

PROJECT FOR A MUSEUM

LA MAISON DES CIVILISATIONS ET DE L'UNITÉ RÉUNIONNAISE

OF THE PRESENT

FRANÇOISE VERGÈS
CARPANIN MARIMOUTOU



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PREFACE

Reunion is a small island, came and still come from countries with very Whatever the conditions and reasons of their and memories of these civilizations and adapted has been filled with violence, denials, negations, culture, one of hybridity and creolization. Six European, Indian, Islamic, insular worlds were and recognize ourselves. The main expression of this always dynamic and pregnant with changes. Our immaterial productions, a treasure that warrants an the economic logic of merchandise. *La Maison des* practices of resistance and of constantly renewed shared, where all the memories join forces, where

its history is recent, and its people ancient and very different civilizations.

coming may be, they brought with them traces them to their new country. Reunion's history contempt. Yet it led to the edification of a common worlds converged here. The African, Chinese, still are the crucible of a culture in which we all common culture is orality which by definition is island's contribution to the world is founded on our ethics of human relations that refuses to comply with *Civilisations et de l'Unité Réunionnaise*, born of affirmations, is the place where all the origins are cultural differences build the dynamics of unity.

Paul Vergès

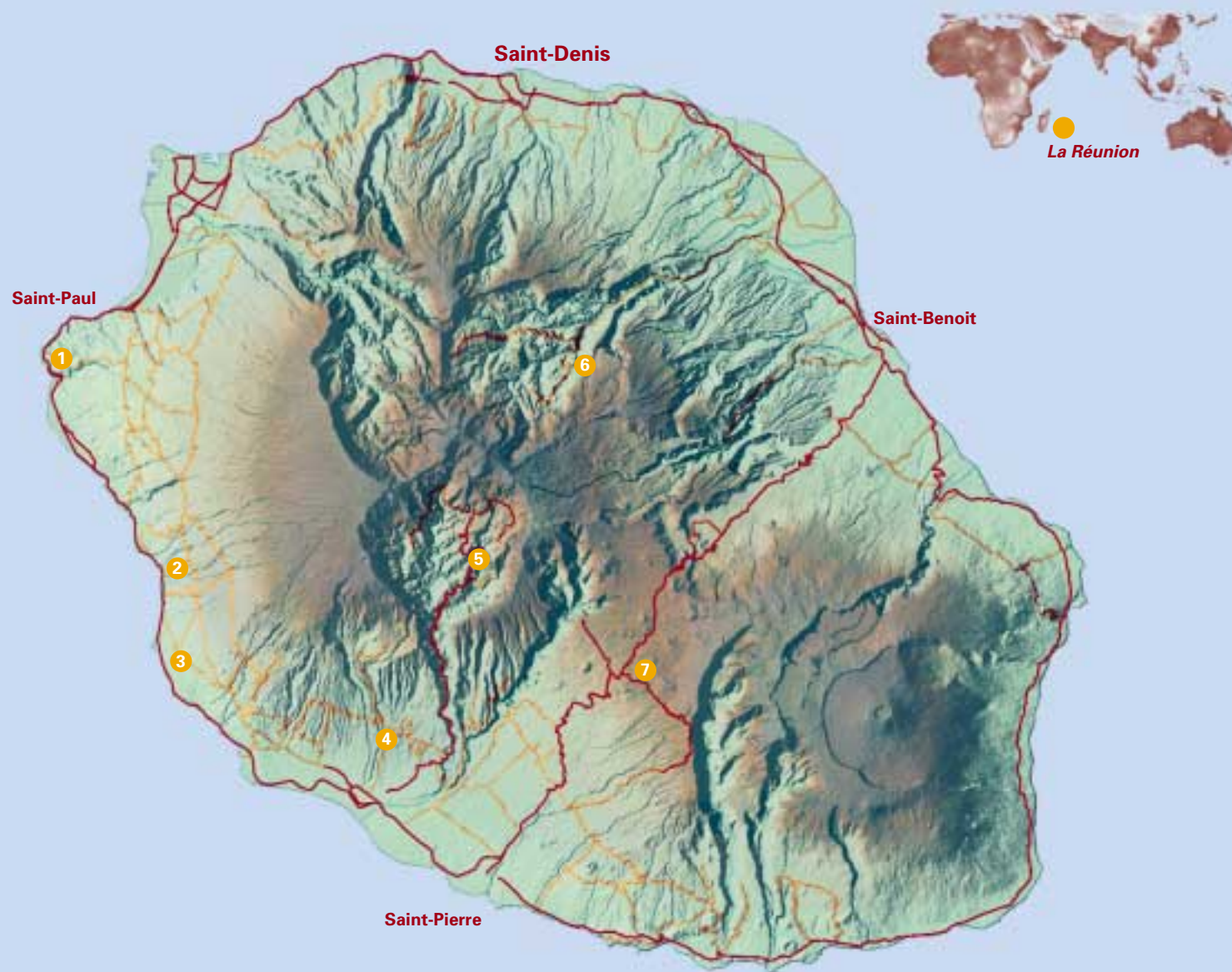
President of

the Regional

Council of

Reunion

May 2005.



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2. Centre d'Études et de Découvertes des Tortues Marines, KELONIA.

3. Musée Stella Matutina.
4. Musée des Arts décoratifs de l'océan Indien, MADOI.

5. Éco-musée de Cilaos.
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FOREWORD

This document presents the conceptual and methodological choices for a museum sponsored by the Reunion Region and supported by the French government and the European Community. It will be built on the island of Reunion and should be completed by 2010. It will be located at Saint-Paul, the site of the first human settlement on the island in the seventeenth century.

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The conception of the museum results from several observations and interrogations: how can practices and processes that belong for the most part to what has been called “immaterial” or “intangible” culture be expressed visually without falling into a reductive ethnology? How can the maps of exchanges, contacts and conflicts of the Indoceanic world, where in the course of centuries six worlds converged (African, Chinese, European, Indian, Muslim, Malagasy and Comorian world), be expressed visually so as to render the contact zones, the cultural interactions, the modes of interpenetration, diffusion, dissemination and dispersion? How can the processes and practices of creolization at work in the creation of Reunionese unity be expressed visually? How can yesterday’s routes of slavery and indentured labor, today’s migrations, power relationships, inequalities, discriminations be



★ Words, expressions and abbreviations in grayscale are explained in a glossary at the end of the document.

■ ■ ■ expressed visually, concurrently with the resistances, struggles and imaginaries? How can we make the museum a space of discussion open to reinterpretations, local and global transformations? This document seeks to answer those questions, putting forth the founding principles of a museum on a small territory of the “South”, linked to France and Europe, Africa and China, India and the Muslim world, *a museum of creolization processes, a museum of the living present.*

14 It is based on the results of a study and enquiry performed by the SCET, observations and recommendations expressed in seminars and the report drafted by the SCET/Abaque research consultancy. It benefited by suggestions offered by Reunionese social, economic and cultural actors, as well as by national and international scholars, artists, and curators. This text arises from the conclusions of the encounters of the past four years. It is especially indebted to the work and knowledge gathered on the Reunionese space by the Reunionese, knowledge that for ages was neglected or marginalized.

The list of all those to whom we wish to express our gratitude is very long since we would have to go way back in time to avoid omitting any contribution. We should in particular name all those who did not leave a written trace but without whom our culture, Reunionese culture, would not be what it is. Without them this project would never have come about, without them these reflections would never have been completed, without them the very notion of unity in difference would have lost all meaning.

We thank them all as we do all those who shared in varying degrees in the elaboration of this publication.

