



## Introduction from the Chair

Åsa Stenström

### Dear COMCOL Newsletter Readers, HELLO!

Hereby I say hello as the new chair of COMCOL. I am deeply honoured and happy to have the members trust to continue the great work that our resigning chair and board members have started. Together with the new board members and all of you members of COMCOL, we will continue to deepen the discussions on collecting and collections from

Sculptured heads @ Museo Civico, Bassano del Grappa our host during the pre-conference days.  
Photo: Danielle Kuijten.

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different perspectives during the upcoming years. They will be exciting years with annual conferences starting in Umeå, in the northern part of Sweden, in December this year and ending in Kyoto, Japan, in September 2019. The board has an ongoing dialogue with our partners in Umeå and Kyoto and both these cities are welcoming COMCOL. The board is also working on finalizing the conference venue and collaborators for 2018. But COMCOL is not only about conferences! Remember that you can get involved in any of the working groups, or projects, that COMCOL are working on! On the COMCOL website you can find information on how to take part and who to contact.

And please share your experiences with other members of COMCOL, for example by writing an article in the COMCOL Newsletter about ongoing projects, research and different collecting matters. Do you have ideas of projects you think COMCOL should get involved in, please contact the COMCOL board! We all work for – and together with – you!

A short presentation of the new board:

- President: Åsa Stenström, Head of Collections and Ethnology at Västerbottens museum in Umeå, Sweden, and Chair of the Swedish national network Contemporary Collecting Sweden.
  - Vice-president: Danielle Kuijten, Freelance Museums & Heritage Consultant in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.
  - Secretary: Helene Vollgraaff, Regional Manager: Metro/West Coast Museums, South Africa.
  - Treasurer: Tanja Rozenbergar, Director of Slovene Ethnographic Museum in Ljubljana, Slovenia.
  - Other board members:  
Virginia Curry, Doctoral Research Assistant, Barrett Museum Planning Committee, Dallas, USA.
- Riitta Kela, Chief Curator, Helsinki City Museum, Finland.
- Kiprop Lagat, Director of Culture at the Ministry of Sports, Culture and the Arts in Kenya and Principal Research Scientist at National Museums of Kenya.
- Cláudia Porto, Public servant working with collections at the Congress in Brasilia, Brazil.

Kim Smit, Head of Exhibitions & Collections Services at the National Gallery of Ireland.



**Åsa Stenström.**

Photo Petter Engman, Västerbottens museum.



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Västerbottens museum, Umeå, Sweden



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Private tour by Giuliana Ericani @ Musei Civici & Cappella degli Scrovegni, Padua.  
Photo: Danielle Kuijten.

perspectives in the context of specific dilemmas resulting from the relation between works of art and their “natural habitat”, such as sculptures in public spaces and the museum and digital landscape.

## COMCOL Conference 2016 - Milano

### *Art, collecting and the sense of place: an integral and integrated approach towards arts, heritage and collecting*

*Danielle Kuijten*

On the occasion of the 24th General Conference of ICOM the international committees on fine arts (ICFA) and collecting (COMCOL) joined forces. In line with the general theme of the Milan conference we looked at how museums are part of a cultural information landscape. The increased tendency to create networks of museums and other art and heritage initiatives means that the distinction between institutional and private initiatives is blurring as well as the distinction between in situ and ex situ. These tendencies ask for an integrated and integral perspective on art and heritage and on the concept of collecting. During the conference we explored these

The pre-conference was set in the beautiful surroundings of Bassano del Grappa. Here we kicked off with two inspiring keynotes from Giuliana Ericani (art historian and until 2015 director of the Musei Biblioteca Archivio of Bassano del Grappa, Italy) and Åsa Stenström, (Ethnologist and Head of the Department of Collections and Ethnology at Västerbottens museum, Umeå, Sweden).

Giuliana talked about the Fine Arts Museums in Italy and their changing relationship with their cultural landscapes. Local art museums, established in the Nineteenth century in Italy, were identity museums, as they shared with the societies which



Tour in the depot of Museo Civico, Bassano del Grappa our host during the pre-conference days.

Photo: Danielle Kuijten.



Head @ Gypsoteca Canoviana,  
Possagno - pre-conference tour.  
Photo: Danielle Kuijten.

founded them the idea that the collections gathered by them were part of the history of the communities. They were identity as they were the mirror of the society that founded them and the same society was their public. As a “jardin de Guermantes”, the fine arts museums of the nineteenth century were a secret garden where the sophisticated flowers were nurtured and followed in detail from the seeds onwards. Museums and their cultural landscapes grew together (or were destroyed together) as they were part of the same view of life and of the same society. Their settings followed the birth and the development of the discipline, the history of art, as the professionals were part of the same society which collected the works of art. That society is not the same any longer and the significance of the fine arts museums changed,

as their audience changed, but they didn't change their settings. Giuliana referred in her keynote to the historian and philosopher Quatremère de Quincy who successfully put forward the idea that the true heritage of Rome was the Roman sky, the topography of its hills, the mentality of its inhabitants, the music of its language, and that its monuments, once exiled to the banks of the Seine or elsewhere, had lost their true value (Quatremère, 1796).

Åsa Stenström talked about the Västerbotten Museum in Umeå, Sweden and about contemporary collecting in the cultural landscapes of the region, on how they engage the local community in participative projects. Establishing networks between museums and local communities is key to finding ways to share responsibilities for the cultural landscape and its cultural heritage content. Åsa talked about culture as the agent, the natural area as the medium and cultural landscape as the result. Furthermore, she presented a long-term collaboration between Västerbottens museum and thirteen smaller municipalities in the region. She showed how the involvement of museums, community and networking help out local heritage societies that own objects, photos and works of art of importance for the region, or the nation, but are lacking the competence and experience to safeguard these objects.

