BULLETIN of the European Museum Forum

April 2002

***The 2002 EMYA Meeting in Luxembourg, 8-11 May*. Members of the EMF Committee are looking forward very much to meeting representatives of the museums which have participated in the EMYA competition during the past year, and to renewing friendships with many museum colleagues who are joining us to celebrate our 25th anniversary. A report on this meeting will appear in the July issue of the Bulletin. Information on the theme and venue of the 2002 EMF Workshop will be available in Luxembourg.**

Can museums make a difference in a world full of disaster, trauma, intolerance and terror? asks Gaynor Kavanagh, Dean of Media and Culture at Falmouth College of Arts in England. Her answer is: 'Every act of intended and thoughtful good, no matter how small and seemingly insignificant, is important. Every exhibit that raises questions, that explores and prompts and engages people's imagination in ways that are expansive has to be a contribution to making a difference.' **Svenska Museer**

The Women's Library *Part of the London Guildhall University, the Library reopened last month. It was established in 1926 to house a collection of women's history, including posters and banners, as well as more than 60,000 books, photographs and periodicals dating from 1746. Its new £6.9 million home is the renovated Whitechapel Public Baths and Wash Houses. The Victorian building in Old Castle Street was converted and extended by the architects Wright and Wright thanks to a £4.2 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and other donations.*

The gender perspective must be present in our consciousness in the making of every exhibition, not just as something one gives thought to on International Women's Day. These are the words of Ann Kristin Carlström, research director at the Museum of Work in Norrköping in Sweden. She is part of a newly-appointed group commissioned by the Ministry of Culture to come up with proposals as to how gender perspectives can be made to have a greater impact on museum activities. **Svenska Museer**

Free entry does not guarantee more visitors **Research in the Netherlands commissioned by Rik van der Ploeg, Minister of State for Culture, has shown that his proposal for free entry to museums one day a week would not greatly affect the total number of visitors in the long term. Dutch museums welcomed these findings as they would prefer to fix their own entry fees.**

Fire in Bucharest One of the EMYA competitors in 1994, the open-air Village Museum in Bucharest, has suffered its second fire within five years. The first one, in September 1997, destroyed only two dwellings and they were restored within three years.

On the afternoon of 20 February 2002, a fire started near the museum's perimeter fence and quickly spread. Though the firemen came very quickly, the lack of water and specialised equipment meant that major damage was sustained before it was brought under control. 18 wooden dwellings, mostly dating from the second half of the 19th century, were badly damaged. Three of them were entirely destroyed and cannot be rebuilt. Among these, the house from Fundu Moldovei (in the north-eastern region of Romania), had been brought to the site by the founder of the museum, the well-known sociologist, Dimitrie Gusti, in 1936. About 75 per cent of the remaining

15 were destroyed, although there are hopes that these can be rebuilt. Inside the dwellings were 1,336 objects. The curators were able to save 890 items and they are already under restoration.

An unofficial estimate of the damage produced by the fire is about 125,000 Euros, considering the 'official' value of the properties, as they are inscribed in the museum's register. However, it is worth noting that Romania has had a high rate of inflation during the last 12 years (the total is over 1,000%) and the last official evaluation was made in 1989. The Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs has announced immediate funding of about 71,400 Euros to be made available for restoration work. The official enquiry on the cause of the fire started immediately, but as yet has not revealed how it began.

The museum is open to visitors again. On 24 February, a first performance was held in the museum, to attract donations. Several bank accounts were also opened for donations. The Minister has promised that the restoration will be completed by the end of the year.

In recent years the museum has experienced a series of managerial crises. The first general director of the museum after the Romanian Revolution, was dismissed in 1997 (before the fire). His successor was dismissed in 2001. The museum community largely considered both of the dismissals to be for political reasons. The first temporary general director, appointed in April, 2001, then became deputy general director in November, 2001, being replaced - also temporarily - by a reputed (and long retired) sociologist.