This document was written first of all for the Reunionese people and, as such, may appear “localized.” We are aware of this pitfall. As a pedagogical tool, it is open to repetitions and its bibliography is only indicative. However, we think that the modest suggestions we make could interest artists, scholars, curators and cultural players all over the world who endeavor to better express intercultural practices. It is an invitation to join in the discussion, because the MCUR wants to be a terrain for experiments, a dynamic tool serving a population in a postcolonial situation.

15

It is difficult to present Reunion Island in a single paragraph. To begin with, most people in the world will not even know where it is. It is not associated to a recognized world like the Caribbean archipelago, nor to a single area of civilization: it is not an “African”, “Asian” or “French” island. Finally, it is a French territory and as such does not belong to the accepted narrative of decolonization. Colonial and postcolonial history tend to ignore this island.

Reunion Island is located in the southwest of the Indian Ocean, east of Madagascar, west of Mauritius. Uninhabited until the seventeenth century, it was known by Arab and Chinese navigators. The French took possession of the island in 1663 and named it “Bourbon” to honor ■ ■ ■

■ ■ ■ their monarch. It became a colony where coffee and then sugar economy shaped the social organization. Slaves were brought mostly from Madagascar, but also from the eastern coast of Africa, and in lesser number from the Comoros and other countries.

Slavery was abolished in 1848, 60 000 children, women and men out of 100 000 inhabitants were freed. They were citizens but remained colonized and this *paradoxical citizenship* structured the anti-colonial struggle for equality and democracy on the island. Indentured work replaced slavery, and thousands of workers were brought from southern India, Mozambique, China, Madagascar and other countries of the Indian Ocean. In the second half of the nineteenth century, groups of immigrants from Gujarat and southern China also arrived on the island, occupying the niches of small commerce (grocery for Chinese and fabrics for Muslims of Gujarat). The last indentured workers arrived in the 1930s.

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The colonial status ended in 1946. By the 1950s, the Conservatives who opposed the status of department had transformed the demand for equality into a policy of cultural assimilation and economic dependency. Anti-colonial movements retorted with the demand for political and economic “autonomy.” French governments (Left and Right) fighting colonial wars elsewhere (Madagascar, Indochina, Algeria) resisted aspirations for democratization. The 1950s to the late 1970s were marked by political and cultural repression (fraud, censorship, denial of the Creole language and culture, policy of assimilation) and a modernization of infrastructures. Slowly, the hold of reactionary conservatives weakened under the determined struggle of a large front of democratic forces. Yet, traces of this era linger. The economic situation has been

critical for decades: high unemployment rate, crisis of the agricultural world under the assault of sugar conglomerates and global competition, deep inequalities and discriminations. Yet, there is also strong social solidarity, a highly educated youth, and a vibrant cultural scene.

This is the place from which we started and to which we returned when working on this document. A small island whose population has invented ways of inhabiting its territory, created a space where cultural differences shape the social with pluri-religious, pluri-cultural elements. Reunionese identity is a play between different reservoirs of meaning, where the *mise-en-scène* of ancestry reveals the ways in which the Reunionese individual works out the plurality of its past to construct a singularity.

17

Françoise Vergès	Indoceanic formations	Both have been
is currently a Reader	and the processes	involved in cultural
at the Center for	of creolization.	and political
Cultural Studies,		movements on
Goldsmiths College,	Carpanin Marimoutou	the island.
London, and for	is professor of	They have been
the last two years	Literature at the	working since 2003
has worked on	University of Reunion	on the scientific
the MCUR project.	Island, a poet	and cultural
	and writer.	programme of
She has widely		the MCUR.
published on slavery	He has published	
and abolitionism, the	widely on Indoceanic	They jointly wrote
politics of predation	and Creole literature	<i>Amarres</i> .
and fabrication of	and the ways in which	<i>Créolisations India-</i>
disposable people in	the vernacular	<i>Océanes</i> , Ile-sur-Têt,
eras of globalization,	reworks the great	Éditions K'A, 2003 /
Frantz Fanon, French	mythological texts	Paris, L'Harmattan,
colonial republicanism,	of India.	2005.

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MCUR | PROJECT FOR A MUSEUM OF THE PRESENT

PREMISE

Paul Vergès, July 1999

“

The goal of La Maison
des Civilisations: starting
from differences and
reaching a synthesis.

The content of La Maison
des Civilisations: it is not
a museum where you
come to look at the past,
it is something alive.

”

CULTURAL DIFFERENCE, CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND DEMOCRACY

20

In the years to come Reunion will be facing a number of challenges: increased population, resulting modification of its territory, insertion in a world subject to an accelerated market-oriented globalization with all the changes that it implies (migrations from one continent to another, new regionalizations, greater inequalities, merchandizing of culture, rapid urbanization, new geopolitical boundaries, but also rise of new cultural, religious and artistic expressions).

In the course of its history, Reunionese society has undergone a great many upheavals. It has a twofold heritage: one of dehumanization, contempt, exile, and one of vitality and creativity. The latest upheaval relates to the end of an agricultural and rural world observant of moral ideals respected in other rural societies, where some extent of mutual assistance is the basis of social relationships among the exploited. The end of this world and its social organization, its network of assistance and solidarity, the decline of industry, the growth of the unemployment rate caused a profound social breakdown that further added to a long-lasting denial of history and culture. The Reunionese population is like many other populations: it is confronted with dire economic problems in a world that endures the logic of liberal economy, with many of its members living from hand to mouth. Sociological studies point it out:

regions devastated by factory closures with a high unemployment rate are afflicted with alcoholism, domestic violence, child abuse, suicides, legal or illegal drugs, delinquency... Trans-generational transmission is thwarted. Yet the gravity of the situation should not make us forget Reunion's assets: popular creativity (tales, *sirandanes*, *maloya*, languages and so on), a history of struggles and resistances, cultural diversity, extension of school and university formation, a booming geo-economic environment, dynamic economic partners, and a regional policy of cultural and economic cooperation.

21

Faced with these challenges, Reunionese society must offer and develop a series of reflections based on its cultural assets. They should be repositioned in an approach that takes into consideration social, cultural, economic and political evolutions and transformations on local, national, regional and international levels.

The MCUR takes a firm stand against attacks on the diversity of cultures and their dynamics that need to be shielded from the logic of liberal market-oriented trade. Its goal is to encourage the expression of the diversity and inter-cultural spirit inherent to Reunion.

RESTITUTION, REPARATION, REINTERPRETATION

22

Paul Vergès, President of the Regional Council of Reunion, often reminded us: for only too long Reunionese society (its history, formation, culture, organization) was perceived and explained as depending on a sole matrix, Europe. As early as 1963, in *Bitter Sugar*, a film by Yann Le Masson, he claimed in a public meeting: “Our ancestors came from Africa, China, Madagascar, India and Europe” and added that we should not favor one origin to the detriment of another. The Reunionese, either constrained or willingly, came from countries and peoples with developed civilizations that possessed elaborate social, cultural and political organizations. Nowadays the notion of an exclusively Western modernity bringing progress to a pre-modern world has been scientifically disproved by philosophers, historians and anthropologists. The paradigm of multiple modernities has become an alternative to a homogenizing, reductive conception. The complex and rich histories of the diverse cultures are now part of humanity’s knowledge, giving way to new interpretations of world and local events. Restitution of the cultures from which our ancestors came, historical reparation, and suggestions for new interpretations constitute the basis of the MCUR policy.

This paradigm is the cornerstone of the MCUR program’s overall conception: restitution of the plurality of systems of signification and identification. Reunionese identity has been plural from the onset since it is the result of inter-culturality and *métissage*, which is not the expression of a harmony but more frequently of conflict.

23

The MCUR will show and help grasp the plurality of these systems. Thus someone can be a woman, living in a city, speaking Creole and French, Reunionese, practicing or not a religion or a combination of religions, a mother, back in the island after years in mainland France... all these layers contribute to the perception of identity. The shared identity is the result of a community of identifications with cultural forms that are the result of social relations. It is therefore linked to space and culture and not to blood. The MCUR will avoid making one system of signification prevail over others.

