

**23rd GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF MUSEUMS  
RIO 2013**

**{Museums (Memory + Creativity = Social Change)}**

Museums wish and work to promote change. The mathematical equation inspiring the 23<sup>rd</sup> General Conference of the International Council of Museums suggests that this work arises from a composition between creative freshness and the memory constructed and entrusted to these museums. Behind this equation there are numerous individuals strengthened each day: professionals and especially the public, full of aspirations, acting as engines of this movement. It is the memory activated by creativity in the museum environment reverberating in the society and promoting social change.

Ever since its creation, the International Council of Museums has been the stage for essential debates, actions, documents and propositions to make museums what they are today: bridges between cultures, instruments for transformations in micro and macro scales.

In this trajectory, the American continent has granted a memorable contribution registered in meetings and documents, such as the pioneering UNESCO Regional Seminar held in 1958 in Rio de Janeiro, in which the educational and transforming role of museums was by then highlighted. In the following seminars organized around the world, the meeting irrefutably deemed the most important contribution of Latin America to the international Museology was held: the Santiago of Chile Round Table. It was then that the model adopted to seminars was broken off, Spanish was elected as working language and highlight was given to the speech of Latin-American scholars. This rupture is expected to inspire the first General Conference of the International Council of Museums to take place in Brazil, only the 2<sup>nd</sup> in South America.

Brazilian educator Paulo Freire was firstly entrusted with the chair of the Round Table held in Chile, then under the Popular Unit government. However, Brazil lived under a dictatorship, and our delegate at UNESCO vetoed this representation, leaving Argentinean urbanist Jorge Enrique Hardoy in charge of the discussions. When the Round Table on the Role of Museums in Latin America finally took place in May, 1972, a great and new contribution was put forward: consideration on the social role of museums, its insertion in cities undergoing a population boom, the ideal of a whole (or integrated) museum tuned into society's problems and capable of acting as a developmental tool.

Nonetheless, it is generally agreed that the Santiago of Chile Declaration took long to be incorporated as a reference to the rest of the world, despite the fact that ecomuseums, territory museums, community museums and several other models situated in the so-called New Museology – or in its youngest sibling, the Sociomuseology – have been grounded on it. We still have a log to drive forward in order to achieve our ideal equation. Even though another emblematic document, the Quebec Declaration (1984) took inspiration in the New Museology for the creation of the International Movement for a New Museology, and that the Caracas Declaration (1992) celebrates its 20 years reasserting the principles and museums as a means of communication, it is essential to consider what really was left from the Santiago aspirations 40 years after.

Therefore, the thought about museums and social changes has been built in the American continent for decades. Brazil brings this legacy up to date in a very vigorous way. We see growing numbers of museums and museum public, with some of the world's largest visitation numbers in recent exhibits, opposing reductive views of Brazilian blindness to culture and museums in particular. We have a National Museums Policy grounded on new legal milestones, such as the Statute of Museums and guidelines created especially for a continental-size country, an almost incomparable challenge. We have learned about unique features in our professional background with over ten undergraduate courses in Museology, in addition to graduate and technical courses, and scientific production in rapid progress. We have witnessed an exponential increase of territory museums and community museums, notably slum [*favela*] museums. Our experience allows us to state that we share the concerns and challenges common to museums worldwide, whereas we have particularities to present and discuss. We are open and look forward to this meeting.

Looking back, we realize how much the field has gained since the meeting in Santiago. With an eye in the future, we hope that the 23<sup>rd</sup> General Conference of the International Council of Museums will notice the particularities of our cities, our people, our musealization process, our museum experiences. May the international committees, aware of this reality, contemplate students, communities and other individuals interested in promoting a dialogue with ICOM in this passage by Brazil, and may our blow of creativity and boldness resonate and distinguish this conference from all others that have already taken place.

Manuelina Maria Duarte Cândido  
Goiânia, October 21, 2012.