We continued our pre-conference days with inspiring visits to Asolo, Maser, Possagno, with as highlight the visit to Cappella degli Scrovegni in Padova, all with a very special guide – Giuliana. In Milan we continued our meetings with a great variety of topics from Brazil to Mongolia.

Cultural landscapes were discussed in the broadest way including the digital landscape. The specificities of cultural mapping and heritage as common good were just some of the topics we discussed.

### The memory of fine arts museums in their cities

Museums represent a “sense of place” themselves. The institutions with their collections and their buildings are markers in the identity of the place (square, neighborhood, city), usually embodying the history of the place. As such, the place gives

identity to the museum institution. But who are the people involved? Is it possible to identify stakeholder communities and what role do they play in shaping this memory? Nicole Moolhuijsen talked about social significance and how personal memories function as sources of knowledge and sense of place. The presentation investigated the ways in which museums and institutions collecting fine art can emphasize connections between the objects' significances and their contextual surroundings. Ann-Mette Villumsen presented perspectives on the challenges of working with shared heritage across institutional borders, where an interdisciplinary collaboration revealed differences in how a museum and a cathedral perceived their responsibilities towards their communities. Tsogbayar Orkhon brought us an interesting insight in the Choijin Lama Temple Museum in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. The Temple Museum is a unique and integral part of the urban landscape with great potential to engage local and foreign audiences. While Aysegul Guchan spoke about how an art museum in Istanbul that bears a strong symbolic value through its building and space in the city lost this when it was moved by the new government to a space with no historical relation to space and place: "When its home changes, it will no longer be the most powerful cultural symbol of the transformation of Turkey."

## The meaning of heritage in the public space, and how to collect this

We listened to talks where different ways of civil appropriation of heritage in public spaces were presented. Alexandra Bounia talked about a specific civil action group in Athens. As a result of incidents of vandalism of sculptures and other monuments of public art in Athens, a small group of people created a website exhibition ([www.athenssculptures.com](http://www.athenssculptures.com)), which presents, interprets and locates approximately 300 sculptures in the city of Athens on a digital city map. Helene Vollgraaff presented a case from South Africa, where in 2015, political dissatisfaction spilled over in the vandalism of monuments across the country. The events were initiated by the #Rhodesmustfall movement at the University of Cape Town that demanded the removal of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes as a symbol of the rejection of existing power relations at universities. Though the vandalism of monuments



**Participants on the first day of the joint sessions of ICFA and COMCOL in Milan @ MiCo Center.**

Photo: Danielle Kuijten.

is not new, the spate of vandalism following the #Rhodesmustfall events brought new urgency to the debate on the transformation of heritage. The question was raised how one changed a sense of place reflecting apartheid, urban planning and history. She talked about the role of museums in managing monuments. Gloriana Amador Agüero presented an idea on how to collect narratives of public artworks digitally through participation, referring to 'Urban acupuncture' which is a socio-environmental theory that combines contemporary urban design with traditional Chinese acupuncture, using small-scale interventions to transform the larger urban context. "Good acupuncture is about drawing people out to the streets and creating meeting places. Mainly, it is about helping the city become a catalyst of interactions between people." (Urban Acupuncture, J. Lerner).

It was again an inspiring conference where we were able to exchange experiences and ideas, but also to have a laugh with kindred spirits and make new friends.



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There are at least four common categories of self-portraits on social media: selfies, groupies, uglies and footies. In the collection *Samtidsbild* at Stockholm County Museum footies often depict the photographers own two feet and a glass with a beverage usually consumed when people are at ease in their own free time.

Photo: Malin Lindgren, *Samtidsbild*.

## Collecting the Digital: From a Photographic Perspective

*Elisabeth Boogh & Anni Wallenius*

A new project concerning the collection of photography content from social media is dawning. Four museum and archives in three Nordic countries collaborate in the project *Collecting Social Photo*. Each of the institutions has previous experience in collecting photography and in particular with what we call social digital photography. So what does this term mean? A first attempt at answering gives us the definition: *A digital born image produced for and disseminated through social media as part of a digitally mediated social interaction.*

### The many faces of social photography and the need to collect

The convergence of the smart phone and social media has provided new uses of photography and new ways of self-expression and has given rise to tons of images being uploaded to the Internet every day around the world. This development has resulted in museums

and archives struggling with the collection processes. It is important to identify and learn more about how people are using photography in conjunction with social media in order to upgrade and modify the collection methods of museums and archives.

Today's digital photograph is ephemeral due to poor storage, lack of metadata, and an ever-changing evolvement of motifs. In order to collect these images museums and archives have to loosen up their often authoritative status as it is necessary to collaborate with the users and uploaders of social photographs. Cultural institutions also need to adjust their collection databases to meet the needs of a new kind of material.

The aim of the project *Collecting Social Photo* is to formulate recommendations for the collection, selection, archiving, and mediation of social digital photography in cultural heritage organisations. We will specifically look into three different areas:

1. Adjusting collection policies and methods to better comply with social digital photography in order to create relevant and readily accessible collections;
2. Making the collections relevant and accessible to different audiences such as users, researchers, and other museums and archives by adjusting the collection databases, digital archives and interfaces;
3. Downscaling the museums and archives authoritative role in favour of engaging the

users and audiences to democratically participate in the production and selection of cultural heritage.

We will go about this by pursuing four different empirical pilot projects in which we will study three different methods of collection. The first method is to collect user-generated content from social media, both images and context such as captions and hashtags, where the user makes the selection and uploads the material. Secondly, we will collect the same kind of user-generated content but with the museum and archive professionals making the selection. The third method will be harvesting of visual big data.

