la vocation didactique des musées ;

- comme en mai 1937 avec l'ouverture du Palais de la Découverte à Paris, la consécration du temps des démonstrations, de l'ère du Musée comme expérience ;

- comme en 1963 avec l'inauguration de l'Exploratorium de San Francisco, l'apparition d'une nouvelle relation du Musée avec son public fondée sur l'interactivité ;

- comme en 1972 à partir de Santiago de Chili, avec l'idée d'un Musée intégral impliquant leurs communautés, s'efforçant de résoudre les problèmes sociaux ;

- comme en 1984, avec la Déclaration de Québec réaffirmant la dimension sociale du Musée, le « Musée social » ;

- comme en Octobre 1988 avec l'ouverture du Musée de la Civilisation de Québec qui met le visiteur au centre des musées, au lieu des collections ;
- comme en mai 2009 avec la création du premier Musée dit universel au Moyen Orient, le Musée du Louvre Abou Dhabi, l'ouverture de l'ère des « délocalisations » des musées, l'ouverture de relations nouvelles avec le mode des affaires.

Mesdames et Messieurs,

La thématique que vous avez choisie comme thème de Shanghai 2010, thématique insolite pour certains, ne saurait, entre sens, ouvrir une nouvelle bataille de concepts et de mots.

Mais elle scelle la fin du modèle unique, interpelle tous les musées, tous les types de musées, toutes les institutions muséales, moins dans leur propre structure que dans leur finalité et les moyens qu'ils utilisent.

Elle questionne aussi sur les limites ou plutôt les non limites des débats en cours dans l'univers muséal, depuis surtout 1972 avec l'émergence du concept de la « nouvelle muséologie » qui consacre une définition évolutive du musée, sur le caractère multiple du musée.

Cette thématique ne consacre-t-elle pas aussi l'entrée officielle de la Chine dans le débat de la nouvelle muséologie ?

Ne soulève-t-elle pas le besoin d'une revitalisation du concept en l'ouvrant à d'autres cultures différentes des cultures occidentales alors qu'il tend à s'institutionnaliser ailleurs sur ses « terres promises » ?

N'est-ce pas une des conséquences de « l'ouverture » de ce grand et vieux pays si attaché à sa culture, à ses cultures, et où, aujourd'hui Conficius est à l'ordre du jour avec ses réflexions sur l'Homme et les moyens de

l'améliorer, et où aussi depuis 1983, très officiellement, « il s'agit de mettre l'homme au centre, d'établir un concept un concept de développement global coordonné, durable et de promouvoir un développement d'ensemble économique, social et humain » (3ème Plénum du 46ème Congrès du Parti Communiste Chinois, Octobre 2003), ainsi donc officiellement un concept de société harmonieuse comme référence pour toute la société chinoise.

La mondialisation ne rend-elle pas inévitable de telles évolutions ? L'interrogation de « l'entrée officielle » de la Chine dans le débat va, ce nous semble, au-delà du « clin d'œil » à la seule Chine.

Elle conduit à se poser tout le problème de la dimension spirituelle des musées, de la place des valeurs et de l'homme, de la valeur Homme, disons : de la personne humaine dans les musées.

L'harmonie sociale est certes une marque asiatique, une dimension culturelle caractéristique de cette région, mais établir des liens entre ce concept et et les musées permet de l'offrir en débat, en partage, de poser aussi ainsi toute la problématique de la diversité culturelle, d'indiquer aussi l'unité entre diversité culturelle et biodiversité comme éléments de notre patrimoine commun, le patrimoine de l'humanité.

L'harmonie sociale permet aussi de souligner l'interdépendance de l'Homme avec la Nature et met en exergue les dimensions sociales et esthétiques, la force de l'expérience et du vécu.

Cette prise en compte de la dimension « harmonie sociale », expression de la diversité culturelle, doit reposer sur un certain nombre de principes : acceptation de l'universalité du musée et de ses déclinaisons, fin de l'élitisme, de l'autoritarisme, acceptation du pluralisme et du fait des minorités, des différences, de la concurrence conçue comme saine émulation, promotion de la solidarité, de l'inclusion et du respect mutuel.

