



Minutes VCM 2nd Board of Trustees Meeting Thursday 15 October, 2009 Dublin, Chester Beatty Library

Board members:

Present: Michael Ryan, Steven Engelsman (VCM European lead partner), Min-gwon Park (representing the VCM Asian lead partner), Jongsok Kim, Göran Blomberg, Karl Magnusson and Koos van Brakel (representing Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam)

Absent: Inkyung Chang (Director of the Iron Museum, on behalf of ICOM-ASPAC), Lejo Schenk, (Director of the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam) and Corazon Alvina (Director of the National Museum of Philippines, Manila)

Other participants: Manus Brinkman (VCM Content Editor), Jos Taekema (VCM project manager) and Julie Trébault (Liaison and Innovation Officer for the VCM project).

1. Opening of the meeting, approval of the agenda

Steven Engelsman, chairman of the board meeting, welcomed the members in particular Masters Min-gwon Park and Jongsok Kim, representing the VCM new Asian lead partner. He also announced the absence of the following excused persons: Inkyung Chang, Lejo Schenk and Corazon Alvina. Each participant introduced himself to the board.

The second trustee's board meeting agenda was divided in six parts addressing each question related to the consortium, the activities of the VCM in 2009, the financial report for this year, the proposal of our new Asian lead partner; the National Museum of Korea, the VCM incoming activities and budget for 2010 and the future of the VCM

2. The consortium

A. Confirmation of the trustees commitment to the VCM

Michael Ryan, Göran Blomberg, Min-gwon Park, Koos van Brakel and Steven Engelsman confirmed their commitment for the coming year. Steven Engelsman received the confirmation of the commitment of Inkyung Chang before the meeting. Due to financial difficulties, the National Museum of Philippines left the consortium this year.

B. Approval of the up-to-date Memorandum of Understanding

This memorandum replaces the latest one, signed in 2007. Two signatories have left the consortium: the Gyeonggi Provincial Museum in Yongin City, Korea and the National Museum of the Philippines in Manila. The new signatory party to this agreement is the National Museum of Korea.

Since January 2008, the Asian Lead partner of the VCM, the Gyeonggi Provincial Museum has not given any information and did not answer the trustees request to renew his mandate as the Asian lead partner.

The National Museum of Korea has officially become the new VCM Asian lead partner by signing this Memorandum of Understanding. This new memorandum is effective since 15 October 2009 and will end on January 1st 2011. This Memorandum of Understanding is renewable.

At the present time, the board of trustees is composed of six members. Three members are Asian and four members are European.

This up-to-date Memorandum of Understanding has been accepted and signed by all the present trustees. The original document is in the hands of Mr. Jongsok Kim to be signed by Inkyung Chang in November.

C. The continuation of the VCM after 2010

The trustees raised the question of the future of the VCM after 2010. After a thorough discussion, the trustees decided to answer this question at our next VCM meeting that will take place in Shanghai during the 22nd General Conference of ICOM in November 2010.

Koos van Brakel stressed the importance to find one or two more founding members, preferable from China, Germany or France.

The trustees decided to keep the consortium as it is now and to let it open to new trustees.

3. The activities report for 2009

Jos Taekema, Manus Brinkman and Julie Trébault presented the 2009 activities to the trustees.

First, Manus Brinkman presented the outcomes and issues of the campaign in China, Japan, Mongolia and India to the trustees. Second, Julie Trébault presented the new features, the promotion activities and the educational program to the trustees. She emphasized the importance of the SEO (Search Engine Optimization), the new communication media and the Learning zone.

1. China

The VCM China campaign aiming at enlarging the masterpieces database with an important number of Chinese museums already started two years ago, but gained momentum

after funds became available in July (Museum of Ethnology, Leiden and Gerlach Art Packers, Schiphol, Netherlands).

During a meeting in May 2009 in Shanghai, Prof. Zhang Bai, Vice Director General of the State Administration of Cultural Heritage and President of the Chinese National Committee of ICOM expressed its support and indicated that China would elaborate a list of 30-40 museums that would participate in the VCM. Each museum will select 25 Masterpieces, provide texts in Chinese, and if possible in English. The working session with the first ten museums will take place in Shanghai in October or November. The Shanghai Museum (Mrs. Zhou Yanqun) will be coordinating the VCM project from the Chinese side. Its director, Mr Chen Xiejun, will be responsible for the success of the VCM China project. During the Shanghai working session in October or November 2009 a Cooperation Agreement between the Chinese Society of Museums and the VCM (represented by the Museum of Ethnology, Leiden), in which the details of the VCM China project will be outlined, will be signed.

The participation of the Chinese Museums should culminate in a special presentation at ICOM's General Conference in Shanghai 7-13 November 2010.

