



JULY 2009

The 2009 Annual Meeting of the European Museum Forum took place for the first time in Turkey at the invitation of the Bursa Metropolitan Municipality, on 6-9 May. The standing ovation for our hosts on Saturday morning was well deserved and we would like to thank everyone concerned for all their hard work in making this a very successful occasion. 192 colleagues from 26 European countries took the opportunity to sample Turkish culture as well as updating themselves on the European museum situation.

It was with great regret that our Patron, Her Majesty Queen Fabiola of Belgium, was unable to attend this meeting, as she was continuing her convalescence after a lengthy stay in hospital earlier in the year. We wish her a speedy return to her normal schedule of activities.

After a splendid welcome reception and dinner at the Merinos Park Culture Centre on the first evening the next two mornings were devoted to current EMYA candidates describing their own projects. The two afternoons were opportunities for walking tours of the city. There was time to taste Turkish delicacies, with the opening of an exhibition at Bursa City Museum on traditional food culture, and also to enjoy a truly spectacular dance performance. The Saturday morning session took place at the beautifully restored hamam which is now the Ördekli Culture Centre. Delegates listened to an outline of the current museum scene in Turkey, followed by a contribution by Mrs Snenska Quaadvlieg Mihailovic on the work of

Europa Nostra. There then followed a short outline of current EMF activities by EMF Director, Massimo Negri. The morning concluded with the presentation of certificates to Nominated museums, and the announcement of three new EMF Ambassadors: Mrs Danièle van den Abeelen, Mrs Ulla Keding Olofsson, and Mrs Aleid Rensen-Oosting

The Awards Ceremony on the Saturday evening took place at the Club Altin Ceylan, with EMF Chairman Mr Stephen Harrison as master of ceremonies, and contributions from Mr Eddie O'Hara, Rapporteur on Museums, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and Mr Massimo Negri, EMF Director.



Salzburg Museum, 2009 EMYA winner

The announcement of the Awards was made by Dr Wim van der Weiden, Chairman of the Judging Committee, and Mr Recep Altepe, Mayor of Bursa Metropolitan Municipality, presented the 2009 European Museum of the Year Award to Salzburg Museum in Austria. Our warmest congratulations go to everyone at the Neue Residenz

in Salzburg. Special Commendations went to the Archaeological Centre of Almoina in Valencia, Spain; the Museum of Life Stories, Speicher, Switzerland [see also page 3]; and the Museum of Modern Art in Istanbul, Turkey.



The Micheletti Award was given to the Museum of the Jaeren Region, Naerbø, Norway. The Council of Europe Award, won by the Zeeuws Museum, Middelburg in The Netherlands, had already been presented at an earlier ceremony in Strasbourg in April.

News flash! 2010 EMYA in Finland
The Tampere meeting will take place on 19-22 May. Registration forms will be available in January 2010.

Six observations by Wim van der Weiden Before the announcement of the winners of the 2009 European Museum of the Year Award in Bursa, Turkey, I made six observations in my introductory speech. After the ceremony I got many requests to publish them, so here they are:

1. Because of the widespread use of the internet and associated websites it is now easier for new museums to pick up bright ideas from a wide range of sources. In combination with the present possibilities to travel all over the world in order to visit new and/or renovated museums museum professionals can get a very good view of the museum landscape. As a result the judges have seen fewer innovative

breakthroughs. There is an obvious danger that in the future museums resemble each other more and more, that they become more and more similar and that the lack of individuality and regional flavour will grow, despite the high quality of the presentations as such.

2. Multimedia, interactives and websites have become part of the core business of most museums recently. Next to the physical museum, virtual museums came into being. The so-called 'Public Quality' is the main criteria for the EMYA Judges. (Public Quality is the extent to which a museum meets the needs and wishes of its visitors). It means that in the judging process we now take full account of a museum's multi-media, interactives and websites. For instance, the quality of a website (its attractiveness) is very often decisive for a family visit to a museum.

3. Many more museums than 10 years ago embrace their role as a centre for the community. As places for dialogues: intercultural, multicultural and inter-generational. They accept their social responsibility in this respect. It means listening to their visitors and potential visitors. Focus groups are nowadays a means to achieve a result that satisfies not only the museum staff, but first of all the visitors of all walks of life.