The fire has become the occasion for a public debate on protection of the cultural heritage, because no objects in Romanian museums are insured, due to the lack of money (the cultural budget for 2002 is the worst since 1989). However, no company would insure the items, as they have not been valued recently and there is not adequate security equipment in the museum, against fire and/or theft. **Virgil Nitulescu, EMF National Correspondent**

The Museum of Natural History at Neuchâtel *in Switzerland continues its programme of innovatory exhibitions with Sable (Sand) which opened on 24 March 2002 and continues until 5 January 2003. The subject of the exhibition is described as 'Soft as silk and hard as a diamond, solid as a rock, as liquid as a river, still but always in motion …' It is accompanied by a book, Le sable: secrets et beautés d'un monde minéral. ISBN 2-940041-10-5. Further information by fax on 0041 32 717 79 69.*

The National Museum in Prague **has a new general director. Michal Lukes, appointed by the Minister of Culture Pavel Dostál, on 1 January, has succeeded the anthropologist, Milan Stloukal. Lukes graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy of the Charles University in Prague in 1975 and began his museum career in the Department of Modern Czech History at the National Museum and in the Military Museum of the Institute of History of the Czech Army. Later he worked as deputy director in the Prague theatre, Divadlo bez zábradlí and organised several annual festivals of Slovak theatre in Prague. He lectures in the Cabinet of Slovak Studies at the Faculty of Philosophy of Charles Univesity. A**

historian, he concentrates on modern Czech and Slovak history, the history of Czech-Slovak relations in general, and the modern history of the Central European region.

His ambition is to transform the National Museum into a modern museum within a short space of time, to make the museum exhibitions more relevant to today's public, and with the help of modern technology to make them attractive to a broad range of visitors. In order to succeed in this aim, it will be necessary to make some basic changes leading to modernisation of the management system of the museum, including streamlining activities connected with collections and exhibitions. To achieve this goal he feels it is important to gain knowledge and inspiration from abroad. **Jana Soucková, EMF National Correspondent**

A busy month in Finland *Finnish museums are meeting in Jyväskylä in Central Finland for Museum Days, and at the same time the Finnish Museums Association will have its 79th Annual Meeting, with the theme 'Values and Museums'. Ethics, values and identity will be discussed in different contexts, with ICOM's Code of Professional Ethics having its own session. There is even a version of the new Code in Finnish. Other subjects covered will include 'Illicit traffic of cultural property' and 'Art works unlawfully confiscated during the Second World War in museums or public collections'. The museum week held in connection with International Museum Day on 'Museums and Globalisation' will be arranged at the same time in different museums all over Finland.* **Marja-Liisa Pohjanvirta, EMF National Correspondent**

Presentation of the 'Born in Europe' Project On 10 December 2001 the 'Born in Europe' Project was presented at a conference in Lisbon under the patronage of the President of the Portuguese Republic, Dr Jorge
Sampaio, at the Barbadinhos Steam Pumping Station of the EPAL Water Museum.

Instituted by Dr Udo Gösswald, director of the Museum Neukölln in Berlin, the project is being developed in Portugal through APOREM (the EPAL Water Museum is a member of APOREM and is currently its president) in partnership with the European Culture Museum of Berlin – Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation (Museum Europäischer Kulturen) and with the Museumspädagogischer Dienst Berlin. The project is also collaborating with other museums in Austria, Denmark, Poland and Sweden. The culmination of this collaboration will be a Grand Exhibition to be inaugurated in Berlin in 2003, focussing on two distinct angles: **Anthropology** (pregnancy, birth and maternity rituals) and **Politics** (multiple identities and their respective aspirations in Europe) in an endeavour to try to determine what 'To be born in Europe' means for different cultures. The project embraces a series of problematic issues which are faced daily, such as xenophobia, intolerance, ignorance and fear. It was within this context that the project was presented by the Water Museum at a conference embracing four workshops on the following themes: 'Museums and Permanent Education'; 'Born in Europe'; 'Political Europe and European Identities'; and 'Architecture in Europe'.

Within the scope of this project, the papers presented at the conference by the guest speakers will be published in book form. This publication, sponsored by the 'Rede Portuguesa de Museus' (Portuguese Museum Network), will aim at spreading the word about the Born in Europe Project both in Portugal and abroad.