QUESTIONING CULTURAL IDENTITIES AND DIVERSITY

In recent years the issue of cultural identities has been reappraised. It became clear that cultural identity cannot have a single source without excluding, rejecting, discriminating often less visible sources, resulting from popular resistances to a hegemony of meaning. The notions of hybridness, creolization, mixing, trans-cultural and inter-cultural have been advanced to help grasp what is *different*, to think in terms of the interactive space of encounter. Identity does not rest on an unmoving foundation, it is a response to situations, moments, in which *more than one* memory, *more than one* vocabulary, *more than one* representation, *more than one* identification structure confront one another. We have to recognize the complexity and contextualization of forms of representation and identification.

24

These remarks apply to the Reunionese people, produced by French colonization. There was *no first people, no pre-colonial era*. French colonization built the territory where the Reunionese population was formed, on this uninhabited island in the Indian Ocean. Faced with racism, the dehumanization and violence of slavery, colonial exploitation, *engagisme* (indentured labor) and colonialism (and mind you: the colonial status lasted until 1946), the Reunionese people created their own culture, language, conceptions of the world and of space and time.

Yet this culture was not until recently recognized in its specificity. At the same time we should beware of the pitfalls occurring elsewhere in comparable situations of cultural, linguistic and political “diglossia”: freezing tradition and the past as pure, insisting on the difference and overlooking some regressive, sexist sides of customs and traditions, and forgetting to develop planetary humanism.

The MCUR plans to conceive multicultural and intercultural, unity and differences within the same place, the common place, but where each person transits in her own way while respecting the ways of others.

HIGHLIGHTING THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DYNAMICS OF CREOLIZATION

Each group on arriving at Reunion underwent a *process of creolization*, that is, its members were led to give up their beliefs, traditions, practices and to preserve some aspects of these beliefs, traditions and practices, while borrowing from others. Creolization is precisely that dynamics of loss and preservation of beliefs and practices necessarily altered. In this way, each new group (of slaves, indentured workers, immigrants...) underwent a process of creolization through those already settled who passed on to them, sometimes violently, methods of survival, but those already settled received from the newcomers traces of forgotten traditions and beliefs. To progress, Reunionese society must be able to pursue these dynamics while preserving its originality.

25

But how can the Reunionese preserve these dynamics, how can they avoid making the Reunionese identity an identity founded on exclusion? The fragility of creolization —faced with dominant cultural expressions, with the cultural products of essentially profit-seeking multinational corporations— must be recognized and viewed in the context of liberal globalization, the rise of murderous identities and identity withdrawal.

The MCUR intends to study and encourage the expressions and practices of creolization with the aim of preserving and asserting the Reunionese cultural diversity and unity, and to participate in the movements in the world that share this approach and oppose the hegemony of the One and the Same. The MCUR will not for that shy from analyzing the regressions and frustrations permeating Reunionese society due to violence, sexism, homophobia...

A PLACE OF EXCHANGE AND ENCOUNTER

To structure *La Maison des Civilisations et de l'Unité Reunionaise* we will have to explore these themes and see how they can be approached. Indeed for several years now scholars have shown that similar situations can be perceived, experienced and represented in entirely different ways from one community to another, even within communities that experience these situations. So each analysis of a situation must combine the political and cultural context, memories built up around an event, ways an event is perceived, crossings between individual, family, ethno-cultural and social representations. In other words, each situation must be seen not just in its structure but in the functions and images it produces.

26

The only way an observer can account for the complexity of a society's cultural practices is by showing the constantly hybrid character of signs. For Reunion we must attempt this approach and *create an index of representations*.

The study of Reunionese society is only too often reduced to drawing up a chronological order that arranges interlocking temporalities, neglecting singularity to the benefit of generality, repeating the eternal opposition between elite culture and popular culture, between written and oral, between reality and representations. Reunionese knowledge should be represented with all its richness. But the Reunionese viewpoint should also readjust its focus by restoring meaning to the worlds the island inhabitants come from, by representing the significance of the facts and events that directly and indirectly contributed to form this society.

The MCUR will not be a museum in the traditional sense of the word: its primary purpose is not to collect items and documents and exhibit

collections, even if these aspects are included in its objective. It is to be a museum of civilizations, that is, it will show processes and practices (through objects but also films, sounds and so on). It will be a place for exhibitions, discussions, confrontations, interpretations and a place of proposals, actions, reparations, re-appropriations and restitutions. One of the aims of the MCUR is the *critical contextualizing and transmission* of Reunionese culture that, we insist, is outstanding by its intercultural character. We must do something more than "salvage the heritage." Of course the desire and need to preserve are justified but they should not rule our thinking. We must avoid turning the MCUR into a regional museum with wax figures and wickerwork, reifying traditions and skills and marginalizing their diversity.

The MCUR's goal is innovatory because it proposes to put the past into perspective starting from the present. It will be the one place envisioning the Reunion human and physical territory as something to show, visualize and reconstitute. It is not a historical museum but a place where critical, regenerative dynamics will offer the Reunionese a space in which, in the imaginary as well as in concrete exchange, the development of their culture and their society can be performed.

27

The intersecting approach to events promotes a comparative approach putting "worlds of life" into perspective, thus revealing recurrences, challenging ethnocentrism.

We shall also have to call attention to the contingencies, the accidents of history, challenging the fiction of a linear course presented as inevitably progressive, marked by a modernism defined by Europe in which every event can be explained by a structuring causality. It is clear that we use "Europe" to design a historical and cultural construction, better seen from the colonial world but which has had consequences on the continent itself. Currently, the definition of "Europe" through the debate on the European Constitution has shown that its meaning is far from being exhausted. We have to avoid a progression *from...to...toward...* an end of history that denies the permanence and creative aspect of conflicts and tensions. Instead,

we must encourage systems of signification, the means whereby the women and men of Reunion can re-appropriate their history and their culture.

Symposiums, lectures, seminars, exhibitions, commissioned works, encounters, performances, new communication technologies... The MCUR will use all these tools to offer the Reunionese population a *place of perspective and prospective*. Owing to the great number of young people, such a place is needed to highlight the *values* of the Reunionese culture. Just to cite a few of these values: secularism that is not hostile to the expression of the various religions of the island, capacity to adapt and adopt new practices and expressions (therefore the capacity to resist xenophobia), humanism, self-respect and respect of others.

CULTURAL PROJECT FACILITIES

28

Reflection on the cultural project facilities focuses on two programs: the museographic program of the main exhibition and the cultural program (cultural events: temporary exhibits, educational program, cultural activities and so on). In each sequence we shall offer intersecting points of view in order to express visually, interactively and playfully the diversity of significations of the past and of the present.

THE EXHIBITION

The main exhibition is the mainstay of the museum project. Every extra facility must be designed to back up the main exhibition. Spaces of the temporary exhibit could be included in the trajectory of the main exhibition: that is, in each sequence of the main exhibition a room could be reserved to a temporary exhibit (1 to 2 years) highlighting an object, an event, a personality, a cultural practice. In the same way, the exhibition of contemporary art works can be seen as part of the trajectory of the main exhibition. The guidelines of the project determine the setting up of a specific space and its content, and not the reverse. The materialization of the guidelines of the main exhibition may well lead us to rearrange the different areas.

29

In this space, each time the physical territory "Reunion" will be put in perspective with the territories created by society (land partitioning, "mountain" and "coast", the *kour*, the home, the space of ritual and so on). This island subject to brutal natural events (cyclones, volcanic eruptions, soil in constant formation) and brutal transformations imposed

by Man (sugarcane monoculture, short-term policy regarding the exploitation of resources —water, arable and building land—, supremacy of the automobile hence insatiable need to build roads) must be integrated as an actor in the reflection on its past, present and future. No culture/nature separation making nature a boundless space subject to man's whims, and humans, mere objects subject to the liberal management of planners and managers.