4. Catering for senior citizens has become a trend in museums. They have plenty of time to visit museums and the money to do so. And not only the healthy ones. Reminiscence programmes, nostalgic events, co-operation with organisations like Alzheimer associations and the presenting of life stories of old people have become part of the agenda of museums.

5. Museums are still mostly stand-alone facilities. The merger with other cultural heritage institutions is a new development. In particular the co-

operation of archives, libraries and museums grows. Sometimes they are housed under one roof in the same building, sometimes they get one director and a combined staff. Europeana – the European Digital Library of which EMF is a founding member – shows virtually how important co-operation between museums, libraries and archives can be.

6. My first name is Wim. This very popular name in the past century in Holland is disappearing and becoming extinct. Will the same thing happen to museums? From the nominated museums for the 2009 Award eight don't call themselves 'museum' any more. They use words like centre, experience, house of... etc., all in an attempt to get new audiences, because they consider the word museum too elitist or not inviting enough for less educated people. Wim van der Weiden, Chairman, EMF Judging Committee

Museum of Life Stories: huge response to the award in Bursa The Special Commendation awarded to the Museum of Life Stories in Speicher as part of the European Museum of the Year Award (EMYA) in Bursa has triggered an unexpectedly high level of interest in this small Swiss museum. The Museum of Life Stories is located in a mountain village covering a surface area of approximately 8.21 km². Around 4,000 inhabitants live here at 924 meters above sea level. (www.museumfuerlebensgeschichten.ch).

Andrea Nigg, the museum curator, comments on reactions to the European award, "We had a great deal of positive feedback after Bursa; there was a lot of good feeling, and curiosity too. The inhabitants of 'Hof Speicher' were delighted as well, they were proud of 'their' museum and everyone was suddenly talking about the award. The media throughout Switzerland took an interest and did reports on the museum.

For instance, a team from the national radio station came to do a feature about us and a two-hour programme was broadcast live from the museum at the end of May 2009. Of course, regional and national printed and electronic media also ran stories about the prize and the museum and its ideas.



Then at the beginning of June 2009, a three-man team from Swiss television channel DRS came to visit us and



spent a whole day filming a programme that will be aired as part of the national cultural programme, probably on the evening of 15 July 2009. This sort of radio and TV programme is of course an extremely important way of carrying the ideas of the Museum of Life Stories out into the world to share them with a wider audience around the country. It is also particularly important for us that political authorities such as the Department of Culture of the Canton of Appenzell Ausser Rhoden recently sent a delegation to have a look round the museum for itself.

Receiving this European award has greatly enhanced the degree of popularity of our museum, and it is also true to say that our museum now has a much stronger image on the museum scene. Consequently, whether we work in the limelight or behind the scenes, we all feel very confident about the future.

And of course we also hope that the EMF's Special Commendation will firstly continue to boost the number of visitors to the museum and secondly result in increased financial support for our work and exhibitions. The EMYA/EMF documents will be given a permanent place at the reception of the museum in Hof Speicher, just next to the entrance."

This example of the little museum with a brilliant idea that courageously applied for and stood up for itself in the great European competition for the European Museum of the Year Award is proof that it is worth taking part in EMYA ... and above all that it is worth publicising the award and the nomination throughout the country afterwards with a range of marketing and media measures. After all, the value of a prize for the participants is only as great as the follow-up afterwards!

Incidentally, the museum staff in Speicher are particularly honoured that Sofya Averchenkova has already posted an illustrated article in Russian about the idea of the Swiss Museum on the website of the Cultural Policy Institute in Moscow. Here is the link: http://www.cpolicy.ru/europe/museum_of_life_stories.html. Susann Bosshard-Kälin, EMF Swiss National Correspondent, susann.bosshard@museumspass.ch

Prestigious Eureka Prize for Wim van der Weiden, who has won the NWO Oeuvre Prize for the best oeuvre (totality of works of a person) in the field of scientific communication. The winner was announced during an event where science met the press on

25 May at NEMO, THE Dutch Science Centre in Amsterdam. The prize money (12,500 €) originates from the Eureka Fund, which is financed by NWO, the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (Nederlands Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek).

