

Foreword. ICOFOM's commitment to a new museum definition

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Foreword

ICOFOM's commitment to a new museum definition

This new issue of *ICOFOM Study Series* was first conceived in Kyoto, Japan, after the ICOFOM plenary that discussed the museum definition prior to the ICOM Extraordinary Assembly of September 7, 2019. In that moment, we witnessed possibly the greatest dispute over a museum definition in ICOM history, and the increase of some frictions that would be both conceptual and political within this organisation. In an optimistic interpretation of the recent past, the General Conference in Kyoto represented an important landmark for the recognition of ICOM's cultural diversity and for the democratisation of decision-making processes within this global forum.

Since then, with the postponement of the vote on a new museum definition, which was decided by a majority of 70% of ICOM representatives, the debate around a new definition for the 21st century has continued to grow and is far from reaching an end. In the year following the Kyoto Conference, ICOFOM has conducted an international survey (the results of which are published in this issue), it has organised two international meetings with other ICOM committees (in Europe and in Latin America), and it has established a closer relationship with National and International committees by sharing experiences and possible methodologies for the work on a new museum definition. This publication is one among several actions taken by ICOFOM to continue contributing to the debate by gathering different opinions and updated studies on this fundamental theme. Our goal, with the selected articles, was not to generate a consensus, but to promote a “polyphonic” dialogue with the challenge to find possible ways to compromise. The result, as you will see, is a friendly duel between academics, researchers, and museum professionals, writing from their local realities and from the point of view of their own practices and engagements in the museum field.

Several of the articles presented here refer to the past work done by ICOFOM in the discussion of a specific terminology for museology – work that dates back to its creation, in 1977, and continues to this day, proving that specific terms and concepts should be constantly scrutinised and discussed by those who operate them in the real life of their daily practices. Our aim, once again in this publication, is not to find definitive words to define museums in the 21st century, but, maybe, in the best case, to identify the main challenges involved

in the work of writing this fundamental text for the ICOM organisation and for the professionals who make this global institution.

This volume 48, issue 2 is the second publication of *ICOFOM Study Series* in 2020, and it was achieved thanks to the work of a committed group of professionals, including the members of the Editorial Board, the peer-reviewers, the secretaries and volunteers who believe in the importance of this journal for the field of museology. Thanks to them we can continue in the search for a museology that serves both museum theory and practice, as a constantly changing discipline, socially defined by its professionals, scholars, and museum makers around the world.

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