In 2002 the EPAL Water Museum will host a travelling exhibition, the purpose of which is to draw attention to the forthcoming exhibition in 2003. This travelling exhibition will be hosted at other venues in Lisbon as well as in Coimbra and Oporto and will also be on display in Brazil and in the USA. After its inauguration in Berlin the Grand Exhibition will be on display in Portugal at Lisbon's Electricity Museum and then at the National Museum in Copenhagen, at the Potsdam Ethnological Museum in Poland, and also in Greece in the year 2004, on the occasion of the Olympic Games. **Further information can be obtained from Margarida Ruas dos Santos, EMF National Correspondent and director, Museu da Agua, EPAL, Lisbon**
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Vasa threatened by its visitors *The wreck of the 17th-century warship Vasa, which has been one of Sweden's*
principal tourist attractions since it was raised from the sea bed in 1961, is in danger of disintegrating. The rot set in during last year's wet summer, when moisture from visitors' clothing began to draw sulphur to the surface of the Vasa's timbers. Now, up to five tons of sulphuric acid are eating away at the ancient wood. The Vasa, at the time the mightiest ship ever built, was launched amid much pomp and ceremony in 1628. But it only got a few hundred yards from the dock before keeling over and sinking. ***The Week, 2 March 2002***

Following up this report in a British publication, we have learnt that the sulphur penetrated the Vasa while it was on the seabed, in the form of organic contamination. The attack on the Vasa is being countered on a broad front in a research project set up by Magnus Sandström, Professor of Structural Chemistry at Stockholm University. However, funding is required for the project to move forward. So far only temporary methods have been employed to deal with the problem. The Vasa's interior has been provisionally treated with a bicarbonate solution to raise the pH value and alleviate the acid attack in the short term. The problem of sulphur deposits has been encountered in other parts of the world, so research on the Vasa may assist others in the future. Sulphuric attack has so far been identified in about 80 per cent of the objects investigated.

On 21 February the museum opened a mini exhibition in an area where objects are photographed, registered and studied, to explain the problem to visitors, thus proving that even when disaster threatens, a good museum sees it as an opportunity as well as a setback.

German Painting after World War II **is the title of an exhibition at the Guggenheim in Bilbao (until 19 May 2002). Drawn from the Guggenheim collections, it is a selection of works from the last third of the 20th century by four major German painters. 'The Expressionist figurations of Anselm Kiefer give a broad view of his personal and paradoxical vision of German history. Georg Baselitz, one of the leading figures in new German painting, uses gestural brushwork to shed light on his conflict with the world. Gerhard Richter is specially represented here by *Seascape* (*Seestück*, 1998), recently acquired by the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, which fuses painting and photography to question the ability of either to achieve pictorial illusion. Finally, without neglecting painting, Sigmar Polke plays with the techniques of mechanical graphic reproduction 'to achieve some surprising effects.'**

New Lanark was officially inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in December 2001. The village, 56 km
s-w of Edinburgh in Scotland, was founded in 1785 by David Dale as a completely new industrial settlement. Cotton-spinning mills, powered by water from the River Clyde, and housing for the workforce were built from local sandstone. By 1820 the population of the village was around 2,500 and it was at that time the largest cotton-manufacturing centre in the country. Under the enlightened management of David Dale's son-in-law, Robert Owen, from 1800 until 1825, New Lanark became famous as a model community. Owen set about improving and expanding the business, and he used the profits to finance a series of radical social and educational reforms designed to improve the quality of life for his workforce.

The cotton mills continued in production until 1968, powered throughout by the river. The village, founded during the early period of the Industrial Revolution, survived with few physical changes, and since 1974 it has been in the care of an independent charity, New Lanark Conservation Trust, which is dedicated to its restoration and development as a sustainable working community. The village still has a resident population of about 180 people who live in the beautifully restored Georgian buildings. New Lanark, which enjoys a dramatic riverside location, is a popular tourist destination, and the former industrial buildings now provide award-winning facilities for visitors, including exhibitions, shops, catering and even an hotel and self-catering accommodation, as well as premises for a variety of commercial enterprises.