30 **The main exhibition should call upon the most advanced technologies, making the course of sequences a strong interactive space and time where the visitor is inspired to imagine various scenarios.**

The rooms should be designed so as to draw the visitor into another space, another time while providing her with the means to relate to the present and reinterpret it.

CULTURAL PROGRAM

To respond to the Reunionese men and women's claim to re-appropriate their world, to restore their pride in what they created, the themes of the first cultural event could focus on *their own cultural expressions*, their own ways of living and doing.

Suggestions:

“shemin la vi, shemin la mor”:

birth, christening and other birth rituals, childhood, adolescence, marriage, death... rituals and practices connected with these different ages of life draw attention to a creolization of these practices.

31

“The object”:

the place of the ordinary, familiar, everyday object in social life, its evolution, the realm of the imaginary linked to it. The objects can be the pestle (**pilon**), wicker (**vane**), as well as the vacuum cleaner, the car, the television.

These preliminary remarks reflect our determination to build facilities coinciding with a series of options, needs and esthetic choices. The architecture should take into account the analysis of the requirements and not impose itself as the priority. Neither a mausoleum nor a theme park, nor an awesome monument nor a shopping center, but playing on a series of levels (popular and tending toward the quest for excellence, educational and playful, monument but not monumental), the architecture of the MCUR should aim at expressing diversity and unity.

Zorey Baro Batarsité Bonbon piman Boutik
sinwa Brèd Créolie Engagisme Gramoun
Kabar Kabardock Kalbanon Kaz Kine Kour
Ladilafé Malbar Malogé Maloya Marrons
Marsh dann fé Pilon Kalou Rice-cooker
Samoussa Séga Servis kabaré Servis kaf
Servis makwalé Shemin la vi Shemin la mor
Sirandane Tisaneur Vane Zanbrokal Zarab
Zarboutan nout kiltir Zorey Baro Batarsité
Bonbon piman Boutik sinwa Brèd Créolie
Engagisme Gramoun Kabar Kabardock Kaf
Kalbanon Kaz Kine Kour Ladilafé Malbar
Malogé Maloya Marrons Marsh dann fé
Pilon Kalou Rice-cooker Samoussa Séga
Servis kabaré Servis kaf Servis makwalé
Shemin la vi Shemin la mor Sirandane
Tisaneur Vane Zanbrokal Zarab Zarboutan
nout kiltir Zorey Baro Batarsité Bonbon

MCUR | PROJECT FOR A MUSEUM OF THE PRESENT

METHODOLOGY FOR A POSTCOLONIAL MUSEUM OF THE LIVING PRESENT

When we were given the task to elaborate the cultural and scientific project of the MCUR, we turned to the vast and very diverse literature on postcolonialism, museums and museology. We could not find however a model of a museum of the living present in a postcolony without a pre-colonial past and whose history and culture had not gone through a national transition, or been represented in metropolitan museums. Indeed, Reunion's culture and history have not yet been exhibited and we considered such a fact stimulating for the imagination. The cultural and scientific project draws on the vast critical literature on museums and representations, but also on the long history of cultural resistance in Reunion Island. **We explore below a series of notions that form the "philosophy" of the MCUR' project.** We propose and suggest a methodology that provides grounds for the project of a postcolonial museum of the living present. **The identified goal of the MCUR** requires adopting and adapting notions to the Reunionese situation, taking stock of advances in critical theory. How can slavery, the system of indentured work,

and colonialism be visually represented? **How can creolization processes be represented, performed, visualized?** How can the physical, human, economic and political constraints that shaped the island of Reunion and its inhabitants be staged? How can a culture arisen from constant contributions of waves of voluntary or forced migrations to a territory where there was no first, pre-colonial culture be visualized? How can the struggle against a colonial system backed by brutality, force and contempt, be told? That is, what *visual forms* are there for showing the life and cultural practices of a slave, a **Marron**, a **Libre**, a master, an indentured worker, an anti-colonial dissenter ? What *visual forms* are there for representing the everyday life of a small planter, a docker, a washerwoman, a female civil servant...? What is a museum without "objects"? What is the status of the immaterial archive in a world of colonial archives? **These questions framed our reflection** and we drew our conclusions from works in the past twenty years on museums, postcoloniality, the politics and poetics of representations and visual theory.

REFIGURING THE MUSEUM

36

The MCUR's ambition is not to be a museum according to the strict and precise rules decreed by the *Direction des Musées de France* (Direction of the Museums of France) i.e. a museum is a "collection of artifacts" (objects). Its first aim is not to collect items, preserve them or exhibit them. It will not be a museum in the traditional sense, but a museum of the living present, a museum of history and culture, a museum of civilization.

Museums can be grouped in the following categories:

Museums where the works of an artist are exhibited (Musée Picasso, Van Gogh Museum)

Museums (or Foundations) of a patron (Gulbenkian, Getty Foundations)

Thematic museums (museums of ethnology, natural history, archeology, contemporary art, and more recently historical or political themes like the Museum of Apartheid, Museum of the Quai Branly, Museum of the Holocaust)

Ecomuseums

However, in recent years, cultural sites in France have adopted the appellation "museum" even though their mission and role cannot be said to follow the definition laid out by the 2002 Law about the museum. Thus, the *Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration* scheduled to open in 2006 is said to be "a national museum, a site of discovery, exhibitions and living culture and the bridgehead of a national and international network." The MCUR inscribes itself in this movement of museums of ideas, interpretations, history and culture. Michel Colardelle, of the *Musée des civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée*, has argued that these museums have for objective to "testify of culture in all its expressions, that of peoples rather than of elites and of the State." The "issues and questions of contemporary society are at the heart of their preoccupations," he adds. The museum is no longer a space for dead cultures, pretending to represent "truth" or marketing themselves as "heritage" sites and theme parks, it can be a space for social change, a transformative space where stereotypes are countered and alternative narratives discussed and suggested. In summary, the MCUR is neither a museum in the strict legal sense, nor an eco-museum because if the latter looks at the material and immaterial relations between

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humans, territory and culture, it does not situate them in relation with areas of civilization which contributed to give birth to these relations.

In Reunion we have to invent a space that does not fossilize history or memory, that remains open toward revisions and reinterpretations, that shows creolization processes and practices while restoring the spaces and histories that led up to this creolization. The spirit is that of a non-linear interpretation where the viewer is invited to “dialogue” with what she sees, where she is able to suggest other meanings for things and events. Reunionese anthropology, history, and culture offer so many layers of intersecting meanings that clash and connect that it is impossible to extract a homogeneous narration that would draw a straight line from A to B. Meeting this challenge by juxtaposing spaces of signification is another evasive device, since handling the heterogeneous and the polyvocal requires thinking about the space of the presentation as much as about the presentation itself. This exigency does not concern the MCUR alone, yet before undertaking a program we still have to conceive this space in connection with its environment and its content. *Its environment*, since it is impossible to “represent” creolization without talking about the physical territory (mountains, ocean, plains, rivers, fields, towns), its constraints (cyclones, fragility of the soil, steep slopes) and its influence on the imaginary. *Its content*, because the challenge is to present intersecting stories and views, never letting one of the terms prevail yet nonetheless giving meaning.

The MCUR could well commission a collection or envisage buying a collection from other museums, but its exhibition areas’ principal concern is to offer *new interpretations* of the ongoing process of cultural diversity on the island (the movement between native civilizations and Reunionese unity). Classical museography offered a linear didactic interpretation where the work was explicated by a text, following a strict logic, apparently neutral and objective. In the past twenty years this procedure has been challenged. The MCUR will profit by these advances (Museum of

Quebec, Museum of Apartheid in Johannesburg, Museum of Grenoble, installations at the Johannesburg Biennial, Dakar Biennale...). The MCUR wants to provide the public with very diversified and complex information and to give it time for reflection, to spawn a movement of curiosity, a desire “to know more”, while providing surprise, emotion and enjoyment.