The Prize is intended for 'a researcher, a journalist or any other person who has made a significant contribution in the field of communication of science to a wide audience during a long period of years. He or she must have performed high and above what might be expected from somebody who practises their profession well. The winner must also have had an obvious input in the development of communication of science in The Netherlands'. [extract from the criteria]

A detailed Judges' Report justified the election of Wim van der Weiden as the winner out of more than 20 candidates this year. First of all the judges stressed the fact that he was nominated by six institutions/organisations: The Dutch Museums Association, the Association of Science Centres, the Association of Medium-sized and Small Companies, and three of the institutions of which he had been director – Museon in The Hague, Naturalis in Leiden and Anno in The Hague.

His qualities in changing the Museum for Education in The Hague into the (inter-) nationally renowned, popular-scientific Museon and as founder and first director of Omniversum, the first space theatre in Europe, are warmly praised by the judges. The transforming of the National Museum of Natural History and the National Museum of Geology and Mineralogy into the world-famous Naturalis is an unrivalled achievement, according to the judges.

His more recent activities for Anno as chief editor/creative director, and those for the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science as composer of the first

draft for a future National History Museum were considered to be very innovative in the field of communication of science.

Here follows an excerpt from the Judges' Report. 'Van der Weiden has brought the communication of science to a higher level in The Netherlands. His ambition has always been to tap into a hidden interest in science of people of all walks of life. He stimulated scientists to leave the base of safe academic certainties (for all kinds of science: history, physics, biology, ethnology, etc.). He has not only a faultless feeling for museological presentations, modern and printed media, and events, but he has also influenced many others to innovations in scientific communication. This role is also marked by his chairmanship of the Jury of the European Museum of the Year Award. It is a special oeuvre, different from the usual meaning, but an oeuvre used daily by people who do not know the 'director', the 'chief editor', the 'adviser' or 'window-dresser'.

'Wim van der Weiden can be characterised as a person who visualises science and makes it tangible: someone who thinks and works in 3D.' [end of extract from the Judges' Report]

On behalf of you all I congratulate Wim on this prestigious Award, which is richly deserved. **EMF Administrator**

Our new Judging Committee members Continuing our annual programme of renewal of the EMYA Jury, we would like to introduce two new members, appointed following the death of Hans Woodtli and the retirement of Aleid Rensen-Oosting during the last year.



Javier Pes

I've edited the magazine *Museum Practice* since 2002. Published by the UK Museums Association four times a year, it includes reviews of new museums internationally and outstanding ones, including several European Museum of the Year winners, as well as practical, or 'how to' articles.

Before turning to journalism I worked in museums, as a social history curator at the Museum of Reading (a town in the south-east of England) for four years and as an assistant curator at the Museum of London for three. My 'passport' to the world of museums after university (Cambridge/history degree) was the University of Leicester's museum studies diploma.

As well as writing about museums in 'my' magazine, *Museum Practice*, I work as an arts journalist as a freelance deputy editor (with Jane Morris as the editor) for the *Art Newspaper* at the major art fairs held in Basel, Miami and London.

I've happily attended EMF annual conferences/EMYA awards since 2002 in Luxembourg. For the past two years I've been a stand-in judge, visiting Portugal and Turkey.



Sibilla de Luxembourg

I was born in France, grew up in Switzerland and graduated from the Ecole du Louvre in Art History. After taking a Contemporary Art course in London I worked at the Jill George Gallery. I'm the former owner of two galleries in Cork Street, with a crew concept of art spaces to rent for international galleries to promote their artists in London.

I married and moved to the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg, and am now the proud mother of four children with a cosmopolitan family. I have travelled extensively and speak five languages.

As well as helping with the promotion and awareness of Luxembourg culture, past and present, I was also a member of the acquisition committee for the Museum of Contemporary Art Grand-Duc Jean (MUDAM). I am a board member of many committees, charities and cultural associations. Some of my other appointments include International Chairman of Venetian Heritage for the restoration of Venice and Honorary Chairman of the Peggy Guggenheim Foundation; and board member of the international Think Tank 'Life': interfaith dialogue, environmental issues.