## What has been accomplished so far?

Four museums and archives from three Nordic countries collaborate in the project. The main contributors are Kajsa Hartig from Nordiska museet (Sweden), Bente Jensen from Aalborg City Archives (Denmark), Elisabeth Boogh from Stockholm County Museum (Sweden), and Anni Wallenius from The Finnish Museum of Photography (Finland). The working group of the project also includes researchers: Professor Helena Wulff and associate professor Paula Uimonen from the Department of Social Anthropology at the Stockholm University, as well as Lisa Ehlin, PhD, from The Research School of Studies in Cultural History, Department of Media Studies, Stockholm University. A multidisciplinary reference group including experts from all three Nordic countries and Great Britain is also attached to the project.

The project builds on previous experiences of the participating organisations. These include research project *Images for the Future* and the collection *Samtidsbild - Contemporary Photographs* at the Stockholm County Museum (from 2011). In addition the Aalborg City Archives' collection of photographs started evaluation data from Instagram from 2012 and onwards. *Other connected projects are the #snapshot* exhibition and research project at The Finnish Museum of Photography (2013-2015) and the work at the former national Swedish Secretariat of Photographic Collections, at the Nordiska museet (1992-2010).



**Digital born photographs have to be collected in collaboration with their creators and collecting has to be done as are being produced. Instawalk in Aalborg. Photo: Bente Jensen, Instawalk Aalborg, 2015.**

The research questions and project goals result from our mutual experiences regarding collecting digital born photography. It has become evident that digital born photographs have to be collected in collaboration with their creators and collecting has to be done as the digital images are produced. Also, there is a real urgent need to develop technological tools that collect photographs and metadata. Heritage organisations have to collaborate with researchers, but we must also act as advisors, both for other organisations, as well as professional and amateur photographers. In order to do this, museums and archives have to identify new areas in photography and then adapt and re-direct our collecting efforts to be able to document a fleeting phenomenon.

Working in a Nordic setting will enable valuable comparison of user relations, culture of sharing, trust in the institutions, and existing methods of collecting and caring for digitally born photographs. The four partners all have varying perspectives on the topics of collecting, photographic collections, and social photography.

## Goal and outcome of the project

Today photographs have become integral in all forms of our communication and sharing pictures is as important as creating them. There are hardly any memory organisations that are not touched by the on-going changes of photographic practices. Now that the nature of photograph has changed profoundly, it is clear that museums and archives need to rethink their strategies regarding photographic collections. Therefore the most immediate goal of the project is to raise awareness of this development among museum and archive professionals.

The project received funding for its first year from the Nordic Cultural Fund, followed by a substantial grant from Riksbankens Jubileumsfond in Sweden allowing the project to work for the next three and a half years, starting in January 2017. During the first stage the focus has been on mapping on-going studies on collecting social digital photography. The goal is to identify relevant research discourses among the vast body of research done on social media on different fields. The strategic co-operation with researchers will further strengthen the competence of the project group.



Cats of all shapes and colors are often uploaded on social media. What expressions like this say about visual culture are questions we have to ask ourselves as museum professionals. This image wall was part of the exhibition #snapshot at The Finnish Museum of Photography. Creative Commons licensed images in Snapshot exhibition.

Cats on Flickr, Creative Commons licensed images in Snapshot exhibition

Describing and mapping the role of traditional photographic collections and workflows around them in museums and archives as well as mapping the role of social media and social digital photographs in society is also a necessary starting point for the project.

The long-term aim of the project is to, through research and practical experiments in pilot projects, find new ways to collect, select, manage, and disseminate social digital photography. The pilot projects will also give us a better understanding on how the collecting role of heritage organisations is perceived by users and audiences. Within the pilot projects new prototypes for interfaces for collecting and visualization of the collections will be developed. At the final stage of the project these findings will result in suggestions and recommendations. With a strong Nordic cooperation the findings will be disseminated effectively. The project strives to make a positive impact on the accessibility of the digital photographic cultural heritage. Seminars and a conference will be organised and an anthology published along with extensive communication through social media and presentations.

We kindly invite all colleagues working with topics related to collecting, selecting, and/or disseminating social digital photographs to inform us of interesting initiatives relevant to our project. You can find and contact us on Twitter: #collectingsocialphoto and through the project website <http://collectingsocialphoto.nordiskamuseet.se>.



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**Museomix in the Museum of Communication (MFK), Bern.**

Photo: Julia Voillat

# *Museomix: People make Museums.*

## *A field report*

*Elke Schimanski*

During my internship at the Museum of Communication in Bern, Switzerland in 2015 I came into contact with the people of Museomix for the first time. “Museomix is a yearly event that brings together, in museums, teams of designers, makers, coders, content experts and communicators to create digital prototypes of mediation.” (<http://www.museomix.org/en/les-prototypes>). “The vision of Museomix is to create an open museum with a place for everyone, a living-lab museum that evolves with its users and a networked museum in touch with its communities” (<http://www.museomix.org/en/about>).

This project started in 2011 in France and since then around a thousand people in more than twenty museums from all over Europe, as well as Canada and Mexico have participated in Museomix. In 2015 alone five countries and eleven museums participate. I participated in the Museomix in Bern (6-9 November 2015) and I want to share part of the excitement and the fascinating atmosphere that I experienced.

On the first day all museomixers (participants) came to the museum, the Museum of Communication (MFK), and got to know each other. The organizers

explained how Museomix works: six teams with six members will work together for a whole weekend. Every member of the team has a different specialty (content, mediation, communication, graphic design, code and fabrication). We started with a brainstorming session on various topics.

The topics that we were given to work with were: lighthouse, participation of the audience, ambassador, message, iceberg and wifi? – please talk to me ( a topic about to get people more engaged with each other).

We were constantly reminded to “think outside of the box”. My group was formed quickly from people with a common interest: “lighthouse.” The question given to us was: What can we do to send a message from the museum into the world to reach as many people as possible?