Notwithstanding, the MCUR cannot do without a reflection on the *issues of a museum of the present time*, a space that must display episodes where violence, brutality and poverty prevail, without becoming a space of expiation. Who decides what is represented? We have few examples of visual representation of Reunion’s culture and history to examine, analyze, counter or challenge. Reunion’s culture did not even belong to the infamous genre of “primitivism.” At Colonial Exhibitions, the island’s culture and history were shown through goods (sugar, coffee) or through the *Creole art de vivre*, an imagined gentle way of life in the colony, masking its brutality. French universalism invented an abstract esthetics to refigure the empire, which concealed social and historical context. Rather than looking at what had been done, we concluded that it is by *starting from the present* that another future can be imagined.

The MCUR has to solve a difficulty: how to show extremely different civilizations at very different periods of their respective historical trajectories *and* their translation on Reunion. These civilizations arrived in the form of *traces*, and were further altered during creolization. The creolized traces will be represented not only by material testimonies but also by mechanisms we have to invent that will render tangible and intelligible the contexts in which they were created, the finalities and functions that had been assigned to them and the meaning attached to them.

Philippe Descola, Professor at the Collège de France, member of the Board of the Museum of Quai Branly, raised a series of questions which resonate with our project:



How can we break the rigidity of the conventional divisions in cultural areas, furthermore considered at very different historical depths depending on the regions?

How can we help grasp the influences, the diffusion of ideas and objects, the manifold hybridizations triggered by migrations, colonizations and proselyte movements?

Last, how can we account for the variability of cultural responses to questions all societies ask themselves and how can we help to grasp guidelines in the way humankind confronts the problem of death, of survival, of exchange and authority? ¹



The tale of social struggle on Reunion, of the diffusion of ideas and objects, the manifold hybridizations triggered by migrations, colonization and social and political movements entails thinking about their representations. The problem, we know, is no longer about 'adequate' representation but about representation itself. The MCUR wishes to offer a highly innovative conception of space in terms of both scientific and organizational systems. All this has led the MCUR's study group to imagine a *postcolonial museography* for a society still undergoing a process of creolization.

Under the pressure of anti-colonial criticism, then of postcolonial criticism, a great many museums reappraised scenography, museology and museography. In Europe, a museum sought to be the space where *one* institutionalized version of the past as a common memory was shown (Rouso, 2003). It was an institution for the elite, ratifying certain forms of cultural expression and asserting certain interpretations. The *Musée des Colonies* that became the *Musée des Arts Océaniens et Africains* (closed now and whose collections will be shown in the future Musée du Quai Branly) was created to celebrate the French civilizing mission. The inhabitants of the colonies, their cultures, their customs were presented not as intrinsic creations but as part of a vast colonial project, illustrating France's role as benefactor. In such a scenography the visitor was reassured by a vision of hierarchized civilizations, a biologizing vision, influenced by raciology (Antze & Lambek, 1996; Bal, Crewe & Spitzer, 1999; Coombes, 1994, 2003; Huyssen, 1994, 2003). To represent non-European cultures, the ethnographic museum model held sway for a long time, with its tendency to fossilize categories and differences. Ethnology and anthropology were formed with the intent of establishing the inventory of social formations by collecting, describing, classifying. Ethnography analyzed, compared, theorized. These two disciplines were under the influence of the prevailing twentieth-century scientific view that qualified non-European peoples as "primitive", ignoring the diversity of cultures, appraising the Other by their own standards. For a long time

1. Introduction, Information Day at the museum of the Quai Branly, June 27th 2001, Collège de France.

anthropology spoke in the name of peoples and civilizations, it assumed the right to explain these peoples to themselves, organized their archives, built the *colonial library* to follow the expression of the African philosopher Valentin Mudimbe. In the name of “state and nation building”, postcolonial states imported the model of the national museum where a *single* representation of the nation was imposed. Diversity was erased, scenography devoid of imagination, and interpretation of history linear.

4 2

Critical work has been done, to which the MCUR can turn. It is clear though that it will not attempt to truly, authentically represent the past, an impossible task as the past is a country that has become foreign to us [Lowenthal, 1985].

A new approach has arisen in recent years inspired by the critical work of exhibition curators, anthropologists and ethnologists. In Africa, Australia Europe, Latin America and Asia, a reformulation of the museum’s content has occurred. The museum is refigured, its role and function debated and revised. It can now be conceived as a cultural space where experimentations with truth are developed and new strategies of representation deployed.

Philippe Dubé of the University of Laval, Quebec, in his paper “*About cultural transmission compared to experience*” at the symposium *Mémoires*, Museum of Civilization of Quebec (2003), explained:

“

Today we rush to name everything and that makes us invent neologisms, especially in the vast field of studies on culture. Mediology and museology increasingly appear to be new fields seeking to pierce the “mystery of culture”. Now, with their contribution, we tend to believe that regarding cultural transmission, we should focus on the means that allow it to happen. Among these, the museum is identified as one of the vehicles of culture *par excellence* that works on the long term allowing to link culturally the sequence of generations that time separates. There is a sort of unanimity about this, the museum acts as a powerful and solid vehicle of the cultural legacy... The museum is viewed here as one of the new kinds of media ... From that point of view, the recent experience of Canadian museums contributes new material with the development of the dialogical dimension of the museum.

4 3

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This *dialogical dimension* is central, and the work accomplished by local associations and by the *Association pour la Maison des Civilisations et de l'Unité Réunionnaise* (AMCUR) on the *cultural and social memories* in Reunion is an introduction to such a dialogue. Not far from Reunion, in South Africa, museums had to reexamine their role after apartheid ended. Critics pointed out the Eurocentrism of what constituted the 'national patrimony' (in 1993, less than 1% of the 400 sites registered as national monuments had anything to do with the pre-colonial past. Davison, 1998). The need to tell *hidden stories* that had been denied, deformed or suppressed under apartheid led to a democratization of museum institutions. The transformation of Robben Island into a place of remembrance, the creation of the Museum of Apartheid, the District Six Museum (the multicultural district of Cape Town torn down in 1982 by the apartheid regime), provided the opportunity to examine the following questions: what content, what architecture, what scenography can meet the combined need to represent an event in the most faithful way and to build an attractive place? The exhibitions "The Black Atlantic" (Berlin, 2004), "Europe Unpacked" (Rotterdam, 2002), "Alors la Chine?" (Beaubourg, 2003), the Johannesburg Biennial in 2000, Documenta 11 (Kassel, 2003) also constitute examples of the effort to refigure the museum.

4 4

In Reunion we had to reappraise the "museum" institution and take into consideration the absence of a reflection on museums and an economy of catching up and of urgency. The museum has been deeply connected to the imperial project and its "mission to civilize". When Reunion was still a colony, two museums were created, the Museum of Natural History, whose role was to describe 'natural history' in the colony, masking the cultural construction of "nature" and especially its history in the empire, and the Musée Léon Dierx, which housed a small part of Ambroise Vollard's collection on modern art (Vollard was a Reunionese who collected modern art at the end of the nineteenth century). Neither museum was visited by the Reunionese public until very recently, and both were conceived very traditionally, mimicking museums of the colonial metropole.