It is surprising to many people that a site of recognised international cultural significance should be in the care of a small independent charity, rather than being the direct responsibility of the State. It is not unique in this respect, and it may be a reflection of the fact that it has taken a long time for industrial sites to be recognised as important elements of our cultural heritage. Whether this position can continue now that New Lanark is a designated World Heritage Site is a matter for review by the authorities concerned. The industrial heritage is less picturesque, perhaps, than World Heritage Sites like the Taj Mahal or the great cathedrals, but it is no less relevant to the lives of millions of ordinary people. The inscription of New Lanark and other industrial sites is a welcome recognition that the Industrial Revolution genuinely and irrevocably changed our society.

New Lanark was born in an era of enterprise, and in Robert Owen that spirit of enterprise was allied to a vision of a better and fairer society for the working people who created the wealth and prosperity of the new industrial age. Above all, it is essential that this unique Scottish settlement is safeguarded to inspire and delight future generations. trust@newlanark.org. www.newlanark.org

Other European industrial sites recently added to the UNESCO list include the Zollverein Coal Mine Industrial Complex in Germany, which 'constitutes remarkable material evidence of the evolution and decline of the coal industry over the past 150 years'; The Mining Area of the Great Copper Mountain in Falun, Sweden, '… provides a vivid picture of what was for centuries one of the world's most important mining areas'; Derwent Valley Mills, UK, '.. a series of 18th and 19th-century cotton mills and an industrial landscape of high historical and technological significance';

Saltaire, UK, '… a complete and well-preserved industrial village of the second half of the 19th century'. **TICCIH Bulletin, 15, 2002**

Conference on Migration, Work and Identity *Peter Ludvigsen, of the Workers' Museum in Copenhagen, has sent details of this conference, held on 22-23 November 2001 as part of the Culture-2000 supported Worklab partnership programme 'Migration, Work and Identity'. The starting point of the project is the relationship of the 'new Europeans' to their new country of residence. Amongst other organisations, museums too have an obligation and a responsibility to study the heterogeneous migrant groups living within Europe, to show their culture in museums and encourage the migrants to use the museums.*

Seven museums of working-class culture and industrial history in Sweden, Denmark, Germany, the United Kingdom, Austria and Spain have formed a partnership to focus on the topical question of migration. The purpose of the project is to contribute to the European debate on cultural diversity, with the expectation that greater knowledge of the different migrant communities within the EU will improve mutual understanding and tolerance. The partners will share their work with each other and with the public by means of national and international conferences, exhibitions, a web-site and publications, thus developing a European perspective on migration. The project will run for three years and it is hoped that its effects will go on for many years and the results will contribute to European discussions and initiatives on these issues.

This is the second conference: the first was held in Manchester in November 2000, when discussions concentrated on Migration, Work and Identity. Papers on the first meeting are available at www.worklab.dk

During the second conference the theme was narrowed to Dreams and Walls. This theme will be followed in the creation of exhibitions as part of the dissemination of the project. During the last decades of the 20th century many people from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, the Middle East, the Balkan States and Eastern Europe have been invited to or dreamt of a better life in Europe. However, they are often met by walls – administrative, cultural, linguistic and social – and do sometimes create their own walls.

Footnotes to the Great War 100 objects from the Historial de la Grande Guerre in Péronne (Somme, France). An exhibition at the Musée international de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge, Geneva (until 11 August 2002). Both museums are former EMYA candidates.

The exhibition is described as follows: A seemingly random assortment of objects, they remind us of a poem by Prévert. Whether military, utilitarian, decorative of symbolic, whether of British, French or German origin, the items gathered here reflect the history of their time and are all that is left of nameless and modest people who witnessed it, when they were not its victims.

We are in turn astounded by the almost medieval primitiveness of certain pieces of equipment, horrified by the 'improved' blades and moved by the 'war toys' and child-sized uniforms for young boys whom many fathers would never live to see grow up. The naivety and ferociousness of the caricatures raise a smile. But above all we are

touched by all those objects made in trenches, shelters and hospitals to ward off loneliness, suffering, fear and the anxiety borne of long periods of waiting.

… Those who practised what would later be called 'trench art' did much more than salvage war materials to make souvenirs for their loved ones, clever tools or inspired knick-knacks: they proclaimed their faith in life.