Each group had its own area, and was provided with all the materials they would need for writing, brainstorming and so on. Each group was asked to come up with their ideas for a prototype by the end of the day and present it to the others.

All museomixers had access to the whole museum. My group walked through the permanent collection display to draw inspiration. We saw old and contemporary telephones, radio transmitters, mobile phones and computers. We were informed that the MFK will close for one year to remodel this permanent display. So we asked ourselves: “Where are the objects during that time? What would they do?” While we were standing in front of the old computers we imagined that the objects would escape for one year and that visitors would receive a



**Warmup Museomix.**

Photo: Pierre Volet

tiny 3D-printed prototype of a museum object, which could be every object the museum want. In this case it should be a prototype of an object that will be again in the new exhibition of the MFK. The visitor will get the tiny object for e.g. at the final closure of the old permanent exhibition or you could launch an extra event for it.

Our first little prototype was an esc-key from a keyboard. We thought it was a nice play on words. The esc-key will see the world and collect stories from people. We named our prototype “The Great Escape: [Museum Objects on Tour]”.

If you scan the QR-Code on that prototype you will be redirected to a twitter-page where you can write your story about “escaping” in 120 characters and mark it with the hashtag #escwhite (stands for white esc-key), so you can follow it.

After that you hand the esc-key over to another person, take a selfie together with the esc-key and the



Scanning the prototype #escpink.

Photo: Julia Voillat.



Attempts finding the right material and size for the prototype.

Photo: Elke Schimanski.

person you hand it over to. Then you post this selfie as well with the hashtag #escwhite and after that another person can tell his or her story. After one year of travelling the 3D-objects should come back to the museum and be presented in the new permanent exhibition with their stories.

On the second day all the teams came together and had to consider how all the prototypes will look and how they can be produced. We decided to produce four esc-keys in five colors: white, grey, blue, pink and yellow. Each copy gets their own hashtag (#escwhite, #escgrey, #escblue, #escpink, #escyellow) With several copies of the same prototype in different colors the museum will reach more people. The good thing about Museomix is that everything you need is available in all museums which participate in the event. There are 3D-printers, all kinds of materials and people who can help you to decide which material you can use for your prototype.

Each group was asked to do a crash-test with the experts, on that day, to improve their idea. At the end of the day every group had to produce a video of their prototype. (Link to all the videos of the prototypes: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLD9DiWfqMGOJYMMIriycleUt\\_eoHoGq4J](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLD9DiWfqMGOJYMMIriycleUt_eoHoGq4J))

On the third day we had to finalise our prototypes and make sure that they were presentable for a public audience. All visitors could visit the exhibitions in the museum for free on that day. The audience tested the prototypes and provided the teams with feedback. We also had the opportunity to check out the other groups' prototypes.

## Some of the other prototypes

“Déjà-Vu?! Make your own TV show” was a prototype in which the visitors could travel back in time and create their own TV show. A statement of the group: “The Museum’s room with the old TVs inspired us for our project. We want to give life back to these TVs that are unfortunately lifeless. Our idea, is to transport the visitor in time, to give him/her a historical context, and give them the possibility to see themselves inside an old TV” (<http://blog.museomix.ch/2015-bern/deja-vu-make-your-own-tv-show/>) With a tablet and the use of augmented reality (the real-time integration of digital content in the user’s environment) people can record themselves and put the recordings into the old TVs in the museum.

Another prototype was “Iceburgers”. It was explained as having a strong connection between the collection and the museum, especially with the objects which are in the archives and not shown to the public. The idea is that the visitors will have a 3D experience in a “white room” with these objects. (<http://blog.museomix.ch/2015-bern/iceburgers/>)

The idea of “On/Off” dealt with the sounds of a museum and the connection between the visitor inside the museum and life outside. People can hear through the bones in their elbows, as sound is linked with vibration. So the visitor can sit outside the museum, put his or her elbow to a spot and then s/he can hear “inside” the museum.

“Stampfie” focused on stamps. In a photo booth you could take a photo of yourself and create your own stamp, print it and put it on a wall in the museum.



**Museomixer at work.**

Photo: Julia Voillat.



**Using the prototype „Stampfie“.**

Photo: Pierre Volet.

The museum would, in this way, develop a fine collection of visitors’ stamps.

Finally, “x-loves-y” brings communication to locations in the museum where you least expect something to happen, for example the restrooms. With this prototype people can write something on a screen in the restroom and the visitor can see it on another screen which is placed inside a locker. This way uninteresting places in the museum get exciting.

One of the best things about Museomix is that it keeps bringing people, from various fields and backgrounds, together. Every museum, every exhibition, and every audience can benefit from it. People, specialties, exhibitions and the collection of each museum – all these elements are enhanced by the idea of Museomix. I can only recommend the Museomix trend to be adopted in museums all over the world. The next Museomix will be in November 2017. If you want to know more, please see <http://www.museomix.ch/#information>.



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# What we Collect

## *Shirley de Vocht (nee Martin) collection*

*Anne-Marie Van de Ven*

The Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS) in Sydney is Australia's major design museum. Founded in 1880, it has a diverse collection covering science and industry, design and technology, arts and crafts. The Technological, Industrial and Sanitary Museum, as it was originally known, grew out of the great international expositions of the late nineteenth century. In its early years the Museum occupied a space in the Garden Palace exhibition building in Sydney's Domain until this majestic glass edifice burnt down in 1882. The Museum survived, and over 130 years later, continues to thrive. Although it has a contemporary focus today, its historical collections are rich, diverse and international in scope. Like The Netherlands' Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the MAAS collection in Sydney also has a strong 'national core' which focuses on Australian social, scientific, technological and design innovation.

