



Editor's Introduction

by Nana Oforiatta Ayim

The Committee on Museums and Cultural Heritage and its report have come together during a time in which museums across the world have begun going through a reevaluation. The Imperialist principles on which many of the so-called Universal or Encyclopaedic Museums were built no longer hold, with many of the objects taken as colonial loot now contested.

How do we reimagine museums in this new moment where cultures stand shoulder to shoulder, rather than as coloniser and colonised? What kind of structures do we create? What kinds of relationships and narratives do we build? This report goes some way towards

answering these questions for a specific place and context, and, in doing so, hopefully informs those of many others.

The history of the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (GMMB), which governs our museum structures, did not originate from our ways of being but instead, as William Nsuiban Gmayi outlines, from the need of English colonisers to survey and preserve a material culture that they in the same breath had been intent on destroying. In his essay, Nsuiban Gmayi outlines that the foundations for GMMB were collections amassed by foreigners and, like many museums built during that last colonial gasp, unrepresentative of the communities they came from. Today they are outdated and neo-colonial in their presentation of the cultures that make up Ghana.

I write about what our future national and regional museums might look like based on the work I've been doing these past several years with a mobile museum traveling into communities,

inviting them in as co-creators and curators; as well as the work I did on Ghana's first pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2019. I write about what a museum might look like if made of local sustainable materials, inspired by local ontologies, made of interlinked chambers that showcase the pluralities of place and time; how our Science and Technology Museum could embrace future technologies that have been kickstarted by other fields in Ghana; how museums in monuments, such as the slave castles along the coast, could be holders of narratives for how these pasts created our presents; and how museums in national parks can be dynamic crucibles of narratives, archaeologies, ecologies and communities.

Professor Kodzo Gavua goes into more detail on the creation of monuments as part of the process of a top-down nation definition and forming. He writes on the importance of National Monuments beyond revenue generation: their function as archives of Ghana's early architectural history, of how communities contributed to

their construction and function, and of the impact they and the activities associated with them had on the societies, cultures, economies and cognitive structures of these communities. He writes of the monuments as keepers of historical narratives, and of the importance of those narratives on unarchiving subdued local and other histories; and of the need for their reconceptualisation as holders of shared heritages beyond borders. He, like almost all the contributors, stresses the need for the involvement of local communities.

Dr William Gblerkpor advocates for the inclusion of national parks, resource reserves, sacred groves and wetlands into the GMMB fold. He writes on the presence of historical caves, cultural and archaeological sites that have not yet been mediated, and of the inclusion of the narratives and cultural heritage of surrounding communities. He points in particular to the natural and bio-cultural heritage of the peoples whose past and contemporary engagement with their landscape and environment form the larger story of the parks. He posits that park museums can serve as memory centres for understanding indigenous knowledge systems and practices that reflect innovative technologies and arts, the balance of humans and nature over millennia; as well as places for crafting the possible futures, for example, in herbal medicines.

Since community was such a significant thread in everyone's contributions, it was important to have Dr Dickson Adom outline what communities might mean in our contexts, and how they might share governance—as well as take on leadership, advisory, and curatorial roles—in museums, which might in

turn take on board their needs.

Participation can especially be enhanced through education, as Kwasi Adi-Dako elucidates in his section, where he advocates for increased interactivity and cohesiveness of storytelling and flow. He also outlines methodologies on the inclusion of new technologies, of gamification, virtual and augmented reality and 3D mapping.

DK Osseo-Asare shows how rethinking the architecture of museums can bring new technologies into their structures. He proposes architecture that can be affordable and used in temporary ways; how structures themselves can be design partners and co-participants in culture. He uses bamboo as an example of a material comparable to steel in tension, and to concrete in compression. He posits what building may become when reformulated as a body made up of a skeleton, skin or bounded system, and proposes the creation of open-source architecture, including technologies such as biodigesting and 3D bioprinting, designed for self-assembly. It becomes a museum not contained within walls, but a network of lightweight and mobile architectures with key building complexes to increase access to arts and culture, as well as participation in its production, curation and dissemination. He asks how one talks or listens to a building; how to dialogue or dance with architecture that is alive, or at least beginning to possess sentience, motility and a primitive metabolism. He also discusses how repatriated objects will need time and space to heal, and he contemplates how structures can provide that distributed network of accommodation, co-designed to reunite culture with land, water and spirit.

Afua Nkansah-Asamoah's section looks at how we might begin the process of repatriation from Western museums and private collections by creating inventories through blockchain-based provenance and artificial intelligence to spot, detect and compile specific types of data in custom solutions. She proposes what our next steps might be in identifying the most important objects to be returned first: how to create heritage vaults of digital content; how to share this data publicly; and how to create ongoing systems of inventory and repatriation.

Agnes Allotey starts to imagine what a new, restructured Ghana Museums and Monuments Board might look like by gathering data and benchmarking its structures against others

In their section, Dr Edith Dankwa and Magida Peregrino-Brimah begin to create financial models that make the museum sectors less reliant on the state, diversifying them to include earned income, private donations and investment income.

And finally, Maame Mensa-Bonsu outlines a new legal framework that overhauls the old one, which was primarily focused on archiving relics and antiquities. She proposes dividing the existing structure into separate entities, each enabled to achieve their complementary potential and each insulated from excessive political interference: The National Museum Board; the National Monuments Board; and the National Parks and Wildlife Board. She proposes National Trusts for each of the three entities that maintain endowments for the institutions, as well as key

research projects and partnerships with research-focused institutions to retain dynamism. She also suggests, given how critical it is that communities own their museums as spaces and experiences, that the boards decentralise and see their roles more as coordinators and regulators of those spaces, so that each site roots itself in its host community, with a national narrative, allowing the nuances of community to be owned by its host—and seen and appreciated by others. The outcome of the committee's findings is the proposal of a new Museums Act put together by Maame Mensa-Bonsu.



Exhibit by El Anatsui: Venice Biennale Ghana Pavilion