2009 EMF Workshop on Islands and Coastal Heritage, Sardinia, 16-18 October

The workshop will be held at the Province of Nuoro Museum of Art (MAN), Nuoro is a city which lies on a plateau dominated by Mount Ortobene. There will be four main themes:

- *Island and Coastal Heritage – a vital part of European identity*
- *Cultural Tourism for Islands and Coastal Areas – museum networking and co-operation*
- *The Role of the Museum in Balancing Heritage and Industry in the local society*
- *Identity on a Plate – the role of regional food in developing the regional identity*

Each of the main themes will be introduced by keynote speakers from the north and south of Europe, followed by detailed consideration in groups, and a final full session reporting back from the group work. A programme of social events will enable participants to familiarise themselves with the Sardinian culture and heritage. Numbers are limited to 30 to allow full discussions, and the working language is English.

The workshop is co-ordinated by Stephen Harrison, EMF Chairman and organised by Dr Cristiana Collu (MAN Director) and Dr Elena Moreddu.

Further information and the workshop programme can be seen on the EMF website. If you are interested in participating, please send an e-mail to Ann Nicholls, EMF Administrator, at mail@europeanmuseumforum.eu.

Museums for All programme established in Hungary The programme started in 2003 and consisted primarily of an annual conference near the start of the school year and a series of free publications on education programmes in museums and the offers they make to schools. There were also some methodological publications on museum visits,

museum learning, and school-museum educational relationships.

In 2006 the Ministry of Education & Culture established the Education and Training Centre for Museums, to stimulate the training of museum professionals and development of museum-school relationships. A countrywide programme has started to develop a network of museum educators.

In March 2009 a contract was signed between the Hungarian Open Air Museum at Szentendre (where ETCM is operating) and the National Development Agency, on the establishment of the Museums for All programme for 2009-2013. Using EU support, c. 1.5 million Euros will be spent strengthening the educational and training capabilities of Hungarian museums. There will be various training courses (and manuals), sharing of expertise, dissemination of results and a series of publications, among them one on the results of a year-long representative survey of the educational potential of Hungarian Museums. Further information is available (only in Hungarian) at www.mokk.muzeumokmindenek.hu. Tamás Vásárhelyi, EMF Hungarian National Correspondent

The official opening of the New Acropolis Museum, Athens, Greece

The New Museum of the Acropolis opened its doors in Athens, in a striking modern building situated just opposite the Acropolis rock. The impressive grand opening ceremony took place on 20 June 2009 in the presence of Heads of State and Government and international cultural personalities.

The visitors were impressed by the combined efforts of Bernard Tschumi, the Swiss-French architect who collaborated with the Greek architect Michael Photiadis, and Dimitrios Pandermanlis, the museum's Director,

who personally gave a guided tour of the museum to international dignitaries, including EU Commission President José Manuel Barroso and UNESCO Director-General Koichiro Matsuura, who addressed the ceremony, as well as to Greece's leadership. "Today, the whole world can see, all together, the most significant sculptures of the Parthenon. Some are missing. Now is the time to heal the monument's wounds with the return of the marbles to where they belong.... their natural setting," Greek President Karolos Papoulias said in addressing the international audience.

Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis emphasised that the new 130-million € museum belongs to all of humanity and forms part of the world's cultural heritage. "In the sacred hill of the Acropolis the world views the forms that ecumenical and eternal ideals take. In the New Acropolis Museum the world can now ascertain these forms, these ideals, reuniting them and allowing them to regain their radiance.... Welcome to a Greece of civilization and history; together we are inaugurating a museum for the supreme monument of the Classical civilization: the Acropolis Museum," Karamanlis said.

The Greek Minister of Culture, Antonis Samaras, continued: "This unique embodiment of ideas, ideals, moral standards and aesthetic values is needed now, more than ever. And we enjoy these, for the first time in a Modern Museum deserving to the historical Monument. Take a tour in it. Appreciate its atmosphere and its exhibits. Be inspired by its transcending message. It is Greek because it is Ecumenical. It is ours only to share it with the rest of the World. And please, remember: What you will discover is not just a part of our History. It is also a part of our soul, of who we are.... There are strong, sacred bonds, connecting us with every single item, from the humblest archaeological fragment to

the most ornate figure. All of the artefacts are parts of our soul.. Mostly the ones missing! With the anticipation that eventually – better sooner than later – they will be reunited in their birth place and in the integral form they were meant to be.”

A unique audiovisual spectacle awaited the visitors of the new museum, with images of the exhibits projected on the walls of the nearby buildings.



