

Special Project Report

CITY TEXTureS: Reflecting the city in literature and museums

Special Project by ICLM and CAMOC

13-14 August 2013



Rio Botanical Gardens' welcoming team

Executive Summary

International Committee for Literary Museums (ICLM) and International Committee for the Collections and Activities of Museums of Cities (CAMOC) have received a Special Projects Grant Award (2013) from ICOM for the *CITY TEXTureS* project that they jointly developed and implemented.

The collaboration comprised two dimensions: a) the joint meetings at the conference venue where members from both International Committees made presentations of various formats (papers and Ignites!); and b) the *CITY TEXTureS*

event starting at the conference venue and culminating at the Botanical Gardens where writers, poets and members read texts about their cities to the public. The latter dimension was the object of the Special Projects award.

The joint conference and project aimed to give professionals and scholars the opportunity to reflect on how literary museums and city museums make visible the intrinsic relation of urban space and literary imagination. What role do cities play in the offerings of literary museums and what role does literature play in the life city museums? How can museums – whether devoted to cities or to literature – cultivate the creativity of other arts, such as performance, music, cinema, and visual arts (including new media) in order to develop new urban narratives?

A development not previously planned was triggered by the immediate feedback received during the implementation of the project at the Botanical Gardens. The excitement shared with the audience as a whole inspired CAMOC to look for ways of continuing the process at a broader collaborative plane. Hence the decision on creating a web page for the online audio (and visual) resource.

I. The Project



José Miguel Wisnik performing with words.

Cities have been among the writers' most important sources of inspiration – cities make for great literature, as literature can make for a great city.

The *CITY TEXTureS* project envisaged a public event at the premises of the Rio Botanical Gardens that comprised a) reading of texts on cities by writers and poets as well as by CAMOC and ICLM delegates outdoors in the garden and indoors in the Environmental Museum on the premises; and b) a musical performance and dance in front of the Tom Jobim (Brazilian song writer and composer) Auditorium.

II. Implementation



ICLM Chair Lothar Jordan greets the audience.

The collaboration of the two ICs was initiated right before the ICOM June 2012 meetings with a series of correspondence between the CAMOC and ICLM Chairs and a short meeting of the CAMOC Chair with the ICLM Secretary at the June meetings. It got into a more formal track with the agreement of the ICLM Chair and the CAMOC Vice-chair who is also the Chair of ICOM Brazil, at the National Forum of Museums in Petrópolis in November 2012. Eventually ICOM Brazil became a partner providing various services to the realisation of the project.

In pursuit of establishing a public link between ICOM GC, ICLM, CAMOC, and other Committees and the residents of Rio, the ICLM-CAMOC joint programme was adjusted to start the public event already at the conference venue. Consequently, the famous Brazilian linguistics scholar and songwriter José Miguel Wisnik's keynote performance was scheduled for the Barra before departing for the Botanical Gardens where the rest of the programme was resumed. This brought about the anticipated effect: a high number of delegates from other Committees participated in the event

officially overcrowding one of the larger rooms of the conference venue reserved for the session.



Vladimir Tolstoy reads his grandfather Leo Tolstoy's Moscow. Jette Sandahl reads Kierkegaard's Copenhagen.

Following a bus trip from the conference venue to the Botanical Gardens the latter part of the programme was realised partly outdoors when groups of participants were taken around and discovered the Botanical Gardens and partly in the auditorium of the Environment Museum on the premises. Vladimir Tolstoy, the grandson of Leo Tolstoy, was the highlight of the programme at this venue, reading a piece from his ancestor's work. CAMOC and ICLM members who read, or rather animated, excerpts from their native writers on their home cities were the real actors who actually earned the event its soul and were much appreciated by the general audience.



The Samba Brass Orchestra and its energetic director

The music and dance event, taking place indoors due to weather conditions, was the climax of the whole event with the Samba Brass Orchestra performing a fulfilling repertoire of samba pieces and encouraging the audience to dance to their music at the end.

