

Workshop

“Drinking Deeply from Museum Work“ – Ugandan-Swiss Museum Cooperation

Date 13 – 21 January, 2016

Venue Uganda National Museum, Kampala & Igongo Cultural Centre, Mbarara

Report

According to the state of the art in museology, and as formulated by the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the classical objectives of conservation, collection, research, communication and exhibition as core activities of museums shall be complemented by broad international cooperation, especially with the communities and museums in the provenance areas of the collections. Considering this last endeavor the starting and pivotal point for our joint project, the Swiss core team travelled in January 2016 to Uganda to meet their East African counterparts to engage in practical cooperation work. After the laboratory in September 2015 for which two Ugandan colleagues visited the European core team in Zurich and numerous virtual encounters and many hours of digital cooperative work, finally, the delegation from Switzerland and Germany was able to meet the entire Ugandan core team in Kampala and Mbarara, the locations of the two museums in Uganda cooperating with the Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich. Besides strengthening ties between the delegations, cooperation partners and team members through getting to know each other personally, the ten days workshop aimed at working towards three goals. Firstly, getting an in-depth insight into the museums and exhibitions, the museum work, mode and methods of operation and challenges of the cooperation partners and therewith also gain an understanding of the status, relevance, effectualness of museums in the respective context. Secondly, based on this acquired understanding, the workshop should also clarify on the terms of our cooperation, i.e. activate a deepened debate on-site on the potentials, requirements, expectations, opportunities and purpose of our project and reflect on the previous process of cooperation. Thirdly, the workshop's last aim was to work towards conceptualizing of jointly curating exhibitions in the three museums on the Swiss and Ugandan “milk-complex”.

The Program

The program of the workshop was planned accordingly. The ceremonial opening of the workshop at the Uganda Museum in Kampala was initiated by speeches of Mwanja N. Rose, the director of the Uganda Museum and commissioner of the Department of Museums and Monuments of the Government of Uganda, then James Tumusiime, the director of Igongo Cultural Centre and Thomas Laely, the deputy director of the Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich, followed by addresses of the Swiss Honorary Consul and the German Ambassador to Uganda. Meet-and-greet, introductions and networking continued then with the further invited guests, followed by an exclusive and elaborate guided tour through the permanent and temporary exhibitions of the Uganda Museum. The



The team with the Swiss Honorary Consul and the German Ambassador to Uganda

opening day ended with three key note lectures of Prof. William Kyamuhangire from the Department of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering of Makerere University (whose milk research labs we were invited to visit the next day) on 'Milk in Uganda: A case of Ankole and Karamoja', of Dr. Richard Drama of Makerere's Department of Geography on 'Impacts of Legislation on Museums and Monuments in Uganda' and thirdly of Dr. Ephraim Kamuhangire, the senior presidential advisor on culture, on 'The Role of Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Development'.

The second day was dedicated to reflect on the cooperation project's past and future by discussing the outcome of the laboratory, reviewing accumulated and accomplished tasks, unfolding current expectations and debating the contents of the memorandum of understanding to be signed. In a second block, members elaborated and discussed particularities of curating in the respective institutions in order to push forward the goal of building an understanding of the other's way of work – through visits into the storage rooms and the cultural village and a dialogue at the roundtable.

In a second part, called the 'Concept & Content Days', we worked on the joint development and drafting of the exhibitions. Quite successfully, we were able to brainstorm a long list of potential topics to be displayed and then create different exhibition concept drafts out of them for all the three museums. They carry the promising working titles 'ANKOLE – Meeting the world on the milky way', 'MILK, my life' and 'Points of Views – A Museum Cooperation on Milk in Uganda and Switzerland'. The concept drafts include first ideas on the objectives and messages, exhibits, storylines/scripts and design, sections/subtopics, display media elements, target audiences, organizational issues, etc. – and finally turned out to reflect both a common vision and shared narrative of the cooperation team but also institution specific perceptions, conceptions and ambitions.

The second part of 'Concept & Content Days' were held at the Igongo Cultural Centre where



Impressive Ankole bull seen during the field day around Igongo Cultural Centre

we were hosted in the Igongo Country Hotel on the premises of the cultural centre. On a field day around Igongo all the workshop participants, after an extensive and very insightful guided tour through the museum, engaged in the smoking of milk gourds, the preparation of the traditional milk sauce called 'eshabwe' which was then eaten with delicious millet bread, later we drank sour milk and hiked through the savanna to walk a herd of stunningly beautiful Ankole cows to the kraal where we milked them with the traditional milking containers. At night, a dance group performed traditional dances in which elegant movements of cows are imitated.

The last three days of the workshop were invested in reflections on the current state of the project, planning of the way forward (e.g. agreeing on project management issues like timelines, communication strategies, fundraising, roles and responsibilities, etc.) and a wrap-up of the past discussions and decisions. Finally, the memorandum of understanding amended during the workshop was ceremonially signed, followed by a festive workshop closing dinner with speeches and honorable guests from academia and diplomacy.

Evaluation

Looking back, the team agrees that the workshop managed to attain the set goals. Measured by the written output, the three exhibition concept drafts, the strategy and planning document and the MoU, we are pleased with our productivity despite the fact that the program was quite ambitious and therefore highly energy-sapping. Extensively discussing organizational strategies and communication channels and being able to agree upon such, should be considered another important outcome. Likewise, the establishment of closer contacts with Makerere University as potential future research partners. Lastly but very essentially, the workshop increased our understanding and sensitivity of the other's work and its conditions, and strengthened the project group dynamic and each member's commitment to the project. Currently the project team engages in fundraising (for research for the milk exhibitions and the installation of the exhibitions), in work on the exhibitions in Uganda and Switzerland and in organizing an academic conference in Zurich in December 2016 on the topic of international museum cooperation.



After the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding

Participants

Abiti Nelson (Uganda Museum)
Asiimwe Richard (Uganda Museum)
Birthe Pater (University of Mainz)
Daniela Bollinger (freelance filmmaker)
Dr. Thomas Laely (Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich)
James Tumusiime (Igongo Cultural Centre)
Kashure Moses (Igongo Cultural Centre)
Kyakuhaire Rose Mary (Uganda Museum)
Marc Meyer (University of Zurich)
Mugume Amon (Uganda Museum)
Musalizi Sarah (Uganda Museum)
Mwanja N. Rose (Uganda Museum)
Raphael Schwere (University of Zurich)
Samuel Bachmann (Basel Historical Museum)

Guests

Atukwase Wartson (Uganda Society)
Dr. Ephraim Kamuhangire (Senior Presidential Advisor on Culture)
Edwin Tumwujukye (Igongo Cultural Centre)
H.E. Dr. Peter Blomeyer (German Ambassador to Uganda)
Jovia Busingye (Uganda Museum)
Juma Ndegu (Uganda Museum)
Loy Tumusiime (Igongo Cultural Centre)
Mugabi Martin (Uganda Football Coach Association)
Nalumansi Margaret (Uganda Museum)
Petra Kochendörfer (Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany Kampala)
Prof. William Kyamuhangire (Makerere University)
Richard Drama (Makerere University)
Romina Wilke-Koehler (Swiss Honorary Consul to Uganda)
Rosemary Munezero (Uganda Museum)
Sam Kizaalwa (Uganda Museum)

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Uganda Museum

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