The Archaic Gallery

The Museum's most exciting section is housed on the upper gallery, where the all-important marble relief, matches exactly the dimensions and orientation of the frieze's old home, the Parthenon. The new museum holds about 40% of the remaining marble sculptures, depicting the annual religious procession to the Acropolis to present a new garment to the city's patron goddess, Athena. Most of the rest of the collection is housed in the British Museum, having been removed by Lord Elgin in the early 19th century. These pieces are represented by plaster casts, their different depth and starker white face distinguishing them from the original marbles. Visitors can also see the Parthenon itself through the glass gallery, and even reflected in the windows from the balcony.

The idea is to keep conditions as close to those of the original Acropolis as possible with sunlight and no glass showcases. If the sunshine becomes too intense, automatic blinds drop to protect the precious antiquities. The museum's simplicity illustrates its beauty. There's nothing flashy, just gorgeously airy transparent spaces almost 10 times the size of the old museum on the Hill of the Acropolis.

The New Acropolis Museum has a total area of 25,000 m², with display space of over 14,000 m², providing excellent visitor facilities and amenities. Set to be among the elite of international museums, it hosts two shops and a museum restaurant with panoramic views of the Acropolis and a 700 m² public terrace looking towards the historic hills of Athens. The museum café on the ground floor level overlooks the archaeological excavation. Tickets can be purchased online at www.newacropolismuseum.gr. Admission will be €1 in 2009 before it rises to €5 in 2010. Anna Vogli, EMF Greek National Correspondent

News stories from the UK -

Stonehenge visitor centre breakthrough *The deadlock to build a new visitor centre at Stonehenge, the prehistoric stone circle and World Heritage Site in the South West of England, may be nearly over with the announcement by the British government that a site, 1.5 miles from the circle, has been chosen. As well as a location for the £25m centre, due to open in 2012, the government also announced that it intends to close and grass over a road that runs near the stones.*

Wedgwood Museum wins UK museum prize *A museum dedicated to Wedgwood, the famous pottery company, has won the Art Fund Prize for the best new museum or museum project in the UK. The museum in Stoke-on-Trent won the £100,000 prize ahead of Glasgow's Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum's education*

work, the Ruthin Craft Centre in Denbighshire, Wales, and the community work of the Orleans House Gallery, a small local museum in west London. The Wedgwood Museum's success comes at a time when the Waterford Wedgwood company (from which the museum is financially independent) almost closed due to the financial crisis.

National Trust for Scotland in trouble

The financially troubled National Trust for Scotland (a separate body from the National Trust for England and Wales) has announced that it will close historic houses to the public and cut jobs to save money. It is facing a £3m hole in its annual budget. The number of redundancies could be as high as a fifth of its workforce, or 90 posts, and the trade union representing workers in the conservation body have claimed that as many as 11 properties might close.

London University Egyptology museum hits problem

The Panopticon, which would have housed the University College London's Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, is on hold because a mayor overseas funder has pulled out, leaving the project in central London needing to find £20m from elsewhere. The university is now in talks with the Heritage Lottery Fund, which granted £5m to the project, and other funders to revise the brief.

Titanic Museum for Southampton

A museum about the ill-fated liner, the Titanic, is planned for Southampton, with an opening date of 2012, the centenary of its sinking. The ship sailed from Southampton on its tragic maiden voyage, and many who worked on board came from the port city on the south coast of England. If the £28m museum is built it will probably mean the closure of the city's existing maritime museum, which is housed in one of the city's surviving medieval buildings.

Aborigines' human remains listed on eBay

A document allegedly detailing the Aboriginal human remains held in the Duckworth Collection at the University of Cambridge, which was discovered on eBay, could make it easier for the Australian government repatriation team to identify items. The manuscript, handwritten by the collector, an anthropologist called WLH Duckworth, is said to give specific details about holdings of Aboriginal people's remains in the collection. The manuscript now belongs to Lyndon Ormond-Parker, an academic from the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation at the University of Melbourne and an Aboriginal campaigner. A friend of Ormond-Parker living in London who bought the manuscript for £65 found it on eBay. **Javier Pes, EMF Judging Committee**

No logos here!