The acquisition of the Shirley de Vocht collection is interesting in this national regional context as it followed a simple offer of donation of a 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games towel during the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. When following up this offer, and meeting artist/designer Shirley de Vocht, it became clear that her story was nationally more significant than a singular story about an Olympic Games towel design. It became clear that her towel design had come at the end of a short but productive career as a post-WWII industrial designer of textiles and ceramics. In fact, Shirley de Vocht was probably Australia's first female Indigenous industrial designer.

The Museum has a strong collection of Australian design archives. These archives help to tell the stories of the individual practitioners and their contribution to Australian life and culture. In a generous offer, Shirley donated her small archival collection to the Museum in 2002, just one year before she passed away in 2003. As word spread, other acquisitions



**Conservation work underway on the Shirley de Vocht design archive.**

Photo Anne-Marie Van de Ven, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney.

followed, including ceramics from the son of one of her former employers. MAAS now holds a growing Shirley de Vocht design collection which includes ceramics and ceramic designs, correspondence, catalogues, photograph album and photographs, textile and towel designs, textile lengths and towels created for various manufacturers. This collection, provides insight and sheds light on how one young Australian woman found a pathway to a career as a designer in large and small post-WWII Australian textile and ceramic manufacturing industries.

### The artist

Shirley de Vocht was born Shirley Martin in Carlingford, in north western Sydney in 1929. Her father and father's forebears were Koori Aboriginal men. When Shirley was growing up it wasn't easy for Indigenous Australians to forge a career path in white society. Shirley's family moved up country when Shirley was just a year old, to Uralla in northern New South Wales. She grew up in the bush, as her father pursued a passion for gold mining while working part-time as a hair dresser in town to help raise a family. Shirley recalled that her family often struggled to make ends meet. It was probably during these formative years that Shirley developed a keen eye for observing nature which later became evident in her work.



2002/88/1-4/1  
04002012

Handcoloured photographic print, portrait of Shirley Martin, photograph by Hector Brown of Ryde (Shirley's great uncle), Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, c.1945; w.90mm x h.240mm; Collection: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney (2002/88/1-4/1)

Shirley's family returned to the city and Shirley Martin went to study art at East Sydney Technical College (ESTC) from 1944 through to 1946 – under Phyllis Shillito (1895-1980) an English designer who had come to Australia from the Yorkshire Textile Centre. While most students usually stayed at ESTC for five years, Phyllis Shillito helped Shirley secure a position with Silk and Textile Printers Pty Ltd (STP) at 30-62 Barcom Ave, Darlinghurst in her first year of study, so Shirley then worked four days a week and studied two evenings and Friday each week.

STP was established by Italian-born migrant textile manufacturers, Claudio Alcorso (1913-2000) and his brother Orlando (in partnership with Paul Sonnino) in 1939, shortly after their arrival in Australia from

Italy, via England. This company is best known locally for its ambitious artist-designed 'Modernage Fabrics' project of 1945-1946, a pioneering and ambitious attempt to link Australian art to textile design. In a bold step, it was the first time a large group of prominent Australian artists had been used in industry. Shirley Martin's role during this project was to translate Australian artist Russell Drysdale's paintings and drawings into multi-coloured designs for screenprinted furnishing fabrics. At the time, she was just 17 and still a young art student at ESTC. A book titled 'A New Approach to Textile Designing by a Group of Australian Artists' published by Sydney Ure Smith in 1947, also in MAAS collection, documents this ambitious project with prominent Australian artists. Rare extant photographs of the 'Art in Industry' Modernage Fabrics display mounted in the ballroom of the Australia Hotel in Sydney can be found in the leather bound photograph album found in the Shirley Martin collection.

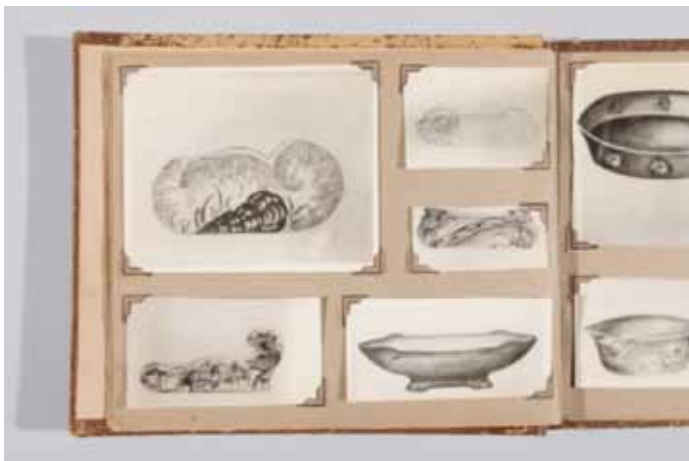


2002/88/1-3/1  
04002012

Album page (1 of 19), with black and white photograph of STP's (Silk and Textile Printers Pty Ltd's) 1946 'Art in Industry' exhibition of textile designs by Australian artists for the 'Modernage Range', Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, 1946; w.275mm x h. 205mm; Collection: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney (2002/88/1-3/1)

The de Vocht collection also contains a letter of reference from Orlando Alcorso to Shirley stating that Shirley worked in the Design Department at STP 'making technical drawings and designs from 11 December 1944 until the 18 October 1946, where she performed her work very satisfactorily'. Other letters of reference and business envelopes in the collection help piece together her career from 1946 through to 1960, including one from Modern Ceramic Products (MCP) in Redfern with whom she worked as a ceramic designer from 1947-1948, after Claudio Alcorso moved his business to Tasmania.

