Museums and Cultural Landscapes
Joint ICOM-SA and ICOMOS-SA Programme
First circular – February 2016

The South African landscape reflects South African heritage in all its diversity. It includes sites and spaces rich in living heritage; sites containing evidence of our geological and palaeontological heritage; sites reflecting our agricultural and industrial past and urban and townscapes that not only reflect our architectural heritage, but also our divided political past. The documentation and conservation of our cultural landscapes forms an integral part of our tangible and intangible cultural heritage and should be conserved and interpreted as such. Museums form an important part of the cultural landscape. There is a tendency to blur boundaries between museums, art and other heritage initiatives as well as blurring the distinction between in situ and ex situ conservation. In addition to being archaeological repositories and keepers of objects associated with the build environment, museums collect tangible and intangible testimonies of their environment and can play an important role in promoting understanding of the evolving cultural environment.

ICOM-SA and ICOMOS-SA are planning a series of focus group meetings and workshops in April – May 2016 with the objective of developing a joint position statement on the heritage landscape in southern Africa. This will encompass concepts such as intangible heritage, cultural landscapes, living heritage as well as museums and their collections, and monuments (buildings) and sites. A national workshop is planned for late August 2016 in Gauteng.

The focus group meetings and workshops will be augmented by supporting events arranged by partner organisations.

Themes for Discussion

The following issues will be explored in this programme:
1. How to define cultural landscapes – exploring different perspectives: the World Heritage Convention, museum practice, fine art, natural science

2. Museums within urban landscapes
   a. Museums, sites, monuments and memorials, and the role they play in the cultural landscape
   b. The impact of museum buildings in creating a sense of place
   c. The interrelationship between museums and other elements within their immediate environment (parks, cultural precincts, commercial & tourism precincts, official buildings etc)
   d. Gentrification, revitalisation of urban areas
   e. Reinterpreting industrial and commercial buildings by adapting them as museums

3. Defining the role of museums in interpreting and documenting cultural landscapes through collecting and research programmes. This discussion can be further divided into:
   a. The relationship between the collections of historic houses and their environment
   b. Natural history as cultural practice – documenting our natural environment
   c. Fine art and photography as interpretation of cultural landscapes
   d. The role of museums in developing a sense of place.
   e. Remembering cultural landscapes: Memory, nostalgia, sentiment

4. New models to extend the museum beyond the restrictions of buildings to interpret and conserve cultural landscapes and activities in situ.
   a. In situ cultural elements as museum collections
   b. Museums as working environments (ecomuseums, sites of traditional economic activities)
   c. Museums and sites related to intangible cultural practices

5. Enabling conditions for the development of new models to integrate museum activities and heritage resource management practice. (A). An overview of the relevant legislative framework within which cultural institutions operate; (b). the possible integration and alignment of policy within such institutions;

6. Addressing the transformation of the urban visual landscape – dealing with apartheid era monuments and exploring new models for memorialisation. Transformation of the urban visual landscape can include:
   a. Alternative ways of memorialising/honouring and remembering people and events, e.g. using public buildings, graveyards;
   b. Re-contextualising prominent public spaces;
   c. Striking a balance between old and new monuments.
   d. Addressing apartheid urban planning (Remembering and/versus transformation)
   e. Emergency collecting of statues and memorials – a necessity of avoidance of the problem

7. Heritage Education and Social Cohesion or Building responsible and proud citizens through Heritage Education.
   a. Providing forums for discussion around heritage
Programme Coordinators

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