Talking of philanthropy, the June issue of The Art Newspaper reports that Timothy Potts, Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum [Cambridge] has rejected a grant of £80,000 from the Art Fund towards the purchase of a pieta by Marco Antonio Bassetti (1588-1630) – entitled The Dead Christ Supported by the Virgin and Mary Magdalene – because he is unwilling to display the Art Fund's heart-shaped pink and black logo alongside the painting. According to Timothy Potts, "logos are the currency of marketing and this introduces a promotional element into the galleries which we regard as an unacceptable distraction". Sadly, it looks as if rejecting the Art Fund logo means that other funders have now pulled out, and that the Fitzwilliam may not be able to purchase the £175,000 painting after all; surely there must be some better way of acknowledging and thanking donors than the inappropriate partnering of a sober religious work and a transient piece of marketing puff?

UK postscript from the Editor It is not often that I can say that a

blockbusting exhibition is breaking all records in Bristol, but this summer the exhibition entitled Banksy versus Bristol Museum is doing just that. Visitors, many of whom have never crossed the threshold of the Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery, are queuing in their hundreds to see the biggest ever free exhibition of the anonymous Bristol-born artist best known for his subversive stencil graffiti, the first examples of which appeared on the streets of Bristol in the late 1980s. After three weeks the museum announced its 100,000th visitor to the exhibition. Featuring over 100 pieces, the show was installed over two days in an audacious secret move that most of the museum's own staff did not even know about, the culmination of an operation which took the director 10 months to organise. The exhibition has taken over the ground floor of the museum and other exhibits have been inserted among the permanent collections, leading visitors on a treasure hunt through the galleries (an oil of the Madonna and Child, for instance, may seem conventional at first glance until you notice that the Holy Mother is listening to her iPod). The exhibition continues until 31 August. Type 'Banksy' into Google and you will see much more.

News from Luxembourg -

Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean (MUDAM Luxembourg) The board of directors of the Fondation Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean (MUDAM Luxembourg) appointed Mr Enrico Lunghi as general director of the Museum to succeed Mrs Marie-Claude Beaud. Mr Lunghi took up his post on 1 January 2009 for a five-year term. Enrico Lunghi was born in 1962 in Luxembourg and studied art history in Strasbourg. A curator at the Musée national d'histoire et d'art, he then became, in 1996, the artistic director of Casino Luxembourg - Forum d'art contemporain. Since 2005, he has been the president of IKT, the international association of curators of contemporary art. www.mudam.lu

Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain

On 1 April 2009 Mr Kevin Muhlen was appointed new artistic director of Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain to succeed Enrico Lunghi. Born in Luxembourg in 1977, Kevin Muhlen studied art history and graphic design in Strasbourg and Brussels. He joined the team at Casino Luxembourg in 2004 as exhibition co-ordinator, then as chief curator. He is currently curator of the Luxembourg Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2009 (Gast Bouschet and Nadine Hilbert – *Collision Zone*). www.casino-luxembourg.lu

Villa Vauban – Musée d'Art de la Ville de Luxembourg

Following important conversion work Villa Vauban, the city of Luxembourg's art museum, will re-open its doors in the Spring of 2010. The art collection, housed in 19th century bourgeois villa, includes paintings by Flemish, Dutch, French and Italian masters of the 17th - 19th centuries, most of which were bequeathed to the city of Luxembourg by private collectors towards the end of the 19th century. Dr. des. Eva Maringer, born in 1975, has recently been appointed as curator of the art collection. Eva Maringer studied art history, history and philosophy in Heidelberg, Paris and Cologne. www.mhvl.lu

Musée national d'histoire et d'art

Jean Luc Koltz retired after 32 years as chief curator of the Fine Arts department at the Musée national d'histoire et d'art (National Museum of History and Art). On 1 June 2009, Ms Malgorzata Nowara was appointed new curator of the Fine Arts department. Malgorzata Nowara, born in 1973, studied art history and archaeology in Brussels. She curated several exhibitions (e.g. Pierre Alechinsky, René Magritte, Félicien Rops) for the CGRI (Commissariat général aux Relations internationales de la Communauté française de Belgique). www.mnha.lu Jo Kox, EMF Luxembourg National Correspondent

The Catharijneconvent Museum in Utrecht won the EMYA competition in 1980, and after its recent renovation it received a Special Commendation in the 2008 Awards. It is interesting to see that it mentions this fact in a recent job advertisement:

‘Museum Catharijneconvent in Utrecht is het nationale museum voor christelijke kunst en cultuur in Nederland, en is een onafhankelijke stichting met ca. 40 mede-werkers. Na een ingrijpende verbouwing en herinrichting ontving het museum in 2008 de Special Commendation van het European Museum Forum.

