

LE MONDE DES MUSÉES

WORLD OF MUSEUMS

Museum Research: Dinosaur or Phoenix?*

*Announcement of panel at forthcoming meeting of the CMA, Ottawa, March 28-31, 2007

Moderator: *Andrée Gendreau, Musée de la civilisation, Québec, and Vice-President, Canadian Museums Association*

Presenters: *Victoria Dickenson, McCord Museum; Paul Litt, Carleton University; Robert McGhee, Canadian Museum of Civilization; David Moorman, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council; and CMA museum research committee: Laura Brandon, Canadian War Museum; Del Muise, Carleton University; and Garth Wilson, Canada Science and Technology Museum*

Museums are repositories of knowledge and places of discovery: but what do we really know about the nature and direction of the scholarship that takes place in Canada's museums? As museum professionals, we believe museum research is about finding out more about collections. But this is changing — and rapidly. More contemporary concerns relating to issues such as gender, ownership, and the sacred are now also part of the equation, enriching, although also complicating, the museum researcher's task. The general public is rarely privy to these developments and challenges and, in consequence, its understanding of the traditional role and importance of museum research appears to be eroding. Some in the profession believe these transformations are necessary and good but they do have consequences. As a result, research is no longer just a curatorial responsibility but also includes educational, archival, and sociological dimensions. Museum research funding is also a perennial problem regardless of the size of the institution. Presenters will discuss their experience of these issues in relation to their research projects, the evolution of museum research training, and available funding. At the end of the session the CMA's museum research committee will update you on progress on the Action Plan formulated at the Research Summit in January 2005.

Exhibition Review: *Clash of Empires: The War that Made Canada, 1754-1763*

by R.H. Caldwell, Directorate of History and Heritage, National Defence Headquarters, Ottawa.

This exhibition was organized by the Senator John Heinz Pittsburgh Regional History Centre, an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, in partnership with the Canadian War Museum, 31 May to 12 November 2006. The accompanying

publication, *Clash of Empires — The British, French and Indian War 1754-1763*, by R.S. Stephenson, in French and English, is a full-colour, 108-page record of the art, artifacts, text panel writings, and creation of the exhibit. The work, priced at \$23.99 (Canadian), is extremely good value.

Following the end of the War of Austrian Succession, in 1748, France and Britain sparred along their North American frontiers. There was tension in Acadia as well as in western Pennsylvania, where the Ohio River, *La Belle Rivière*, provided vital access into the trans-Appalachian west. By 1754 it was inevitable that a clash would occur somewhere, and so it did, about 30 miles south of the Forks of the Ohio. There a British force surprised a French force, and Seneca leader Tanaghrisson executed the wounded Ensign Jumonville, the French subaltern in command. The unlucky commander of the British colonial group was 22-year-old George Washington, an officer in the Virginia militia.

This minor incident in the wilderness sparked open conflict between France and Britain. The result was the Seven Years' War, known by the Americans as the French and Indian War, or the war before the Revolution. Although war was officially declared in 1756, Britain, France, and their respective colonial troops and native allies fought for nine years, from 1754 to 1763. Eventually the conflict raged across the European and British continental and maritime worlds. This was the first global war, and because it involved all the major powers of the day, its conduct was shaped by the ambitions, conventions, financial arrangements, technology and military thought that prevailed in Europe at the time.

Military professionalism flourished in the eighteenth century. Senior officials like Marshal de Saxe, as well as officers of all ranks, spent considerable time studying war. To oversimplify, they thought in terms of two types of war: *petite guerre* and *grande guerre*. *Petite guerre*, a style of war encountered in Scotland and in eastern Europe, was new, irregular, rarely decisive, and fought on the fringes of larger operations. Engagements were vicious, close-range, often hand-to-hand battles fought with hand-held weapons. *Grande guerre*, on land and sea, was by far the most decisive form of war. Here large national navies were involved, as well as powerful armies that conducted complex manoeuvres, often against, or around, fortifications.