In the 1980s, under the new cultural policy launched by the Socialist government, their curators sought to interest a larger public in their collections, but the history of the museum in Reunion and its relation with the colonial project remained unexplored. New museums have been built: Maison du Volcan (exhibition on the volcano), Stella Matutina (exhibition on the sugar industry in a renovated sugar cane factory), and two small eco-museums at Cilaos and Hell Bourg on the colonization of these remote mountains by maroons and poor whites. However, there was no theoretical debate on how objects were framed, presented and reified by the discursive practices of art history, history and ethnography. How knowledge was packaged and objectified was not analyzed. The museum appeared as a 'natural' site of representation. The modes of explaining, the legitimization of the 'reality' of history and of a single interpretation, did not become a topic for debates. It is not fully surprising since the debate on colonial culture and representation has barely started in France proper which has yet to engage in a rereading of its colonial past, its representations and narrative (Blanchard et al., 2002, 2003, 2004; Bancel, Blanchard and Vergès, 2004). In Reunion, the debate is currently starting but it is hindered by the rhetoric and economy of catching up.

4 5

The demand to catch up and its vocabulary stemmed from anti-colonial struggles and the discourse of progress. They were based on an acknowledgment of the wretched condition of the infrastructures, non-application of labor legislation, extremely brutal employers, racist schools and churches, malnutrition... In 1946, Aimé Césaire, Raymond Vergès and Léon de Lepervenche denounced "the state of neglect of the population" and the rule of the colonial oligarchy and its henchmen during the debate on the end of the colonial status at the National Assembly. Equality was the key notion in the struggle for social and political emancipation. This notion, arisen from the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, assumed a special dimension in the colonies where inequality was an organizational principle based on race. The demand for emancipation was a demand for social equality (application of the social and labor legislation)

and for civil rights (end of electoral fraud, of censorship and repression). It was expressed as well as a demand to catch up, and the anti-colonial movement was the first to emphasize its urgency. In the 1960s, under the pressure of unrest, the State adopted the expression “catching up”, adapting it in its own way. Since then that notion and its representations have become the framework and central issue of public discussion. The economy of making up for lost time met several demands, of the State, of elected representatives, of the population. In just a few years “providing” became the key issue. The gap between the different worlds in Reunion —haves and have-nots, those who have a permanent job and those who have a temporary one, those who work and those who do not—, the legacy of a colonial system, a deeply unequal development, all this legitimated a policy of “catching up”. However, the notion has also blocked us inside a rhetoric of urgency.

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The catching-up rhetoric and policy in Reunion has led to developing infrastructures. That phase is endless by definition since new needs always arise and what we have to catch up with is always way beyond, as “France” is the goal to reach. Any statistics is always presented with respect to France as if the latter were by nature the model to emulate. This raises the question of *what* we have to catch up with and *how*. Yet catching-up economy cannot do without a reflection on policy, time and place, tools and strategies. Research on Reunion being in infancy or still framed by a West-centered methodology, it has not yet provided enough conceptual tools and a methodology for a postcolonial analysis. Reunion has borrowed models that were not necessarily appropriate, and notions, concepts that it did not necessarily seek to adapt. There are scores of examples of poorly-designed and poorly-made infrastructures, from a sanatorium with its Sunless solarium (sic!) because the architect forgot it was in the tropics, to schools without ventilation because they are built like in France even though Reunion does not have the same kind of winter...The need to catch up also began to serve consumerism. We are told we have to possess goods “like in France.” The case of the automobile is the most symptomatic. When on an island of 750.000 inhabitants, 300.000 cars travel a perimeter of

250 Kms because there is no systematic and efficient public transportation policy worthy of that name (which ought to have been part of a catching-up policy), one can easily see the perverse misuse of that type of economy. Since the notions of catching up and urgency lie behind every discussion, culture has been caught up in them as well. The economy of urgency, its vocabulary, strategies and representations, demand immediate action without too much thought about what has caused the state of emergency. There is undoubtedly urgency, so action appears legitimate. Yet urgency imposes a policy that does not take into account the complexity of situations, nor analyze historical and social conditions that brought about, produced the urgency, and finally does not seek alternative solutions, and never seeks to foresee the future, the consequences of current decisions. Urgency forces us to set aside a critical approach. But suspending judgment and criticism removes politics and esthetics from the debate that is then entirely taken over by social issues. If my roof leaks repairing it is urgent, but does that mean I have to keep myself from thinking about how the house has been built?

4 7

The 1946 demand for social equality assailed a brutal and repressive colonialism, but did not take culture into consideration. Its limits soon became apparent, because culture is a field where the stakes are economic and political as well. The demand for social equality opened new fields of protest, expressed in the 1960s by a critical approach to the colonial policy with respect to culture: mimetic reproduction of the model of a certain France, denial of the language, contempt for non-Catholic religions, folklorization or negation of popular expressions, rewriting of history canceling non-European contributions, racism, paternalism, mediocrity of public cultural productions. A movement for the assertion of the Creole language, of Reunionese history and culture invested the public sphere. It was a turning point. But the field of culture did not elude the catching-up principle. Gradually the demand for infrastructures prevailed over the demand for content and esthetic elaborations. Cultural action has only too often been confused with entertainment. Towns encourage petty bourgeois prettifying,

supposedly picturesque, to the detriment of reappraised and historicized esthetics. A neo-Creole style has been invented and sold for consumption. Besides, the legitimate demand for historical recognition leads to a race to build monuments without thinking about their esthetics and function. Obviously the monument comes to fill a lack of representation and recognition and replaces a missing archive. The monument is a form of recognition of presence and filiation in the public space. Commemorating the ancestor or the longing for an ancestor, it gives meaning to present existence. Lately the accumulation of stelae, statues, busts, at traffic circles, crossings, and places of remembrance proves the need to situate history on the territory and raise a pantheon of great men (and women?) that are missing in the colonial archive. Yet we must not forget that the relationship with the monument can be passive or exemplary. The monument fossilizes the interpretation of history by replacing the document which instead lends itself to reinterpretation. These remarks also concern the commemorative practice when commemoration replaces the effort of remembrance or the work of history. The catching-up economy leads to a gap between the throngs of places, infrastructures, offers and the vagueness, the haziness of the theoretical approach. Thus the MCUR posits itself as a place to propose and boost a transversal reflection with artists, cultural workers, social workers, elected officials and representatives of associations on the concerned infrastructures and institutions as well as suggesting forming a common perspective to question the policy of urgency inevitably produced by the catching-up economy.

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Catching-up rhetoric induces to forget historical complexities and legacies. Owing to colonial history, that lasted officially up to 1946, owing to a certain amount of denials including during the contemporary period, the issues of remembrance or memory are essential in Reunion insofar as they question the dominant story, personal or group stories, ideological or fanciful reconstructions, the desire for roots or genealogies... One cannot talk about remembrance and heritage without replacing them within the frame of heritage and debt.

HERITAGE, DEBT AND CHOICE

The highly contested notion of “heritage” ought to be clarified. The challenge, as the historian Henry Rousso has written, is to “allow the actors of the present to appropriate a past that is theirs only because inherited, that opens onto the future and as much as possible avoids dwelling hopelessly on what once was and will no longer be” (Rousso, 2003). Heritage has to do with the remembrance of the past in the present. In other words, putting the past in the present is that essential operation of memory that Paul Ricoeur defined with Saint Augustine as the “present of the past”. Bernard Stiegler, Director of the IRCAM (*Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique*), recalls that by the notion of heritage, the “constitution of an ‘us’ is posed as a question, insofar as a ‘we’ is always the heritage of a past” (Stiegler, 2003). What does ‘we’ mean? What is this ‘we’? How can we present a common heritage of a ‘we’ that is shaped but not fossilized, because if it were, then heritage could be a pretext for the closing of this ‘we’? In Reunion this is a particularly important question. There are at once *several pasts* (those of the different groups that shaped the population) and *a past*. But this is a widespread condition. What is special for Reunion, like for many territories that were colonized, is that the construction of what Paul Ricoeur has called a *récit partagé*, a *shared story*, was postponed, prevented by the colonial power. Its construction is now under way and the development of this shared story should not deny the singular memories of individuals and groups but propose a shared space for living together.