‘Wij zoeken op korte termijn een Ervaren projectleider tentoonstellingen m/v voor 32 uur per week ...’

A German fossil and a museum professor in Norway become an international sensation and a case of the ‘Tall Poppy Syndrome’! At a press conference in New York on 19 May Jørn Hurum, a Norwegian palaeontologist at the University Museum of Natural History in Oslo, announced the discovery of a perfectly preserved 47 million-year-old human ancestor (from the Eocene Epoch). The fossil, which he named Ida after his 5-year-old daughter, was found by a collector in 1982 in the Messel Pit, Germany. In 1995 the Messel Pit became the first natural history site in Germany to be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The Ida fossil The conditions at Messel in the Eocene were perfect for fossilisation - not just of bones but also of the animals' finest details. As the bacteria fed upon the protein of the hairs and feathers, they respired, producing carbon dioxide. The dark shape surrounding the skeleton of Ida is the outline of her soft body tissue. Ida's last meal, which included fruits,

seeds and leaves, can be seen in her stomach.

The fossil is 20 times older than most fossils that explain human evolution. She is a remarkable link between the first primates and modern humans and her features show striking similarities to our own. The fossil was ‘discovered’ by Hurum at a fossil fair in Hamburg in 2006, and purchased by the University Natural History Museum. The asking price was \$1m. The museum had never previously paid more than \$15,000 for a fossil. A team led by Hurum studied Ida for two years before presenting her in New York. Read more about Ida on: <http://www.revealingthelink.com/who-is-ida/>.

The launching of Ida Unsurprisingly, this extraordinary fossil attracted the attention from major news organisations, and has become a talking point for everyone interested in palaeontology. Google even changed their icon on Wednesday 20 May to a design including an image of Ida!



Norway has been called ‘*The Land of the Jante Law*’ or what according to Wikipedia is called ‘*The Tall Poppy Syndrome*’ in Britain. The first command of the Jante Law is: ‘Thou shall not think highly of thyself’. In America Wikipedia says this law does not exist. Making a song and dance about your success is considered a good thing there.

Many museum people and other academics in Norway felt the enormous publicity the fossil got in the media was downright distasteful. Many still feel more at home presenting results in academic periodicals where

they are reviewed by their peers rather than in a noisy media world. When somebody has drawn attention to themselves out there in the real world this has caused cold stares in the university cafeteria from their colleagues. Fortunately this is now changing. University academics are beginning to understand that it is necessary that the public feels it is getting something in return for the billions of taxpayers' money they give for research (*Dagsavisen* 13 June).

A second press conference was held for Ida on 26 May at the British Museum of Natural History in London. Hurum's childhood hero, Sir David Attenborough, took part in the London press conference. He also wrote and narrated the documentary about Ida, *Uncovering Our Earliest Ancestor: The Link* shown on BBC One the same evening. On 29 May Ida was unveiled at a third press conference at the Natural History Museum in Oslo. She was the front figure in the museum's Darwin jubilee exhibition which opened on 5 June. The opening weekend the Museum of Natural History had eight times the number of visitors on a normal weekend (3,000 versus 400 visitors).

Summing up, within a few weeks there were three major press conferences, a website was launched, a BBC documentary shown on television, a major Ida-Darwin museum exhibition opened and both a book for the general public and a scientific article were published. Hurum waited until all this was ready before launching the story of Ida.

As Hurum said in the country's largest newspaper (*VG* 26 May), the timing was perfect. In the middle of the financial crisis and the swine influenza, people need a distraction. He used words like "The Missing Link" and "This changes everything". This led five other Norwegian scientists to voice their objections in the national

newspaper, *Aftenposten*. They said talk about missing links was misleading and may end up with those who are against the theory of evolution winning a victory when it is pointed out that this Ida is not *the* missing link just one of many links in one of several chains. A debate about the relations between the scientific community and the public was held at the University of Oslo. The organiser, Professor Kristian Gundersen, claimed that Hurum's staging of himself would reinforce the declining respect among the public for researchers.