2. Japan

During the Conference "Innovation of Image Database and Museum Networks" on 27 and 28 February, Manus Brinkman presented the Virtual Collection of Masterpieces as a unique cooperation project and as a portal where links can be made between the museums and their activities. The audience was impressed by the VCM and people stated that they did not know of any such international initiative which such a high quality, both in content and design. Ryo Akama offered to help in promoting the VCM among museums. He considered the VCM to be an unique opportunity to share collections and collection-awareness. He would start with contributing the collection of the Ritsumei to the VCM. He offered to distribute VCM-information in museum-meetings (the VCM flyer). In sum, it was worthwhile to attend the conference. Apart from being able to present the VCM, we have some concrete results: the National Gallery in Prague and the Risumeikan University Collection will participate, but more importantly we have a contact in Japan willing to assist us with promoting participation to the VCM.

Manus Brinkman reminded the trustees the lack of participation of the Japanese museums and how difficult it is to encourage them to get involved in the project.

3. Mongolia

A proposal was made to help Mongolian Museums with adding masterpieces to the VCM by exploring the possibilities to add intangible heritage in the form of video presentations. In the proposal we suggested to start with adding ten Mongolian museums, all of them from Ulan Bator to the VCM. This could be done during a working visit from Manus Brinkman in autumn 2009.

Min-gwon Park expressed the interest of the National Museum of Korea to participate in this working meeting, given its good and frequent relations with Mongolian museums and heritage institutions. He suggested to include the video on Youtube and to use his own Korean server.

Manus Brinkman explained the trustees that Asef offers grants to support film makers and their projects. The VCM could try to apply for a funding for the VCM and Mongolia. The idea of providing a VCM space for short video's of Intangible Heritage has always been part of the VCM project. A great part of Mongolia's Intangible Heritage is available on films. This material was shown at the ASEMUS meeting. Short sequences will now be selected, digitalized and set in an

attractive framework on the VCM. Funding would be requested for any activity related to selection, digitization, and on-line presentation. The project has to be sent before October 30th 2009.

Michael Ryan advised to move carefully forward with this project, since it could be far too ambitious for the VCM.

After a thorough discussion, the trustees agreed on this strategy and confirmed their entire support to these campaigns.

4. India

The Indian campaign will receive all the VCM team efforts after 2010

5. Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

The SEO improves the volume and quality of traffic to the VCM website from search engines via "natural" ("organic" or "algorithmic") search results. Our SEO targets different search modalities, including image search and geographical search. It gives the VCM a web presence that can be controlled and continuously improved. A web crawler gateway for objects and museums has been added as well as page descriptions and keywords. We now submit new content to Google thanks to Google Webmaster Tools. Before the implementation of the SEO, the VCM was referenced by Google 64 times; it is now referenced 203 times.

Michael Ryan suggested contacting Google for the VCM promotion. Google can indeed help the VCM to have a better promotion on the Google search mode. Koos van Brakel advised to add a web questionnaire to the VCM in order to have a better understanding of the VCM visitors' needs and wishes.

6. New communication media

- The ASEMUS widget

The widget of the masterpiece of the day is available to download for the Vista Sidebar. This widget will be found on Yahoo Widget Engine, iGoogle, Mac Dashboard Widget, Windows mobile and Iphone before the end of 2009. Widgets are interactive virtual tools that provide single-purpose services such as informing the user of the latest news, the current weather, the time, providing him or her with a calendar, a dictionary, a map program, a calculator, desktop notes, photo viewers, or even a language translator, among other things.

- VCM Newsletter

The first VCM newsletter has been created and sent on 5 June to the 818 VCM contacts. This publication will regularly be distributed: every three months (due to the summer break, the second VCM newsletter will be sent on 19 October). General sections of the VCM newsletter include VCM news and upcoming events, the new contributors, contents, features and functionalities added to the VCM as well as contact information for general inquiries.

The aim of this newsletter is to inform our contacts of the VCM news and to spread information on the VCM to every person interested in Asian art. It would be appreciated if the trustees shared their contacts with the VCM team.

- VCM Flyer

A bilingual flyer has been designed for the Japanese campaign. During the Conference "Innovation of Image Database and Museum Networks", held at the Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, Japan on 27 and 28 February, this flyer has been distributed to the participants. This year's meeting theme was "Let's enjoy data basing art contents." On the first day, Prof. Akama gave a keynote speech. During his speech, he referred to the VCM project, for which he will soon start to upload the Center's masterpieces. This flyer will be reused for other events such as the conferences and symposiums of our partners.

- Facebook group

In the Facebook group we initiate debate in the course of which information and knowledge can be shared. The topics deal with Asian cultural heritage and museum related subjects. The following subjects are currently being discussed: “sharing of exhibitions”, “new ways of using the VCM and the large database Europeana”, “should we pay a fee for museum images on-line?” and “Facebook is more than a fad”. So far 29 participants have joined the group but the exchanges are not as intense as they could be.

The trustees suggested contacting all the VCM Facebook members in order to know if they want to continue. If the answer is negative, the VCM team has to find another way to create a platform for museums professionals’ exchanges.

7. The Learning Zone

A group of four VCM participants are currently working on the possibility to develop a joint educational on-line program which would (also) feature the VCM.

