

**ICFA Annual Conference in the North of France with visits to Lille, Tourcoing,
Douai, Valenciennes, Cambrai, Amiens and Compiègne
26 to 28 October 1995
The Museums in Nord/Pas-de-Calais**

Thursday, October 26. Morning

The meeting begins with the traditional board meeting. The Chairman H. van Os greets the members and thanks the Secretary, Jacques Kuhnunch to have organized the meeting in France. They give the breaking news of the Committee : Maria Rosa Figueiredo resigns because she doesn't regularly participate to our meetings; other colleagues (V. Villadsen and Knut Berg) are retired and must be replaced. H. van Os proposes Henry Defoer (Netherland) and Konstanty Kalinowski (Poland) as new members. He and the Secretary will remain another year. The next meeting will take place in Netherland; we shall visit some renovated museums (Groningen). The display of the financial balance by Viviane Huchard, treasurer, encloses this meeting.

Following the invitation of Jacques Kuhnunch and Françoise Baligand, the Region Nord-Pas-de-Calais welcomes our meeting. It will make a stage in Picardy where we visit the castle of Compiègne and the Musée de Picardie in Amiens. Thanks to Christine Giard for the translation in English.

The first day is held in the offices of Direction Regionale des Affaires culturelles (Roger Barrié, regional director). Two prestigious hosts joined us: Jean-Yves Marin, ICOM French Committee's President and Dominique Vieville, deputy director of the Museums of France. This region undertook an ambitious program of renovation of museums in spite of a severe economic crisis. Nevertheless, the politicians would have been able to give the priority to the social housing or to the wrestling against the insecurity. At first, Geneviève Becquart, as an adviser for museums, reminds the museographic context: the region shelters 32 museums and between them, an international fame (Lille). The Valenciennes Museum is the second museum after Lille. There are also archaeological museums and museums connected to the harbor, textile and mining activities.

The historic and artistic past of the region (birthplace of Watteau, Carpeaux or Matisse), connected to the density of the industrial activity in the 19th century, engendered numerous museums. Some between them go back to the French Revolution. Several manufacturers donated their collections: So, the collections in these museums are very complementary, single example in France. Until 1914, the Nord-Pas-de Calais was rich with the coal, the steel and the textile which made its fortune and museums full of fine work of art. The World War I causes important damages for the cultural and industrial heritage. In spite of an economic recovery during the 20s, the region quickly declined from the 60s; it was necessary to move into all the domains: tourism and culture. The curators understood this situation by creating, in the middle of the 70s, l'Association Régionale des Conservateurs des musées du Nord-Pas-de-Calais.

The first exhibitions dedicated to the "Treasures of the museums of the North" showed to the elected members the museographic potential the load of which they had. Thanks to the good results of the exhibitions and to the permanent contacts with the political class, the curators directed their research on the following points:

- ✓ Establish an investigation on the new museographic spaces necessary for a better

- functioning of the museums;
- ✓ put the museums in networks;
- ✓ draft a contract between the State and the Region intended to prepare their modernization and the extension.

The political class becomes aware of the cultural, educational and tourist role of museums and generally the cultural environment, able to attract numerous visitors and new business managers. The 10th contract in its chapter "Training-Research and culture" programs the renovation of Cambrai, Douai, Tourcoing, Lille, Valenciennes and Calais museums. The Town Councils can give the benefit of subsidies from State, from the Region and from the Department; the curators have to establish a scientific and museographic program: new works to be restored, to be exposed; program of temporary exhibitions, actions for the school public and adult without forgetting the commercial spaces and of reception.

In the year 2000, all the 32 public museums supervised by the Direction des Musées de France will be renovated, partially or altogether. This Region and the Culture Ministry will have given several billion francs so that the museums rise at an international level. The cultural tourism, in a region very near to England, Germany, Belgium or Netherland, can take advantage of it.

Thursday, October 26th. Afternoon

After the theory, the practice. The organizers planned the visit of four museums opened again in 94-95: Tourcoing, Douai, Valenciennes and Cambrai. To this program is added the visit of the construction site of the Lille Fine arts Museum.