Hurum knew some people thought the launching of 'Ida' was organised by a major public relations agency. Actually he said it was "*just planned by me and one of my colleagues at a café and scribbled down a napkin*".

It seems that the napkin wasn't large enough for all aspects of the campaign. After having launched Ida the University Museum started the process of getting Ida registered at the Patent Office as a logo and for souvenirs (*Aftenposten*, 12 June). At the Patent Office they were told that a mail order firm in the sleepy provincial town of Farsund had already registered the Ida fossil as theirs and they had a monopoly for everything from knives to umbrellas concerning the name and figure.

The mail order form said they (before the fossil was discovered) had a suitcase in their range of goods called 'Ida' and they needed a logo for it. The Ida fossil suited them perfectly. The chairman of board of directors at the university museum said this was intolerable and highway robbery. The patent office answered that they operated on the "first come, first served" principle and that it would be very difficult to revoke the patent registration by the mail order firm.

On 13 June the newspaper, *Dagsavisen* remarked that one of the

more striking features of the launching was the contrast between the language Hurum used in the public media (missing link, this changes everything) and the sober note in his article in a scientific journal. Some decades ago *Dagsavisen* said the public feared the community of experts and knelt in adoration at the feet of scientists. In the case of Hurum some academics felt there was greater reason to fear that researcher had knelt down in the dust in adoration at the altar of 'tabloid media'.

Some of us found it refreshing that museum and university professionals seemed eager for once to be the centre of attention and cause excitement and really had something interesting to tell the public. And that they tried to tell their story in a media-professional manner and not in the usual feet-dragging, bashful, sweet-but-clumsy manner most museum and university people prefer in order not to provoke any envy among their more timid colleagues.

"Shout it out or get out!" When reading newspaper articles about 'the Ida and Hurum story' I was reminded of when I was standing in a long queue in a pizza restaurant in America and timidly letting people coming from the side get in front of me until an exasperated macho guy behind me screamed: "Shout it out or get out!" These are tough times and it seems museum people here in Norway need to get a bit more 'American'. **Hans Christian Sjøborg, EMF Norwegian National Correspondent**

The Belgian Museums Prize The competition is now in its fourth year and three prizes have been given: Wallonia, Flanders and Brussels. Each of the winning museums receives 10,000 Euros, specifically for their work with young people and disadvantaged visitors. It is an initiative of the Cabinet d'avocats Linklaters de Bandt and the OKV Revue, with the assistance of many

partners, including the Conseil Bruxellois des Musées. There is also a Prize chosen by the public and, for the first time, a Children's Prize, both with a value to the winner of 2,500 Euros.

The Jury chose the Musée Bellevue in Brussels; the Musée des Beaux Arts in Gent (Flanders) and the Musée de la Photographie at Charleroi (Wallonia).

The Children's choice was: The Musée de la Bande dessinée in Brussels; the Musée de la Mode at Anvers; and the Préhistosite de Ramioul-Yvoz-Ramez in the Province of Liège.

The Public chose the Musée d'Erasmus in Brussels; the Musée de Geel (hospital for the mentally ill); and the Préhistosite de Ramioul-Yvoz-Ramez (its second award this year).

More information can be seen at www.prixdesmusees.be, which gives more information on the points to be borne in mind by the public when casting their vote.

The long-awaited opening of the Magritte Museum, Place Royale, Brussels The museum is in the house which was the home of the Belgian surrealist painter, René Magritte (1898-1967) for 24 years, during which period he achieved original experimentation of the colours and forms which define his 'période vache' or his 'Renoir period'. He rented the ground-floor apartment with his wife Georgette from 1930 to 1954, and visitors can see the apartment, together with biographical material and examples of his work. Restoration work has included sustainable materials, including solar panels and special lighting. Public interest has been intense, with more than 17,000 visitors in the first three weeks.

Musée Magritte, Rue Essegheem 135, B-1090 Brussels www.magrittemuseum.be. Danièle van den Abeelen, EMF Ambassador, Belgium

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www.europeanmuseumforum.ru
<http://assembly.coe.int/Museum/PrixMuseeCE>

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