

MUSEUM MATTERS III

Museum Storerooms

and

Care for Collections

November 9, 2024

13:00-16:00 Paris time (UTC+01:00) on Zoom

Registration required; max. 100 participants

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Dear colleagues and friends,

In 2022, CIPEG organised its first in the MUSEUM MATTERS series. It focused on Egyptian and Sudanese collections in Latin America and the Caribbean. The discussion was intended to answer certain questions: what was the impetus for the creation of the collections in Mexico City, Havana, La Plata, and Rio de Janeiro? How do these collections fit within European colonialism, the ‘Age of Enlightenment’ and the building of national identity?

The second panel discussion (2023) focused on human remains, starting from the principles of the ICOM Code of Ethics. The aim was to discuss questions that curators working with Egyptian mummies and mummified human remains have to deal with: What constitutes the ‘acceptable’ display of mummified human remains?; Is it acceptable to display mummified body parts?; What is the role of Egyptian mummified remains in the context of human remains from other cultures? How are Egyptian mummified remains treated differently?; If we do not want to display mummified human remains, what do we do with them? Re-bury, discard, put in storage, ... etc.?; What is the role of alternative or supporting displays (e.g. adding CT scans, holograms and photos to the display? Should these be shown instead of or support the display of mummies (some see these visualisations as filters, some as exposing)?; Are facial reconstructions useful/attractive?; Do we need trigger warnings?; Do we need to cover the bodies and to what extent? Should we show unwrapped mummies?

This year, following a survey among CIPEG members, the theme of the third MUSEUM MATTERS will focus on *Museum storerooms and collection care*. It is a great honour for us to welcome Maha Suleiman Taha Ayoub, Ambassador of the Republic of Sudan to Spain, who will address the topic of storerooms and collection care in times of war, updating us on the ongoing situation in Sudan. To provide as broad a view as possible of the practices, experiences, and challenges faced by museums, we invited institutions from different countries and with different types of storage facilities. Invited speakers will present a 15-minute paper, followed by a final discussion of at least one hour. The program will be presented entirely on Zoom.

MUSEUM MATTERS III – PROGRAMME

13.00-13.05

Tine Bagh

Chair CIPEG

Welcome

13.05-13.30

Maha Suleiman Taha Ayoub

Ambassador of the Republic of Sudan to Spain

Museum objects during conflict in Sudan

13.30-13.45

Anna Garnett

The Petrie Museum of Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology, UCL

‘Never change these displays, they are enchanting!’ Issues Open Storage at the Petrie Museum

The Petrie Museum of Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology, UCL, is one of the most comprehensive University teaching collections for any subject in the world. The Museum contains more than 80,000 objects from ancient and modern Egypt and Sudan, around 8–10% of which are displayed in antique showcases, in a very small unsuitable museum space. While historically significant, these ‘open storage’ displays are cramped, confusing and often overwhelming for visitors. However, the installation of new conservation-grade showcases and storage units has provoked mixed reactions among museum users.

In this paper I will present the background to these recent works and explore their impact on our understanding of ‘open storage’ in the context of a public-facing, historic teaching collection.

13.45-14.00

Denise Doxey Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Storage Challenges and Solutions

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, most of the Egyptian, Nubian, and Near Eastern storerooms at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, were in serious need of renovation. In addition, fewer than 24,000 of the more than 70,000 objects in the collection had been accessioned or entered into the museum's database. A multi-year project funded by the National Endowment for the Arts resulted in new, state of the art, cabinetry, shelving, lighting, and wiring. Meanwhile, volunteers created database records for the entire collection. In many cases, however, the objects still needed individual, customized housing within the cabinets, a process that continues today. This paper will discuss the changes that have taken place, the storage solutions that we have developed, and what still remains to be done.

14.00-14.15

Tozuko Onozuka Tokyo National Museum

Storing Ancient Egyptian Materials in Tokyo National Museum

Sixteen museums in Japan hold ancient Egyptian materials, but the size of each collection is not very large. None of them, except for a private collection museum, have an exhibition room or a department dedicated to ancient Egypt, so in general, Egyptian objects are stored and managed together with those of other areas/genres. At Tokyo National Museum, the ancient Egyptian objects not on display are placed in steel cabinets along with materials from West Asia and the Mediterranean, and in the same storage room, are ceramics and archaeological materials from China and other parts of Asia, as well as ethnographic materials from the Asia-Pacific region. One exception is a mummy, which is kept in a special low-oxygen showcase designed for permanent exhibit as well as conservation. Wood has long been the preferred material for the interior of storage rooms and storage boxes in Japan, but in recent years Tokyo National Museum is gradually converting wooden boxes to neutral paper storage boxes.

14.15-14.30

Marie-Lys Marguerite The Centre de conservation du Louvre (CCL), Paris

A New Tool for Sustainable Conservation at the Musée du Louvre?

Five years ago, the Musée du Louvre inaugurated its conservation center (CCL) in Liévin in the Hauts-de-France region. This remarkable contemporary architecture, designed by RSHP, is entirely dedicated to the material preservation and study of collections. This new workplace for the Louvre's teams means rethinking professional practice and the organization of everyone's time. Serving the Louvre's collections and supporting the curatorial departments, the CCL team works daily to guarantee the link between the museum and its storerooms, and to promote and develop scientific partnerships.

14.30-14.45

Gerardo P. Taber Museo Nacional de las Culturas del Mundo, Mexico City

Wonderful Things not at Sight. Some Ancient Egyptian Artefacts in the Storerooms and their Care in the Museo Nacional de las Culturas del Mundo in México

As any Museum in the world, the Museo Nacional de las Culturas del Mundo (MNCM) in México City keeps a great number of its archaeological, historical and ethnographical collections in storerooms. In the case of ancient Egyptian artefacts, many reasons led to “re-burying” pieces in the drawers and cabinets. Some are made of organic materials, or are too heavy to be in a standardized display case. In both cases, the result would be “material fatigue” because the pieces would require manipulation to put them on show and during their time on public display a budget would be needed to secure the special requirements. Also, sometimes, “cultural marketing decisions” have driven the curatorial discourse to display replicas of iconic pieces, since the public prefers to see more “true Egyptian art” rather than humble—but original—artefacts.

14.45-15.45 **Final Discussion**

15.45-16.00 **CIPEG chair's conclusions**