L'harmonie sociale ne peut réellement prévaloir que dans un contexte de dialogue, de réflexion, de débat, d'esprit critique, de libertés, indispensables à la créativité. Elle a besoin de temps pour s'affirmer, mais elle ne saurait signifier passivité, méditation solitaire, contemplation, simple recueillement ; elle doit être refus du conformisme, du « moule commun », de l'uniformisation.

Elle permet de remettre au cœur du musée le public, les publics, les relations entre les publics, les relations entre les objets et les publics, l'immatériel et les publics.

« Le Musée n'est pas au Musée ».
« Le Musée n'est pas au conservateur ».
« Le Musée est un moyen et non une fin ensoi ».
« Chacun peut avoir son univers muséal et doit pouvoir vivre son patrimoine, même dans la pensée ».

Toutes réflexions qui doivent être conduites en ayant en vue les paramètres actuels : la place des nouvelles technologies de la communication, de l'environnement, du changement climatique, la marchandisation de la culture (la finalité du musée n'est pas le projet), le rôle de l'argent dans un contexte mondial où la pensée socio-libérale entend être dominante mais où aussi la nécessité d'un développement durable pourrait s'imposer.

Mesdames et Messieurs,

La thématique proposée « Musées pour l'Harmonie sociale » interpelle le monde des musées à assumer la dimension politique et sociale des musées, à affirmer leur dimension identitaire, à promouvoir le dialogue interculturel entre groupes divers, entre générations, à propos des valeurs et des croyances au-delà des

frontières géopolitiques et religieuses ; à faire prévaloir l'interdisciplinarité, à s'interroger sur le contenu de ses expositions, de ses collections. La thématique proposée interpelle aussi les formations (formation du personnel et du public et le besoin de méthodes éducatives alternatives), sur les échanges (pour moins d'échange inégal, pour plus de partage), sur l'accessibilité des musées : plus d'engagement du public (plus de participation du public, surtout des groupes défavorisés, marginalisés, exclu, handicapés).

Le débat qui s'engage doit avoir en vue que l'harmonie n'est pas figée, qu'elle varie avec les temps et les contextes culturels ; que l'harmonie est la combinaison des diversités, le « champ des possibles », que l'harmonie n'est pas que normative, qu'elle doit aider à mieux interpréter, qu'elle doit aider à plus d'équilibre, à plus de cohabitation, à plus de tolérance.

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Dans un monde en mutation, pleine et totale dans ce 21ème siècle, le besoin d'être soi-même tout en étant ensemble, sera plus que d'actualité. Ceci se fera sentir avec plus d'exigence avec l'avènement des nouveaux territoires, de nouveaux pays, l'affirmation de nouvelles puissances économiques, l'explosion des moyens de communication et du virtuel, l'émergence d'autres cultures, de plus en plus de personnes d'ailleurs, de personnes jeunes ou de jeunes personnes.

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Permettez-moi de noter dans ce sens que le premier continent, l'Afrique, sera un des pays les plus peuplés, le continent le plus jeune parce que continent des jeunes.

En 2050, l'Afrique aura presque 2 milliards d'habitants dont plus de 65% auront moins de 15 ans, autant sinon plus que la Chine, autant sinon plus que l'Inde, autant que toutes les populations de toute l'Amérique du Nord, de toute l'Amérique Centrale, de toute l'Amérique du Sud, de toutes les Caraïbes, de l'Océanie, de toute l'Europe réunies.

Ce phénomène (du poids de la population et de la dimension humaine) ne peut pas ne pas être pris en compte dans une réflexion sur le patrimoine, sur les cultures, sur le musées surtout quand pendant le même temps un déclin démographique et un certain vieillissement de la population se font sentir dans certains vieux et grands pays.

Mesdames et Messieurs

L'ICOM, notre maison commune aura à jouer toujours, comme les musées, un rôle majeur en tant que médiatrice des transformations, actrice du développement et du changement social, comme plateforme de dialogue interculturel.