Small commercial potteries like Modern Ceramic Products (MCP) flourished after WWII. MCP ceramic vessels in the collection highlight the increasingly important role of women in the ceramic industry and the growing demand for decorative items for the home following the austerity of the war years. Although Shirley was employed by MCP for a relatively short time (1947-1948), her prolific output of painted and relief moulded designs were used into the 1960s. An Aboriginal figure with spear appears on one wall vase. Martin presented an example of this figured vase to the composer, John Antill, following a performance of his Corroboree ballet.



Album page (10 of 19), photographs of ceramic designs created by Shirley Martin for Modern Ceramic Products, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, 1946-1948; w.275 x h.205; Collection: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney (2002/88/1-3/10)

Shirley married John de Vocht, a Dutch photographer based in Indonesia with the Dutch Air Force in 1948. John de Vocht had trained in England and was sent to Australia in lieu of being sent to the Dutch East Indies. She then became Shirley de Vocht, and moved from MCP back to textile design at Tennyson Textile Mills Pty Ltd in Gladesville (1949-1950) before joining Coverings & Co Pty Ltd at Mascot (1950-1951). Shirley's last major industrial employment was with Dri-Glo Towels Pty Ltd, Manufacturers of Towels, from 1951 to 1959. It was here that she created the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games towel design, a double sided two colour design influenced by her knowledge and skill of jacquard weaving techniques. The brief stated that the design was to include the Olympic Torch. Shirley added the Olympic Rings, a map of Australia, and 'because I love Australian animals so much, I was determined that I would have them on the towel'. The original was produced in green and yellow, colours Shirley felt she may have helped introduce to represent Australia. After the games, the torch on the towel was replaced by a surfer and the colours changed - to extend the towel design's life. During her career, she designed many commercially successful product designs, some incorporating distinctive Aboriginal motifs and symbols.

Shirley de Vocht (nee Martin)'s are noteworthy achievements. Throughout her career she secured and held different jobs, because she always sought to improve her technically knowledge and skills. At Coverings & Co Pty Ltd she became skilled in designing complex multi-layered jacquard furnishing fabrics. 'Roses' and 'Poppies' are two designs held in the de Vocht collection. After each employ, Shirley would receive a letter of commendation. These letters are preserved in her collection, and each makes it clear that Shirley was 'leaving on her own choice'. Covering's letter states that it was 'with sincere regret that we lose her services'.

## Brilliant pattern and colour

Textile designs on paper in the collection reveal Shirley's amazing ability to capture Australian flora and fauna naturalistically. These designs are fluid, full of energy and saturated colour. They stand out from works by other designers working in the same genre.

Shirley also created a number of impressive designs of Australian flora as a freelance artist. These feature an array of native plants including native heath, flannel flowers, wattle, kangaroo paw and other flowering plants. Several of these were forwarded to F W Grafton & Co Ltd in England in 1952. One was purchased for production and another exhibited. Shirley also entered Australian textile design competitions, including the Leroy-Alcorso design competition of 1954 where the 100 best entries received were exhibited, her work included.

The Museum holds many significant Australian designer's archives, including that of some of Shirley's contemporaries like Douglas Annand who won the 1954 Leroy-Alcorso textile design competition ahead of her. Each one of these is a nationally significant collection, helping to tell the story of Australian design.

After having children in the 1960s, Shirley de Vocht continued to work as an artist, painting flora and fauna, including endangered species such as the native cat, the quoll and the snowy numbat onto mass-produced blank ceramic plates. In future the Museum may acquire one of these works. Shirley died of cancer in 2003. Heartbroken, her husband sadly committed suicide a year later.



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**Textile design, poster colour on paper, numbered 554, floral design of possibly kangaroo paws and grevillias with red fronds, design signed 'S de Vocht' across top right hand corner, Shirley de Vocht (nee Martin), Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, c.1945-1955;  
w.345mm x h.330mm;  
Collection: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney (2002/88/1-5/3)**

# Copyright and Museum Collections under debate in Rio de Janeiro

Ana Cristina Leo Barcellos & Claudia Porto

The issues of intellectual property rights and personality have been increasingly present in the daily life of professionals in the area of museums and collections in Brazil. Accustomed to dealing with measures of air humidity, lumen and museographic projects, legal issues are now coming to the fore: what is public domain? What are image rights? What are the legal risks involved in the development of an exhibition or a catalog around ownership and intellectual property?

On the other hand, a new field of activity has arisen through the use of social media as a means of digital sharing of collections, opening opportunities for developing new audiences, creating communities of interest, deepening research on collections, and so on. Following those paths, institutions such as the Rijksmuseum and the British Library have released their high-resolution collections for indiscriminate use by users, instigating the relationship of heritage with actors other than curators and specialists. In this sense, Creative Commons licenses, for example, protect copyright but, at the same time, encourage the sharing of knowledge and ideas in a much freer way. It is a matter of debate in the field of Museology whether these licenses are an additional opportunity for the financial sustainability of museums or if, on the contrary, they contribute to the reduction of an important source of revenue.

There are now, in Brazil, more than 3,200 museum institutions (data from IBRAM - Brazilian Institute of Museums, 2011), both public and private. There are thousands of cultural producers and galleries, and dozens of collectors interested in showing their



collections through catalogs, books, exhibitions and other means. Understanding the ‘ins and outs’, challenges and opportunities of copyright can greatly contribute to the dissemination of these collections online and offline, to encourage the mobility of collections and to generate new cultural products, new ideas and new knowledge.