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As Jacques Derrida observed, heritage is something we receive without being able to choose. You might say heritage “chooses” us. However, nothing forces us to preserve this heritage as it is. That would mean making heritage a prison, trapping ourselves in a genealogy we would not be allowed to transgress. We have *heritages*. We inherited both the systems of thinking and practices of bonded and indentured work, of colonialism, along with the ideals and practices of anti-slavery, the Enlightenment and anti-colonialism. We are heirs to various civilizations —African, Malagasy,

Indian, European, Asian—, heirs to various religious and cultural beliefs and practices. These different heritages that merged and dissociated from one another, did not remain static over the centuries: they were creolized. Some aspects were lost, others were transformed. We created new ones. We have forgotten or reinvented their origins. Over the centuries new traditions have appeared, new practices, new beliefs, and that impetus is still under way. We will not favor *one* ancestor among *our* multiple ancestors, or *one* heritage among *our* multiple heritages.

The goal of the MCUR is not to set off searching for lost origins, trying to restore an authenticity which is imaginary, to defend a nostalgia that “things used to be better”. Every culture has to be dynamic, adaptable, show flexibility and openness, not fear transformation, new ideas and practices, while still preserving what should be preserved. There is nothing in our heritages, no matter how painful they are, that gives us the right to claim a moral superiority; nothing in our heritages that deprives us of the right to claim we are different.

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Here is where the question of the debt owed to those who came before us and those who will come after us arises. What should be preserved? How? Why? Confronted with heritage, one often has an impulse: to preserve, reassert, defend. Preserve from forgetfulness, from denial, from the policies of silence and amnesia set up by the authorities who seek to impose *one* story, *one* tradition. Reassert what happened. Defend heritages because they gave rise to stories, myths, because they constitute landmarks that we need. But we also need to choose because everything is not worth being preserved, because we have to preserve and reassert but without melancholy, without nostalgia. We have to *reinterpret our heritages, subject them to a critical appraisal*, so that something new can happen, that is, history. We do not have to *be victims of our heritage, but reclaim it from a critical position to be able to pass it on*. We have to give meaning to our heritages, to be active heirs, because to quote René Char, “No testament precedes our heritage”.

MUSEUM AND THE EXHIBITION OF CULTURES

The exhibition space has to take into account Western anthropology’s “bad conscience” but its critical advances as well. Postcolonial critics’ works cast light on the difficulties and issues connected with exhibiting a history and a culture. Most of the museums of the “South” imitated European museums in their most conservative aspects: rows of items, wax figures, “tableaux” of “scenes from life”. These are often places local populations completely ignore, at the best places where tourists and school-children are dragged, at the worst empty, dusty places. Recent approaches are not always much more reassuring. Indeed the cultural industry integrated this criticism but by recording the cultural difference in terms of fixed, rigid distinctions, in an interpretation marking contrasts and oppositions and neglecting unity, what art historian Sarat Maharaj has called *multicultural managerialism*. The exhibition space then does not throw light on paths of encounter, transversality and exchange but on separate identities (a sort of *soft* apartheid), turning difference into a consumer item.

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The merchandizing of the difference (when the difference becomes a mere commodity denying the place, the history it arises from —look at the Native-American doll that tells nothing about the context: genocide, exoticism) is very wide-spread today. It meets the needs of an international middle-class and those of a tourist industry that invents, creates new destinations so that the desire to travel, to discover does not wear out, but without for that thinking about the asymmetry of the situations. Cultural difference is now a part of an economy that needs to increasingly extend its range of action. As soon as they are discovered, spaces, artifacts, images become a part of the consumer economy. The popularity of shops featuring “ethnic items” testifies to the appetite for the “exotic”. There is no point in complaining and regretting a more “protected” past for this notion of protection is often an illusion: temples, libraries, artifacts destroyed and

peoples massacred speak of a violent past. Colonialism profoundly upset practices and brought about the creation of museums where the cultural difference was staged in a scenario featuring a retrograde scientism, (Blanchard *et al.* 2002). There is no need either to violently attack a tourist industry that provides employment and also allows to a certain extent, an encounter with the diversity of cultures. Instead we should undertake and pursue a reflection on the representation of cultural differences, receptive to international research and the Reunionese public's comments, and work with the local tourist industry, arts and crafts, in connection with cultural exchange.

G erard Collomb has pointed out that the museum, "having the responsibility to assemble, show and after all sanctify" a heritage that seeks to be "shared", tends to marginalize "cultural and linguistic heterogeneity" that contributes to the multiplication of "identitary constructions, sometimes competing and confronted" (1999). Two pitfalls that must be avoided: the illusion of a harmonious life and that of pure, protected origins. Postcolonial critique insists on the *transculturation* of forms and practices. Far from embracing the approach to multicultural managerialism, it seeks to represent lines of contact, exchange routes and trajectories, creolization, mixtures of memory traces. It insists on the need to visualize new maps of the past and the present where Europe does not speak in the name of others, does not shape their lives and territories.

The archive is not a talisman, nor a fetish, but a *document*. The archive is meaningful in its context, it is not "truth", it belongs to an entire social environment. Thus the notarized deed of the sale of a slave is meaningful when it is replaced in a social and historical framework; the deed itself is merely a notarized deed. Thus the *Code Noir* (Black Code) has to be presented in a context where what founds the law in France and Europe is explained, and put in perspective with other codes regulating slavery. It must not become a "sacred" text that cannot be discussed but a testimonial text on special laws, on the justification of exclusion. In this way it helps us understand what this state of

exception with respect to the French legislation meant for Reunion, and more broadly how this text is inscribed in the long history of special exclusionary laws up to current laws on foreigners, immigrants, refugees.

The MCUR should not be a *sanctuary* where "one" identity and history would be told despite a diversity of representation within Reunionese society, nor a space where meaning disappears because of overdoing mathematical fairness between several presences to the detriment of unity. In other words, the MCUR cannot strictly speaking be a space of reparation, or a space where a single story is imposed. Even if obviously there will be a dimension of reparation, it must not be a space devoted only to that because reparation cannot be the only framework for re-appropriation and reinterpretation. The notion of reparation has to remain dynamic and firmly turned to the future. It should not allow individuals to give themselves a righteous attitude in the name of their ancestors. Reparation, if we look at what happened in South Africa even with all its problems, has to be a part of an *ethics of responsibility*, meaning that the reparation of the damage done to the Reunionese people (system of bonded and indentured work, colonialism) will be associated more with coping with the present and building the future —what can we do to live together on this land our ancestors and parents left us, with dignity, respect for differences, and the goal of social justice?— than with the sacralization of a victimized past. This ethics of responsibility also means a reflection on Reunion's own complicities with crimes, as in Reunion's complicity with the colonization of Madagascar.

Reunionese are discussing proposals for the present and the future, and if the past shaped the present it did not freeze it: social action on the present, with a strong awareness of the remote and recent past, transforms the environment. There is no such thing as a permanently determined fate. However the notion of human action on the environment must not justify the notion of almightiness, opening the door to grandiose dreams based on the illusion that nature and man can be subjected to these dreams. In our conception we have to integrate physical constraints

and human, social and economic constraints —sudden population increase, often disorderly urbanization, agriculture neglectful of environmental issues, economic crisis, neo-liberal globalization ... The exhibition of these constraints must accompany the display of positive elements. The museum will insert Reunion in an ensemble, a network where the debate between democracy and cultural difference, between cultural diversity and economic development can be pursued.