In the morning, as the Director, Arnauld Brejon de Lavergnée showed the plans and the main lines of this renovation. Built in the end of the 19th century, the museum will be restored in its home state, while being enlarged of 7000m². So, the collections of sculptures, the works of the Middle Age and the Renaissance will be able to be exhibited. The renovation of the museum bases on three principles: the welcoming of visitors, the information and the development of collections. An ambitious program of acquisitions and temporary exhibitions is planned after the reopening. Let us remind that this museum has some major works as the *Feast of Herod* by Donatello, the *Young and the old women* by Goya, *Bélisaire* by David.

The second visit of the day was dedicated to the Museum of the Fine arts of Tourcoing. In spite of economic problems, the city decided to renovate his museum: For lack of important collections, her director found a just balance between the confrontation of the contemporary art and the old painting.

Friday, October 27th.

This day was dedicated in museums situated in the Nord Mining Basin. Coal mines and their coal tips modeled the landscape of this part of the North of France. Two museums were for the program, Douai and Valenciennes.

Douai, Musée de la Chartreuse

City in the rich artistic past, Douai possessed of remarkable buildings of whom the Chartreuse, built in the end of the 16th century, today transformed into museum. The monks built a chapel, at present

in the course of restoration; It will shelter the collections of sculptures and the objects of the Middle Age.



Musée de la Chartreuse

Built by Jacques d'Abancourt in brick and stone in the Renaissance style, on the site of the house of the "Colombier", the hôtel d'Abancourt (1559) with its round tower was extended in 1608 by Jean de Montmorency, who added a square building in the same style with a square tower. In 1623 it was acquired by the Premonstratensians of Furnes. It finally saw itself become a home for Carthusian monks in the middle of the 17th century, via the construction of a chapter house and a small cloister (1663), a refectory (1687), the prior's lodgings (1690) and finally - after a large cloister and cells which were demolished in the 19th century - a chapel in the Jesuit style (not restored yet). On the French Revolution the building was turned over to military use and it was later damaged by bombing in 1944. It was bought by the city in 1951 and from 1958 was used to replace the buildings housing the city's Musée des Beaux-Arts, which had been destroyed in the Second World War at the same time as the neighbouring boys' lyceum.

The current museum complex includes several 16th, 17th and 18th century buildings. To its left is the hôtel d'Abancourt-Montmorency, built between 1559 and 1608 in the Flemish Renaissance style. Built in the classical style at the start of the 18th century, the complex's church is made up of a vast nave and five side chapels. Each was able to admire the major works presented by Françoise Baligand: the *Marchiennes Polyptych* by Jan van Scorel, the *Flagellation* by Ludovico Carracci, the *Child with dove* by Chardin.....

Valenciennes, Musée des Beaux-Arts

Built at the turn of the century, the Valenciennes museum belongs to a generation of Fine Arts museums erected in the Third Republic, with their wide open spaces and monumental proportions to display their prestigious collections to their best advantage. This collection ranges from Gallo-Roman archeology to the 20th century, with some fine 17th century Flemish paintings and monumental 19th century sculptures. After undergoing three years of refurbishment work by Jacques KuhnMunch, Chief Curator and the Architect Christian Germanaz, the museum has doubled its surface area (4 400 m²) and now offers visitors all the amenities of a modern museum, including a conference room, book shop and museum shop, classrooms, etc.



PP Rubens, *St Stephan Martyrdom*

This exceptional collection of Flemish paintings includes work by Jérôme Bosch, Bruegel, Rubens, Jordaens and Van Dyck. It presents work by the old Flemish masters from mannerism to the followers of Rubens. The development of their work is well illustrated here, from the imposing religious paintings, magnificently exhibited in the Rubens room, to the different genres, landscapes, still lives and portraits.

Valenciennes is the birthplace of many renowned artists, of whom Watteau is the most famous. The museum displays work by Pater, Boucher, Hubert, Watteau de Lille, etc... who were all influenced by this emblematic figure.



Sculpture garden : Works by Carpeaux

Sculptures are to be found in the entire museum's rooms, but it is in the heart of the building, in the Place Carpeaux, that the discipline has pride of place. Another native of Valenciennes, Carpeaux is magnificently presented in a vast indoor sculpture garden: *Ugolin*, the *Triumph of Flora* and numerous busts are part of an exceptional holding, with sketches, drawings and paintings that reflect the multiple facets of this inspired genius. Alongside the work of Carpeaux is that of his contemporaries: Lemaire, Crauk, Hiolle, Chapu, Degas, etc...