In order to open the debate on these issues with a specialized audience, the COMCOL representation in Brazil held, on 20 September 2016, the Panel “Copyright, copyleft and the museum’s collections”, in partnership with the Dannemann Siemsen Institute of Legal and Technical Studies, the Latin America IPR SME Helpdesk project and the ITS - Institute of Technology and Society. The panel was composed of: Dr. Rodrigo Borges Carneiro, partner of the Dannemann Siemsen law firm and Master of Intellectual Property at the John Marshall Law School in Chicago; Carlos Affonso Souza, co-founder and director of the Institute of Technology and Society - ITS Rio, member of the NCUC Executive





Sergio Burgi, photography coordinator, presents the collection of Instituto Moreira Salles during the COMCOL panel - CREDITS: Filipa Porto

Committee (non-commercial users constituency) and consultant of the Internet Observatory in Brazil; and - from Spain, connected via web - Dr. Aurelio López-Tarruella, professor of Private International Law at the University of Alicante and advisor to the Government of Vietnam on Intellectual Property issues within the framework of the MUTRAP project of the European Union. The case study presentation was given by Sergio Burgi, Master of Fine Arts in Photography from the Rochester Institute of Technology (USA) and coordinator of photography at the Moreira Salles Institute, an institution that in recent years has launched two projects to make collections available online, in conjunction with the National Library.

The Panel brought together an audience of about 100 people, including museum directors and experts from public and private cultural institutions, curators of private collections, art editors, visual artists, gallerists, lawyers, professors and cultural producers from three Brazilian states: Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais and São Paulo. It was attended by professionals from four universities in the state of Rio de Janeiro, as well as representatives from IBRAM, National Museum of Fine Arts, Historical Museum of the City, Museum of Astronomy and Related Sciences (MAST), Museu Paulista, Botanical Garden, sponsoring institutions such as the Roberto Marinho Foundation and important private institutions such as the Portinari Project and the Eva Klabin Foundation, among others.

Throughout the event, many doubts and challenges were raised. It was clear that there is still a long way to go for cultural managers, museum professionals, researchers and curators in Brazil, in order to familiarize themselves with legal terminology and to obtain a better knowledge of the legislation governing relations between rights holders and users. Jewellery, clothing, accessories and shoes from a museum collection, for example, are mostly objects that can be protected by Industrial Design as well as Copyright, which would already inform the museum about the laws relating to Industrial Property. As with authors, some Industrial Property (Trademarks and Patents) rights also fall into the public domain, but with different limits. The cataloguing records of some Brazilian museums do not gather the necessary information for rights negotiation. Discs are the music supports, the objects of negotiation are the phonograms. Thus, it is necessary to record: phonogram number; record company; date and location of the recording.

It is also important to understand that museums and collections occupy both positions: they are users, but also rights holders. As holders, they have trademarks that must be registered, elaborate architectural and museographic projects, design equipment and solutions that can be protected by industrial design, for example, register domain names, among other possible IP rights. Museums also make use of protected works. Brazil is a signatory to international treaties on Intellectual Property (Berne Convention, Universal Convention and TRIPS, for example), and legislation deals with the matter in the Federal Constitution (1988), Law 9.610 (1998), Law 9.609 (1988) and Law 9.279, mainly. Art, literary or scientific human creations are protected, including: paintings, illustrations, texts, music, sculptures, creative projects, photographs, drawings, audiovisual works, engravings, adaptations and translations, anthologies. The Civil Code (2002) also protects the subjective rights of the human being, such as privacy, image, voice, name, and pseudonym.

In the event, the participation of experts from the Latin America IPR SME Helpdesk project allowed, in addition to the questions answered during the Panel, that participants could send their questions in writing, receiving the answers within 48 hours. The organizers received a total of 38 questions, that

covered the themes: economic damages rights of the author; Copyright; Personality rights; Public domain; Permission to photograph works on display; Bibliography on rights for the art market; Traditional knowledge; Collective works; Works in a public place; Creative Commons licenses; Licensing in social networks; Freedom of expression.

We have selected some of the questions that were received, which represent an overview of the issues that are on the agenda of the managers of museums and collections in Brazil.

- How can public bodies that manage museums control the intellectual property rights of the institutions' collections and their production?
- What kind of subsidy should museums present to attorneys or legal advisors (not specialized in copyright) to engage them in a discussion about open access and use of Creative Commons licenses?
- Do private institutions or heirs possessing photographic negatives or gravure matrices have the right to perform posthumous enlargements or impressions?
- When a company or photographer is hired to digitize a textual, iconographic or museological document, does this company or photographer have copyright, economic damages or other rights over this new creation (the document scan)?
- In the restoration of the photographs (and works of art) changes are made in the original work. Is there legislation on this subject? In photos (more than in the works) we have interventions that supposedly should revert the work to an original state that often cannot be known.
- Works produced by individuals in therapeutic spaces are considered differently depending on the training: the doctor or psychologist may consider it a clinical document, of private order, and therefore, part of the patient's medical record. Artists consider them as works of art (some technicians as well). In these cases what status should prevail?
- Does the museum have to ask the artist's permission to exhibit his work (and also present it in the catalog)



**Panelists of the COMCOL "Copyright, Copyleft and the collections of Museums" Panel responding to the public's questions. From left to right, Claudia Porto (COMCOL), Carlos Affonso Souza (ITS), Sergio Burgi (IMS) and Rodrigo Borges Carneiro (IDS) - CREDITS: Filipa Porto**

in case the item belongs to the museum's own collection?

- What are the main challenges set by museological institutions over the acquisition of collections and related rights?

The large audience attendance - above the expectations of the organizers - and the sample questions above show how necessary it is to continue the debate on copyright as a means of spreading cultural heritage under the custody of museums and collections. In 2017, as a result of this first Panel, COMCOL, Dannemann and other partners have already articulated new events and a specific course on image rights to assist professionals working with public and private collections in Brazil.



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# Meet a new COMCOL member

*Eva Fägerborg interviews Kirsi Ojala*

As we would like to find out a bit more about our members and their interests we have introduced this section where a new member presents her/himself. This way we hope to get to know each other better in the committee and create connections between the members. This time we meet Kirsi from Helsinki:

***Can you please tell us a little about yourself, your work and your museum/institution?***

My name is Kirsi Ojala and I have been working as head of collections in the Museum of Technology in Helsinki, Finland since 2013. Before that, I was employed by the Finnish Museum of Horology, the Museum of Central Finland and the University of Jyväskylä.