The excerpts of city literature were translated into English and Portuguese, printed and distributed on site in order to allow a wider public to follow the event as well as members. (See Attachment 1)



ICLM and CAMOC delegates mingling with Cariocas after the city readings at the Environmental Museum

III. The Online Audio Resource

As mentioned in the Executive Summary above, an unplanned by-product of the *CITY TEXTureS* project, inspired by the excitement the city readings unleashed at the Botanical Gardens, was the undertaking by CAMOC to start up an online platform/resource where the original readers from Rio would upload their readings as audio podcasts. ICLM was invited to join and they responded positively. The idea is to announce it first to the CAMOC and ICLM memberships and further to all ICOM members via ICOM lists and broaden the circle. A yearly competition around a defined theme with individual contestants, perhaps representing their museums is one of the possible plans to promote the resource. Two CAMOC Board members have been working on the project recently and have already realised the following steps:

1. Look into technical details – what format of audio file is needed, what do we need to do to upload it on the new website, etc.
2. Email participants and ask them to record their audio and send it to us, along with a photo that represents their city. Provide simple instructions for how to record on their phone or computer and what type of file to send, based on what we find out during step 1.
3. Keep reminding people to send their audio until they do.
4. Upload audio and images to the website.

This report is privileged by the fact that the mentioned audio resource will be launched on the same day as the deadline of this report and linked to CAMOC's

brand new website (<http://camoc.icom.museum>). The link to the *CITY TEXTureS* web page will be announced as soon as it is operative around December 31, 2013. Uploading of video recordings is a matter under research and discussion.

IV. Financial Analysis

The type of expenditure to be financed by ICOM was originally listed as a) programme brochure; b) technical equipment; c) translations, d) video-recording of the event for CAMOC's and ICLM's websites and ICOMMUNITY.

The other types of expenditure were transport and accommodation. There would also accrue costs of some writers and music that were expected to be in-kind.

The realisation of the *CITY TEXTureS* project yielded a drastic decrease in the estimated project expenses due to the following factors:

- The programme brochure and texts were created online and the participants were asked to download it for their smart phones or tablets or print it if they wished so.
- The use of technical equipment was limited to minimum because a) use of sound equipment outdoors in the BG was prohibited; and b) in view of the high fees demanded by the governance of the Botanical Gardens that surpassed the budgeted estimates the ICLM-CAMOC organising committee decided to utilise the free translation services of the conference venue in the first of the day and allocated the activities that did not require translation to the afternoon at the Botanical Gardens.
- The only writer for whom an honorarium and accommodation expenses were paid was José Miguel Wisnik (EUR 1550.00 + EUR 154.00) because the Italian writer could not make it to Rio eventually and others were convinced to participate pro bono.
- The number of buses, required for the transfer of delegates to the Botanical Gardens and back to the conference venue was less than forecasted. So the amount paid was only EUR 1600.00.
- The rest of the anticipated expenses were not realised because they were covered by sponsorships secured by the ICOM Brazil.

In conclusion the total amount of grant awards ICLM received from ICOM for this ICLM-CAMOC joint project was EUR 4000.00 and the total amount of expenditures made was EUR 3304.00. So there has accrued a surplus of EUR 696.00. (See Attachment 2)

V. Feedback on *CITY TEXTureS*

Following ICOM Rio 2013 CAMOC sent a questionnaire to its conference delegates which contained questions inquiring about the over all evaluation of the Annual Conference 2013 as well as the projects *CITY TEXTureS* and *Insight Favela*. As much

as this is an item for CAMOC's Annual Report, it should be noted here that the ICLM-CAMOC joint conference and project partnership around the Botanical Garden events received overwhelmingly positive responses, and inspired and encouraged CAMOC in undertaking the establishment of the above-mentioned collaborative audio platform.

In the meantime gathering ICOM members and a Carioca public, albeit small, around a museological theme like *CITY TEXTureS*, was an objective that was realised for the most part and it did show ICOM's receptiveness towards and interaction with the arts (literature and music), nature (the Botanical Gardens) and a wider audience (other committees and Cariocas).

VI. Prospects

The *CITY TEXTureS* audio platform linked to the CAMOC website has been launched with the input from the members who uploaded the city readings they performed to the public in the Environment Museum at the Botanical Gardens. The web page link will be functioning as of December 31. It will be first announced on the CAMOC website, but it will be publicised in the *CAMOCnews* starting with the January 2014 issue and communicated to all ICOM members via the ICOM lists in due course.

CAMOC and ICLM intend to look into ways of furthering their collaboration in line with the *CITY TEXTureS* project.



The *CITY TEXTureS* project will go on...