Musée de Cambrai

The last stage of this trip drives us in Cambrai. The civil and religious architecture of the 17th and 18th centuries deserves a visit. The Fine arts Museum is fitted out in a seigniorial hotel built by 1720. For a long time neglected, the museum was deeply modified by her curator, Françoise

Magny. In two years of works, the architects, Jean-François Bodin and Thierry Germe, imagined a contemporary neighboring wing to increase the exhibition space. The difficulty was to articulate the former and modern elements. Staircases going to the rooms of archaeology are narrow; however the major components of this collection are presented well. These are the reliefs decorating the religious buildings of Cambrai in Middle-Age and in 16th century. The cathedral "marvel of the Netherlands" is not more known than by some sculptures in alabaster recently restored. The former part of the Museum shelters 17 century Flemish paintings as 18th and 19th centuries French paintings. Some deposits from Centre Pompidou complete the collections.



Musée de Cambrai

The purpose of this program was to visit the museums the renovation of which is in class, is finished in 94-95; He allowed to show the diverse museographic choices depending on the constraints of buildings. Whatever is the museum, nothing would have been able to be realized without a strong political will.

Saturday, October 28th

The Picardy Day

Two museums were for the program of this day, the Musée de Picardie in Amiens and the Musée national du Château de Compiègne. Christine Debrie presented the museums of this region. Contrary to their neighbors of the North of France, museums in Picardy do not have the same homogeneity in their collections: The Beauvais museum specializes in the Art Nouveau and the Decorative Art; Amiens is a museum with encyclopedic character. Everybody knows Chantilly and his fabulous wealth (Clouet, Raphaël, Poussin).

Musée de Picardie

In Amiens, we are welcomed by Viviane Huchard, former of the Museum and by Françoise Lernout, Curator. Built between 1855 and 1867, the Musée de Picardie was imagined as a museum, a palace and a monument to the glory of Picardy. It is one of the best examples of the museum architecture of the 19th century, decorated by Puvis de Chavannes between 1824 and 1898. In the absence of political will, this museum remained for a long time neglected. A gigantic work was realized by the curators who followed one another between 1988 and 1994, Dominique Viéville and Viviane Huchard to work in the renovation of the building. Let us call remind that this museum has some works of the first importance : Chardin, Boucher, Corot, Dubuffet.....



Musée de Picardie, Facade



Work, by P Puvis de Chavannes

Musée national du château de Compiègne and the “Restitution des états historiques”

It is during the Second World War that was developed the principle of “restitution des états historiques” in the royal residences. The starting point is given by the workings of Pierre Verlet the thesis of the School of the Louvre of which had exactly concerned the furnishing of the Castle of Compiègne. His searches had allowed to draw the conclusion that nothing was left at random in the furnishing of the royal houses. There is a narrow relation between the architectural decoration of a room and the furniture which it receives. It is the starting point of a method the implementation of which allowed to recover, in a considered room, the aspect which it presented to a precise date.



Cour d'honneur



Salon des Cartes

This choice is connected with the existing real estate decoration or the remaining furniture or some old models of tissues. For Compiègne, the question was the period : either the end of the reign of Louis XVI, or The First Empire or the Second Empire. The choice is not inevitably made according to the age but according to exhibit an historic state as complete as possible. The ideal is to succeed in harmonizing decoration and furnishing. When it is not possible, the state must be historically true (furniture of the First Empire in a decoration of the 18th century, when the Empire did not modify spaces). The date of restoration having been determined by the preliminary study in the archives (estimate and memoirs of works, inventories), by the location of the movable elements, the works can begin: restoration of the real estate decoration, put back in place the furniture and objects, manufacturing following the model of old tissues. After the Second World War, the furniture of Compiègne is put back according to these principles, in particular the apartment of king became Emperor’s apartment. Some rooms were restored in their configuration of the Second Empire (Salon des Cartes), because of the important role to play by Napoleon III in Compiègne, place of the “series” which gathered the personalities whom the emperor wanted to honor. On these bases the works went on (smoking room and Guests library). This program will be long and will ask of importing financial means.