L'ICOM doit affirmer ses valeurs déontologiques, pour répondre aux besoins d'éthique, faire prévaloir l'acceptation de la différence, de la diversité, veiller à ce que s'établissent des relations d'équité et de reconnaissance mutuelle.

Sa survie sera liée à sa capacité à fonctionner sur réseau pour ainsi toujours conduire les indispensables débats et introspections pour de nécessaires évolutions, de nécessaires adaptations.

Excellences,
Honorables invités,
Mesdames et Messieurs,

Grâce aux apports de chacun et de tous Shanghai 2010 pourrait mieux faire valoir le place du public et de la société dans les musées et les questions fondamentales qui se posent à l'Homme et dégager ainsi la voie pour que rio 2013 affirme la primauté de la personne humaine et le responsabilité de l'Homme.

Excellences,
Honorables invités,
Mesdames et Messieurs,

En cette année 2010, année du Tigre dans le calendrier chinois :

Beaucoup de réussite à la Grande Chine !

Beaucoup d'avancées à l'ICOM et particulièrement au monde des Musées chinois !

Plein succès à la 22ème Conférence Générale de l'ICOM et la 25ème Assemblée Générale du Conseil International des Musées !

Je vous remercie !

Discours du Président Jacques Chirac
Pour la clôture de la XXIIème conférence générale del'ICOM

Monsieur le Vice-Ministre,

Monsieur le Directeur Général,

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Mes chers Amis,

C'est un bonheur d'être parmi vous aujourd'hui, à Shanghai, pour clore la XXIIème Conférence Générale de l'ICOM.

C'est aussi pour moi un grand honneur. Et je veux d'abord remercier chaleureusement les autorités chinoises, ainsi que les organisateurs de la Conférence, pour la qualité de leur accueil.

Je rends hommage à l'engagement de M. Wu Cai, Ministre de la Culture chinois, qui a présidé la Conférence pendant six journées de travaux fructueux, ainsi qu'à M. Shang Jixiang, Vice Ministre, et Directeur Général de l'Administration d'Etat du Patrimoine Culturel.

Je salue Monsieur Julien ANFRUNS, Directeur général de l'ICOM, qui a facilité ma présence parmi vous aujourd'hui. Et j'adresse à votre nouveau Président du Conseil d'Administration, élu ce matin, mes plus chaleureuses félicitations.

La satisfaction qui est la mienne, c'est d'abord celle de m'exprimer, une nouvelle fois, ici, en Chine, foyer de haute civilisation, pays que j'aime profondément, pays qui mobilise toutes les ressources de son histoire pluri-millénaire pour s'ancrer dans la modernité, et inventer les réponses audacieuses qu'appellent les grands défis de notre temps. A cet égard, l'Exposition Universelle de Shanghai a été, je le sais, une remarquable démonstration et une formidable réussite.

L'honneur qui est le mien, c'est également celui de pouvoir m'adresser à une institution aussi prestigieuse que le Conseil international des musées.

Depuis bientôt 65 ans, l'ICOM protège, préserve et communique la valeur du patrimoine culturel mondial.

Forte d'un réseau de 30 000 membres à travers 137 pays du monde, l'ICOM est parvenue à s'imposer comme un acteur essentiel de la coopération culturelle internationale.

Dans votre enceinte, les professionnels des musées débattent et échangent. Ils travaillent au-delà des barrières culturelles et nationales.

Ils contribuent à faire de la culture un instrument au service d'une société plus ouverte, plus tolérante et plus harmonieuse.

Le thème retenu cette année pour la Conférence -l'harmonie sociale -illustre, parfaitement le rôle que les professionnels des musées peuvent et doivent avoir.

Ma conviction, c'est que dans des périodes troublées telles que nous les connaissons aujourd'hui, les musées ont une vocation sociale et morale.

A l'origine, lieux d'exposition et de conservation érudites, les musées sont devenus des lieux d'échange et de rencontre.

De sanctuaires, ils se sont la plupart du temps transformés en institutions culturelles ouvertes, populaires et interactives.

Le développement de la fréquentation des musées par les jeunes, partout dans le monde, est, à ce titre, significatif.

En offrant un accès à la culture, les musées favorisent la connaissance et la compréhension mutuelles.