The four participants are:

- Jenny Siung, Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Ireland
- Esther van Zutphen, Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden, Netherlands
- Karen Chin, Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore
- Kook Sungha, National Folk Museum of Korea, Seoul, Korea

The Chester Beatty Library, the Asian Civilisations Museum, the National Museum of Korea and the Museum Volkenkunde will cooperate in an art project for schools involving the use of ICT and online tools to present their exploration of the objects. This Asia/Europe project will involve school children (from 11 to 13 years old) working together and, taking their inspiration for the objects encountered. They will share online their investigations, interpretations and creative works. Special web pages or a satellite site will be created within the existing VCM or museums websites in order to enable the pupils to present their work. The project will be driven by the participating museums. The schools and pupils will be assisted by facilitators. Site visits will form part of the program. The VCM team will provide advices and support to the project as far as resources allow it. Museums and schools can participate free of charge.

A virtual silk road will be created online to provide coherence and a methodology to locate the geographical, historical and cultural origins of the art objects encountered in museums. It will provide opportunities for cross-curricular classes to work beyond art, i.e. geography, art, history, culture, religion and language. They will experience the recording of their short stories and present their work online in multi-media formats. This map will mirror the children’s work. On this map, each group will present their “Silk Road” masterpieces with texts and pictures that will be prepared during their visit to the museum.

Michael Ryan informed the trustees of the possibility to finance a part of this educational project thanks to the Chester Beatty Library education funds.

4. The financial report for 2009

All the trustees have paid their contribution for the VCM this year except the National Museum in Philippines. Unfortunately this museum has not been able to raise the funds necessary in 2009. Thanks to the wise management of the budget, this lack of money will be covered by the regular budget.

The trustees approved the 2009 financial report.

5 Proposal of the National Museum of Korea

Min-gwon Park presented to the trustees the National Museum of Korea commitment to the VCM. The National Museum of Korea will support and sustain the project by:

- helping the board of trustees to encourage more Asian museums to come to the VCM
- hiring a VCM liaison and coordinator with a fluency in English and Chinese before the end of this year
- promoting the VCM in local museums The National Museum is indeed a very active member of the ANAN (Asian Museums' network)
- creating a task force team which will find the “killer contents” to attract more visitors on the VCM
- creating new IT applications to help the VCM developing the Learning zone as Flash videogame.
- launching a marketing plan by creating a new logo which will be more friendly and have a stronger visual identity. The contributors and the museums of the ANAN will be touched to add this new logo to their homepage. This logo will be send with the direct link to the masterpieces of the concerned museums

The National Museum would like to make the VCM more attractive. Min-gwon Park suggested presenting a cyber playground for children where they would be able to make their own virtual collection.

With regard to the VCM design, Michael Ryan invited the trustees to think about a pre-homepage. His idea is to create a page shown before the VCM homepage which can give an attractive introduction to the VCM website.

Koos van Brakel proposed to add to the masterpiece description page a “print friendly version” application.

6: Drafts of the Action Plan and the Budget 2010

After a thorough discussion, the trustees decided to approve the 2010 Action Plan and budget. In the meantime, the trustees expressed their wish to receive these two documents updated with the Korean proposals before January 2010. Some of the actions as the creation of the “light version” will be financed only by external funding.

7. The future of the VCM

The trustees focused the debate on the ASEMUS website and the ICOM 22nd General Conference in Shanghai in 2010. Karl Magnusson explained to the trustees that the ASEMUS website does not track enough visitors. It would be an idea to merge the VCM and the ASEMUS websites. As Michael Ryan recalled, the ASEMUS website is a network website and the VCM website is a project website. Each one has its own identity. In his view, it is preferable to have two distinct websites or to offer a special and closed area for the ASEMUS members in the VCM. Steven Engelsman expressed his wish to attract more members for ASEMUS thanks to the VCM project: For a museum, the first step of an effective cooperation is indeed to show its collection to the largest public.

With regard to ICOM General Conference, Manus Brinkman advised the trustees to create a page in Chinese for the Chinese visitors and to start to think about the presentation of the VCM during the conference. It would be wise to pay more attention to the original language if we want to attract Chinese visitors to the VCM.

Michael Ryan suggested sending a formal invitation to the ASEMUS and VCM members. Steven proposed to open a special “VCM and the ICOM General Conference” in the VCM.

In order to promote more efficiently the VCM and ASEMUS, Min-gwon Park proposed to join with the cultural exhibition planned in BOZAR (Brussels) for the ASEM 8 Summit in October 2010. Mr. Paul Dujardin, CEO-Artistic Director and Mr. Jan Van Alphen, Scientific and Curatorial Director, both of BOZAR Centre for Fine Arts are the organizers of this exhibition. Its theme is “Face and Trade”: the concept is to show how the contacts and relations between Europe and Asia have been established as far back as “the age of antiquity” to the present. Steven Engelsman suggested presenting this project during the next ASEMUS Executive Committee meeting.

The trustees decided to wait the ASEMUS Ex-Co members’ opinions about the future of the ASEMUS website and to create on ICOM General Conference occasion a special feature on the VCM Homepage.

8. Next meetings

The next meeting of the trustees will take place in Shanghai during the 22nd ICOM General Conference (7-9 November 2010). Min-gwon Park invited the trustees to the National Museum of Korea for the VCM annual meeting in 2011.

Leiden 2009-11-20

Julie Trébault

Liaison and Innovation Officer for VCM