British and French professional soldiers needed to adapt these ideas to the North American military environment. This environment was characterized by a landscape dominated by

forts of all types, sited to control trade and water routes, and almost invariably surrounded by unmapped wilderness. Fighting here demanded particular attention to logistics and light troops. With a huge North American empire to defend — from Lake Ontario through present-day New York and western Pennsylvania, to Québec and east to Acadia and the Atlantic beyond — the French understood these exigencies at the outset. The British mastered them painfully in the first five years of the conflict.

Throughout the war both sides conducted *petite* and *grande guerre* with large and small forces of professional regulars, native peoples and partly-trained colonial militias. Fighting occurred at forest ambushes, canoe portage sites, and cleared farmsteads in the wilderness, as well as such fortifications as Québec, Ticonderoga, Crown Point and Louisbourg. The British held the initiative after the fall of Québec in 1759.

The Seven Years' War ended with the Treaty of Paris in 1763, and much of France's world-wide empire was lost to Britain. The Royal Navy had firmly established the British Empire, and sea power had come into its own. On land, France renounced all claims to Canada, Acadia (Nova Scotia), the St. Lawrence River and the Ohio valley, and all territory east of the Mississippi. Pontiac's Rebellion, the American Revolutionary War and the intrigue and events of the Napoleonic Wars followed quickly in a single arc of expansion, where the citizens of the new United States advanced into the trans-Appalachian west towards the Pacific.

This year (2006), the Canadian War Museum launched a Canadian version of an American exhibit on the Seven Years' War. *Clash of Empires* is a lavish feast: fine art and artifacts illustrate the period, and highly realistic dioramas are used as special effects to convey two big ideas; that the Seven Year's War shaped North America, and that Canadians and Americans share a common past.

The Canadian War Museum staff were faced with a complex task, carving out a Canadian exhibit from the American one. For example, how would the production connect to the three main Canadian events — the expulsion of the Acadians, Louisbourg, and the battle of the Plains of Abraham? How much of the complex military and civilian experience of this war can any museum convey?

What the Canadian War Museum got right, and how they overcame several challenges, shines through like the stars on an Appalachian night. For example, the Canadians developed superbly written text panels, produced following a four-phase process of side-by-side French and English editing. Also, the use of space is well thought-out, and a visitor can easily experience and enjoy the art, artifacts and dioramas on either side of a wide display area.

The nine mannequins, in eight dioramas designed by Gerry Embleton, are themselves worth the price of admission, and effectively punctuate the visitor's experience. The mannequins cost the Senator John Heinz Center hundreds of thousands of dollars, and the results are impressive and powerful. These figures not only reinforce the visitor's relationship with the cased artifacts, but also leave a lasting impression on all who see them, whether scholars or ordinary visitors.

My second suggestion is that perhaps a material culture approach might be considered to place the artifacts in context. For example, why not use the display cases of muskets and powder horns — the latter representing folk art as well as black powder portability — to explain how they were designed to meet the needs of *grande* and *petite guerre*. And vice versa, why not explain how the technology of those muskets shaped events of the Seven Years' War, as well as military thought in the period?

I raise this issue because the eighteenth century — the Age of Enlightenment — was a period when professional army officers spent much time reading, thinking and often writing about war. Frederick the Great was a product of this movement, and the Seven Years' War stands as one of the test beds for officers who grappled with the nature of war, not only in Europe and Britain, but in backwoods North America.

In summary, my advice is — see this remarkable exhibit. As you look at it, imagine that you have been seconded to the Canadian War Museum for three years to produce a Canadian iteration of an expensive and exhaustively produced American exhibit on the Seven Years' War. How would you do it? What stories would you want told? Can you meet your national aims through the use of another museum's artifacts and special effects? How much of a "material culture" approach would you use? What artifacts would you use, and how would you make them "speak"?

Late this year *Clash of Empires* moves to the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., and after a period on display, it will be dispersed. Art and artifacts borrowed will be returned to their parent collections, and presumably the dioramas will be returned to their rightful home, the Senator John Heinz Center in Pittsburgh. There they will stand as jewels in the crown of that great city's past in the Ohio valley, and will continue to tell the 250-year old story of this unique war and its enormous impact.

