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PRESS RELEASE

Museums: 2012 outlook

ICOM eye on museum current affairs

Museums around the world are announcing their attendance figures for 2011, which are growing significantly. French museums, for instance, showed a general increase in attendance of around 5%, while the Prado, the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum and the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid, Spain posted record visitor numbers in 2011. It is likely that museums elsewhere in Europe and worldwide are following this positive trend. Large museums, but also smaller ones, saw their attendance largely enhanced by iconic exhibitions, such as *Leonardo da Vinci, painter at the court of Milan* at London's National Gallery or the Maurizio Cattelan exhibition at the Guggenheim, New York, which attracted members of the mainstream public at the end of the year.

In 2011, museums were also highly active in the development of new technologies, with tools such as the iPhone application created by the High Museum in Atlanta for the exhibition *From Picasso to Warhol*, which offered visual recognition and online chat facilities. Innovative fundraising initiatives, such as the individual sponsorship campaign for the acquisition of the *The Three Graces* by Cranach by the Louvre Museum was another high point, as well as entertainment programming aimed at younger audiences, such as the MummieLab by the Kunsthall Rotterdam, which includes interactive educational activities about the secret of mummies.

The year 2011 was nonetheless one of major financial difficulty, with generalised budget cuts making it harder to source private partners. In addition, many institutions around the world have been weakened by natural disasters or armed conflict, stressing the importance of international cooperation in the field of cultural heritage protection.

The year 2012 will therefore be critical for museums, who must continue to attract a younger and diversified audience, to find additional resources while implementing major projects, and to provide answers to current social issues such as sustainable development, education and solidarity.

Throughout the year, the International Council of Museums provides objective comment on museum current affairs, with an international vision. Through its international network, ICOM can provide essential information and contacts related to events affecting museums. ICOM Director General, Julien Anfruns, regularly provides in-depth and logical analysis, supported by examples and case studies illustrating the issues and challenges faced by museums today.

Press Contact

ICOM - Aurélie AUBOURG - Tél. + 33 1 47 34 91 63 – aurelie.aubourg@icom.museum
UNESCO House . 1, rue Miollis . 75732 Paris Cedex 15 . France - Tel. +33 1 47 34 05 00, Fax +33 1 43 06 78 62

ICOM in short

Created in 1946, ICOM (International Council of Museums) is an international non-governmental organisation maintaining formal relations with UNESCO. Within the United Nations, ICOM has a consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. ICOM is the only international organisation representing museums and museum professionals on a global level.

ICOM is:

- A diplomatic forum made up of representatives from 137 countries and territories
- Standards of excellence for museums including ethics (*ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums*)
- A unique international network of more than 30,000 museum professionals around the world
- A think-tank composed by 31 International Committees which represent museums' specialties
- Missions of international public service notably in the fight against illicit traffic of cultural property and emergency programmes in case of natural disasters or armed conflicts.

For all questions concerning the world museum community and for interview requests with ICOM's Director General, please contact the press office:

Press contact: Aurélie AUBOURG – Tel. + 33 1 47 34 91 63 – aurelie.aubourg@icom.museum