Souvent, ils sont une vitrine du patrimoine et de l'histoire d'un pays. Ils contribuent alors à valoriser une culture et une histoire nationales ou régionales.

Mais leur place nouvelle dans la société leur permet aujourd'hui d'aller plus loin.

Je crois désormais essentiel que les Musées puissent favoriser l'accès à l'autre.

A ce que font les autres. A ce que sont les autres. C'est l'ambition qui a été la mienne lorsque j'ai œuvré à la création, à Paris, du Musée du Quai Branly, consacré aux arts dits premiers, et à des cultures aussi éloignées que méconnues.

J'ai toujours considéré en effet que nous avions beaucoup à apprendre des civilisations millénaires et de leurs expressions artistiques.

Le Musée du Quai Branly, c'est aujourd'hui un lieu d'accueil, moderne et chaleureux, où les cultures révèlent pleinement leur génie et leur richesse.

Son ambition, c'est d'offrir à chaque visiteur une véritable leçon d'humanité.

Je suis profondément attaché au renforcement du dialogue des cultures et des civilisations.

Sans arrogance, mais sans indifférence. Dans la tolérance et le respect.

Ces convictions sont celles qui ont fondé l'engagement de ma vie.

Un engagement au service de la paix que je poursuis aujourd'hui avec la Fondation que j'ai créée.

Cette Fondation se consacre, à travers les projets qu'elle soutient dans les domaines de la solidarité, de l'environnement et du dialogue des cultures, à agir au service de la paix.

La paix, bien entendu, est directement menacée par les conflits non résolus ou par les crises.

Mais elle l'est aussi par la disparition des cultures singulières. C'est cette disparition des cultures et des identités qui peut générer, au fil du temps, d'abord la crispation identitaire, puis le développement des comportements de mépris et de rejet de l'autre, enfin la violence et même le terrorisme.

Entendons le : chaque peuple, chaque culte, a un message singulier à délivrer au monde. Chaque peuple, chaque religion, peut enrichir l'humanité en apportant sa part de beauté, de création, de vérité.

La diversité culturelle, c'est le respect de la singularité de toute création. C'est le refus d'un standard qui bâtirait un univers parfaitement rationnel et parfaitement aseptisé.

Le combat pour la diversité culturelle n'est donc pas assimilable à la préservation anxieuse ou nostalgique de ce qui vient du passé.

Les cultures sont vivantes, et se transforment sans cesse.
Et pour inventer, il faut garder la mémoire du passé.
Ma conviction, c'est que chaque civilisation, chaque culture est porteuse de multiples richesses.

Devant une mondialisation qui s'accélère, et face aux risques d'uniformisation qu'elle comporte, le destin du monde est là : dans la capacité des peuples à porter les uns sur les autres un regard instruit et compréhensif, à faire dialoguer leurs différences et leurs cultures et à se respecter mutuellement.

Et si le monde a connu une croissance exponentielle du nombre de ses musées, au cours des dix dernières années, ce n'est pas un hasard.

Je veux ici saluer la modernité de ces nouvelles institutions, et féliciter celles et ceux d'entre vous qui s'engagent dans cette conception du musée, lieu de rencontre et de dialogue, de partage et de connaissance ; un musée comme lieu d'interrogation sur notre monde en perpétuelle évolution.

Mes Chers Amis,

Depuis 6 jours, vous échangez et vous débattez pour améliorer votre action, pour améliorer la lutte contre les trafics de biens culturels et leur sécurité, pour valoriser les patrimoines, pour développer la communauté muséale mondiale. Je sais combien vos discussions ont été riches et passionnées.

Tous, vous travaillez dans des contextes politiques différents. Mais tous, par vos collections et vos expositions, par votre engagement et votre passion, par votre travail scientifique et vos recherches, vous faites vivre le patrimoine de l'humanité.

Cette tâche est parmi les plus nobles qui soient.

Je souhaitais aujourd'hui vous en féliciter et vous en remercier. Parce que c'est de la compréhension de l'autre que naît la paix entre les hommes, et la paix entre les peuples.

Je vous remercie.