**EXPOSITIONS EN COURS
CURRENT EXHIBITIONS**

Name of Exhibition : The Post Goes Pop

Location : Canadian Postal Museum-Canadian Museum of Civilization, Gatineau (Musée canadien de la poste-Musée canadien des civilisations)

Details : Opens 10 November, 2007. Postal Imagery in Popular Culture: musique, télévision, cinéma, publicité etc.



*Christmas Figurine
CPM 1997.10.2
Photo : Steven Darby © CMC*

*Figurine de Noël
MCP 1997.10.2
Photo : Steven Darby © MCC*

Nom de l'exposition : Sur les traces d'un peuple disparu : Iroquoiens du Saint-Laurent, peuple du maïs

Endroit : Musée de la Pointe à Callière (Montréal)

Détails : du 7 novembre 2006 au 6 mai 2006. Exposition entièrement consacrée à cette population mystérieusement disparue au 16^e siècle. 130 artefacts provenant de sites archéologiques du Québec, de l'Ontario et de l'État de New York feront revivre ce peuple d'horticulteurs qui a introduit la culture du maïs dans la vallée du Saint-Laurent.

Name of Exhibition: Italian Arts and Design:
The 20th Century

Location: Royal Ontario Museum (Toronto)

Details: October 28, 2006 to January 7, 2007. Showcasing 300 works, *Italian Arts and Design* includes furniture, glass, textiles, ceramics, paintings, sculpture, photography and more from this remarkable period in design history. Work is displayed by a number of leading 20th century Italian designers.

Nom de l'exposition : Au Pérou avec Tintin

Endroit : Musée de la civilisation (Québec)

Détails : du 25 octobre 2006 au 6 janvier 2007. Pour créer les albums *Les sept boules de cristal* et *Le Temple du Soleil*, Hergé s'est fortement inspiré des richesses artistiques des

Incas et de leurs prédécesseurs qu'il a admirées en arpentant les Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire de Belgique. À l'aide de plus de 200 magnifiques objets préhispaniques provenant du Pérou, dont la momie qui inspira à Hergé le personnage de Rascar Capac, et de nombreuses planches originales qu'il a lui-même dessinées, confrontez son imaginaire à la réalité archéologique péruvienne.

Name of Exhibition: Mavericks. An incorrigible History of Alberta (New permanent gallery)

Location: Glenbow Museum (Calgary)

Details: "Alberta was, and continues to be, shaped by mavericks — adventurous, hard-working and spirited men and women. Our new *Mavericks* gallery will invite you to explore our province's history through the dynamic stories of over 40 mavericks..."

Name of Exhibition: Titanic. The Artifact Exhibition

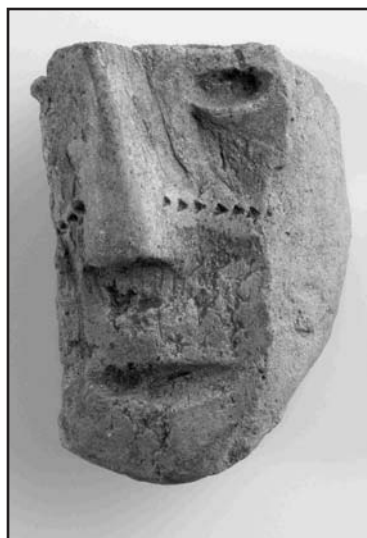
Location: Royal B.C. Museum (Victoria)

Details: April 14 2007 to October 14 2007. "This travelling exhibition features more than 275 artifacts recovered from the Titanic's undersea resting place in a series of galleries that trace the life of the "unsinkable" ship — from its design and construction through to its discovery, recovery and conservation..."

Name of Exhibition: Thaddeus Holownia:
The Terra Nova Suite

Location: The Rooms: Newfoundland and Labrador
Art Gallery (St. John's)

Details: September 2006 to January 7 2007. "A major survey of work examining 25 years (1981-2006) of photographs that offers powerful evidence of the changing landscapes of the province and its complex culture and society."



*Pipe à effigie humain,
site Mandeville, Québec*

*Photo : Jacques Beardsell,
Centre de conservation du
Québec*