While these objects are of great historical and archaeological interest, what visitors will undoubtedly find most compelling is their power of suggestion, their humanity and the way in which – four generations and more than 80 years after they were made – they speak to us of dignity, brotherhood and hope.'

The Benaki Museum in Athens **has purchased an old industrial building in Pireas Street, which will be converted and used as an annexe to the main museum, as a cultural centre, opening in 2004. The Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation has been included in the Cultural Olympiad events by the Ministry of Culture, and is preparing a major exhibition entitled 'Ancient Greek Costume and Fashion in the 20th century, draperies of reality and inspiration'. It will open in the new Benaki museum complex during the Olympic Games and remain there until the end of the year. Other participants include the Louvre, Kent State University Museum and the Kyoto Costume Institute**. **Ioanna Papantoniou, President, Peloponnnesian Folklore Foundation and EMF National Correspondent**

More news from Romania *Virgil Nitulescu tells us that there have been a number of important changes in museums in Romania. For the second time in two years the Ministry of Culture – which since last year is also the Ministry of Religious Affairs – is trying to promote a law on public collections and museums. The new draft has recently been approved by the National Commission for Museums and Collections and is being sent to the Minister, the first step in securing a parliamentary debate.*

From 1 January 2002 many museums which were formerly under the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs, were passed to local and county councils. Amongst them, the former EMYA competitor, the National Cotroceni Museum – housed in the same palace as the Presidency of Romania – was placed under the authority of the Presidential Administration, the only public institution to be treated in this way. Now only nine museums remain directly under Ministerial control (two years ago there were 19) and the Minister has declared his intention to reduce this number over the next three years, until the end of its mandate.

The 1996 EMYA winner, the Romanian Peasant Museum, has just opened a new section of its permanent exhibition, one year after the death of the museum's founder, Horia Bernea. This section, called The work, is the only one not designed under Bernea's supervision and many are saying that it is quite different from the rest of the museum, although appreciation of its quality is widespread.

Three months ago the Government decided, on the initiative of the Prime Minister, to create the Contemporary Art Museum of Romania. It will be housed in a wing of the Palace of the Parliament, which is the largest public building in Europe

It seems that the Minister of Culture and Religious Affairs, who is a member of the Romanian Academy, is tempted to appoint other members of the Academy to managerial positions. Thus Dinu C. Giurescu was appointed director of the Romanian Peasant Museum, Nicolae Edroiu at the National History Museum of Transylvania, Paul H. Stahl at the Village Museum, and Marius Porumb as the chair of the National Commission for Historical Monuments. All these people have replaced non-members of the Academy and they have, as deputies, specialists with long experience in their field of activity.

The Museum of the Year in Sweden – Malmö Museums. The jury's report reads: With its moving project which has attracted international attention, the museum has shown that memories, in the form of apparently quite ordinary personal objects, can play an important part in the lives of people who flee from their home country. With its firm ties with the multicultural community of Malmö, the museum has involved itself in current social problems in order to assist in lessening prejudice and oppression. One example of this is the focus they have brought to bear on the vulnerable situation of gypsies as a minority group. In their programme of exhibitions and activities Malmö Museums have worked hard to increase and disseminate knowledge of other cultures and ethnic groups, thereby facilitating integration and the inclusion of everyone in society.

Irish news **The National Gallery's Millennium Wing was opened in January. Designed by the partnership of Benson & Forsyth the new building is a striking example of their sculptural and inventive design approach. It echoes some of the themes explored by them at the Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh. Not without design failings, poor surface finish and indeterminate entrances, the building has nonetheless been a critical and popular success. Its opening exhibition, *Monet, Renoir and the Impressionist Landscape*, is on loan from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Visitor numbers have greatly exceeded expectations reaching 1,500 per day. Hugh Maguire, Museums & Archives Officer, The Heritage Council and EMF National Correspondent**

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http://www.serlachiusartmuseum.fi and then LINKS and EMF logo
http://www.hdg.de and then 'International Co-operation'
http://www.msim.org.uk and then 'I-connect'
http://www.naturalis.nl and then 'Gelieerde instellingen'
http://stars.coe.int/museum/e_index.htm

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