I took my master's degree in history in 2002 and finished my licentiate thesis in 2007 at the University of Jyväskylä. If someone had told me a three-month project in the museum of Central Finland would lead to a totally new career I would have not believed that. My first project was to start a paper mill factory museum in a full functioning industrial plant. Since then, I have been fascinated by the people behind technology, the process of inventions and innovations, both in the past and present day.

The Museum of Technology is a national specialized museum highlighting technological phenomena, technical inventions and industrial processes. The Museum is run by the private Museum of Technology Foundation. The foundation was established in 1969 by major industrial and engineering organizations, museum enthusiasts and the municipalities in the Helsinki metropolitan region. The museum has been open to the public since the first exhibitions opened in 1972 on a small island at the river mouth of Vantaanjoki River. The museum buildings of today housed a water treatment plant before they were rebuilt as a museum.



**Kirsi Ojala at the door of the collection management team's office.**

Photo credit Museum of Technology.

The collections represent the story of Finland – from an agrarian society to a leading developer and producer of high technology in the global market place. The museum preserves a collection of ca. 56000 artefacts, 53000 photographs, a library with 50000 titles and an archive. The collections are partly digitally accessible on Finna.fi and arjenhistoria.fi web services.

As a Head of Collections my responsibilities are the collection management, policy, and processes. I am in charge of professional consultations for



The museum is located on a historical site in the old waterworks on a small island by the rapids in the Old Town of Helsinki. On this island, the Swedish King Gustav Vasa built an administrative center for Helsinki, the city he established in 1550. Since those days, the shores of the Vantaanjoki River have been the location for industrial facilities requiring hydropower and water.

Photo credit Museum of Technology.

non-professionals who volunteer to manage local museums around Finland and I am also active in the Finnish museum's network for acquisitions, documentation and collection, TAKO (acronym from Finnish words tallennus as acquisitions/documentation and kokoelmat as collection).

### ***Can you say some words about the museums in Finland?***

Finnish museums have collaborated in the TAKO Network since 2009 (see the article by Minna Sarantola-Weiss in COMCOL Newsletter No 15, October 2011). The work is based on volunteering and takes place in seven pools with different topics and themes. The Museum of Technology is active in the Pool no 4 Industry, Services and Working Life and no 5 Communications, Traffic and Tourism. The Services, Production and Working Life pool is very large and is divided into 7 sub-groups (Forest Industry, Metal Industry, Mining, Plastic Industry, Textile Industry, Services, and Game Industry) which each have meetings twice a year and can also have additional conference call meetings. The pools and subgroups have chosen their own working methods. All pools are discussing collection policies

and specific areas of focus, they are mapping and comparing collections to find out possible and obvious overlaps and are discussing current topics. The museums in pools no 4 and 5 have chosen to visit each other, see the exhibitions as well as the stores and other working spaces of the museums. Getting to know each other and different collections has created a good atmosphere to continue the collaboration. Nothing beats peer support!

TAKO cooperation produces practical guidance such as disposal and acquisition handbooks (the English version will be out soon) and how to document enterprises (project start 2016). TAKO projects also include different types of groups, such as Finland Eats and Drinks Documentation (<http://www.suomisyojajuo.fi/about-us.html>). Perhaps, TAKO has encouraged museums to think outside the box.

There is a lot going on within TAKO which brings to mind another interesting current topic: The Finnish museums are bustling with their arrangements for the centenary of Finland's independence in 2017. There will be various new exhibitions, projects and workshops to explore and enjoy. The theme 'Together' was chosen as a slogan for the year 2017.

### ***How did you get to know about COMCOL and what made you interested in the committee? Why did you decide to become a member?***

I've been an ICOM member for some years by now and I thought it was about time to join a committee. It was quite easy to choose COMCOL since I work with collections and would like to network with other professionals managing collections.



The Museum of Technology focuses e.g. on industrialization, hence the round main exhibition hall itself is an example of deindustrialization – the building was a water treatment hall in the early 20th century. Today you can dive in the history of forestry, chemistry, information technology and many other fields of the industrial cultural heritage.  
Photo credit Marissa Tammissalo.

**What topics related to collecting and collections development would you like COMCOL to focus on particularly? Any more thoughts about COMCOL and/or ICOM that you would like to share with us? Expectations, suggestions...?**

I think questions and challenges on preserving digital culture such as digital games are focal now and in the future. Also, I do find – again and again, disposal and acquisition policies very important. I am looking forward to establishing new networks and sharing best practices in museum collection management. Hopefully we'll meet soon!



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*[http://www.tekniikanmuseo.fi/engl\\_museo.html](http://www.tekniikanmuseo.fi/engl_museo.html)  
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Grinder machine is one favorite of the Museum of Technology.  
Photo credit Museum of Technology.

**EDITORIAL**

COMCOL – Committee for Collecting – is the International Committee of ICOM dedicated to deepening discussions and sharing knowledge of the practice, theory and ethics of collecting and collection development.

COMCOL Newsletter provides a forum for developing the work of COMCOL and we welcome contributions from museum professionals, scholars and students all over the world: short essays on projects, reflections, conference/seminar reports, specific questions, notices about useful reading material, invitations to cooperate, introductions to new research or other matters. Views and opinions published in the newsletter are the views of the contributors. Contributions for the next issue are welcomed by **15 September 2017**. Please contact the editors if you wish to discuss a theme or topic for publication.

**COMCOL Newsletter** is available at COMCOL's website <http://network.icom.museum/comcol/>  
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