To sum up the MCUR's *basic principles and stakes*:

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- _____ **A** museum where the diversity of cultural contributions and a developing unity are represented,
- _____ **A** museum where the physical environment is strongly present (the island shapes the people and is shaped by the people),
- _____ **A** space where the regional environment is represented in its interaction with the island and its population,
- _____ **A** space where the past is not shown as a condemnation ("there is nothing we can do about it") but as something contributing negatively and positively to the present,
- _____ **A** space where the visitor is invited to contribute to the reflection on the present and the future,
- _____ **A** space of dialogue where the visitor is active.

To sum up its *overall goals*:

_____ The MCUR will document culture in the broadest sense, that of peoples and not just that of the State or official culture or elites.

_____ The MCUR shall respond to the expectations of several publics: the Reunionese public by giving it back its cultural history, the non-Reunionese public by giving it the desire to learn about the civilization areas that contributed to the history of humankind and about an island that proved able to assemble so many differences.

_____ The MCUR shall put contemporary society and its questionings at the heart of its reflections.

_____ The MCUR shall be a place for a comparative approach to the civilizations of the inhabitants of the island that came from: Africa, Asia, islands of the Indian Ocean, and Europe. It shall help discover the ties connecting these spaces that first seem to be separated by great differences.

_____ The MCUR shall help discover a common belonging, be a place where new solidarities, new projects for society are produced. It shall help the Reunionese discover the solutions found by others societies faced with similar problems and challenges as theirs.

_____ The MCUR shall play a major role in improving civic life, in thinking about the territory, how to inhabit it and protect, safeguard it for future generations.

_____ The MCUR shall encourage curiosity and desire for knowledge, because no knowledge in the field of research in the social sciences, no artistic expression can be imposed as a unique truth, the source of intolerance and violence.

_____ The MCUR shall remain a space where learning is combined with leisure, reflection with play.

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REFIGURING THE OBJECT AND THE ARCHIVE

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Rather than looking for the lost object, trying to fill a gap, we started with the following challenge: “If there are no objects, how do we imagine a museum without objects?” It might be truer to say: the object cannot be central to the MCUR. We know how important it has been for non-Western countries to impose a new reading on the object so that the latter (African masks, Inuit sculptures, Aborigines’ paintings...) was seen as legitimate as a sculpture or painting by a European artist. The importance of that movement is still being tested. Yet, considering our own situation, we felt it was better to start with an *accepted absence*. No vernacular object before 1848 has survived and we wish to underline: there was *no* collection of testimonies of slaves after the abolition of slavery. No one (emancipated, abolitionists, writers...) thought of collecting oral testimonies of the freed slaves. The desire to forget and a policy of silence prevailed. The voices of 60 000 women, children and men were lost for the written archives. They survived in oral literature, songs, poetry, in police and trials reports, but no direct testimonies remained. Archeological work is in infancy and so many popular vestiges —cemeteries,

kalbanons housing slaves and *indentured workers*, popular neighborhoods, *boutik sinwa*...— have been destroyed or built over in recent years that it is doubtful we can recover much.

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Starting from an absence and a trace led to revisiting the notion of the object and then integrating what exists —the memory of the object, its reconstruction— within that approach. Thus, the object is treated as a trace whose meaning emerges from a *scape*, social, literary, imaginary, musical, techno, and landscape.

How can we represent, how can we perform, how can we *imagize* practices in a situation where available documents, archives, are for the most part those of “the Other” (visitor, colonizer) or the master; museography and museology were conceived in the West, imposing an exhibition model; the local public is very much suspicious of the museum, mainly perceived as a colonial technique of discipline; the situation of archive preservation in Reunion is tricky. On this last issue we have to point out a symptom: Reunion destroys or neglects its archives, abandons

them, loses them, disperses them, does not safeguard them. As for the State and its institutions, there has often been a deliberate policy of neglect if not destruction.

The role of the republican State was fundamental in the constitution of the archive in France, it took over that role from the Church and in creating the *Archives Nationales*, contributed to found the concept of Nation. The *colonial archive* played a role in the construction of the national archive, that of representing the greatness of the Republic in its self-proclaimed "civilizing mission". In this it made a discriminatory selection and eliminated the voices and views of the colonized population. The latter, as Michel Foucault pointed out regarding criminals and the insane in France, only appeared in police reports and notary accounts. They were represented and reinterpreted from a law-and-order point of view. The colonial archive told about the life of the *notables*, and by its rhetorical devices built stereotypes, the category of the anonymous, the voiceless, the cultureless, the knowledgeless. An entire humanity was banned from the colonial archive. Works and days, joy and grief, loves and sorrows, festivities and mournings, everything that forms the texture of a life vanished. Hence, an enormous job lies ahead. *An archeology of the archive, of the colonial discourse and its orders will exhume the murmur of voices, the texture of the lives of the anonymous from the dust of the colonial archive.*

Several attitudes can be observed about the archive. On the one hand the archives are simply missing. The ones that exist are often archives of shame, recollections of dehumanization and violence, often producing a desire for repression and even erasure of the trauma. On the other hand, since constituting the archive meets the desire to affirm a foundation (the kingdom, the nation, the people...) and since the colonial power prevented it, the symbolic relationship with the archive fails to work. How could it be otherwise since history was denied? More astonishing, even archives of social and political resistance movements are treated the

same way. It is surprisingly difficult to consult that type of archive even just thirty years later. This *archive sickness* can be explained by a lack of self-image, preference for orality, urgency of the present, but especially by the State's lack of determination to create an authentic archive policy in this island. Having said this, we recently observed an urge for archiving: individuals, parties, unions, associations actually deplore the disappearance, the scattering of their archives while wondering how to find a method of collection, preservation and valorization.

It is worthwhile investigating the notion of "anonymity", the lack of patronymics and its connection with the archive in Reunion. Only freedmen, that is, a minority, had a patronymic that inscribed them in a filiation and a genealogy. The great majority was deprived of this inscription. Genealogy and filiation were passed on orally but with lacunae, blanks, masks and re-elaborations. These breaks, these lacks surface in denials, in the obsessive quest for origins, filiations, ties: who is my mother? Who is my father? It recurs in appeals for a recourse, for help, addressed to the gods, to the powers that be. This is the ground in which the Reunionese individual and collective relationship is rooted.

The MCUR team is currently developing several methodological patterns for collecting the archive of a colony but above all wants to contribute to set up a Reunionese archive policy. The *postcolonial archive* is an archive of traces, of ghosts, of missing and anonymous persons.

Based on these remarks, the problem is how to account for cultural practices that are social practices passed down by words and gestures. We wish to avoid reification that turns everything into "tradition". Chérif Khaznadar, director of the *Maison des Cultures du Monde*, commenting Michel Leiris, questions: "How can we grasp what is in motion without risking to fossilize it?" How can we represent and showcase the non-material culture that is so important in Reunion?

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We, Reunionese: our ancestors came from Africa, from India, from Madagascar, from China, from France.

But nobody will make us choose one among our ancestors because we are as proud of those who came from Africa, as from India or France.

Yes, we are Reunionese, and our ancestors were whites, blacks, Malagasy, Indians, but we all live in our country; we are proud of being Reunionese and we demand that our dignity be respected in our own country.²

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REFIGURING MEMORY

Memories of groups and individuals are not organized in a linear pattern, they do not closely follow the chronology of events, but give them a denser meaning, marked by signs and signifiers. They are closely bound to the experience of groups and individuals whose fates intersect, whose memories overlap and clash with one another. The past returns and triggers controversies when traumatic events are disclosed. Memory is a social construction.

Memory is subject to be rewritten by the different groups. The conflict between remembrances, remembrances of the victims against those of the oppressors, remembrances of minorities, often leads to a competition as if *only one* memory had the status of truth. Certainly there are lacunary, diminished, marginalized memories, and we suffered from those lacunae and marginalizations. Yet it would be fruitless to indulge in a rivalry that erases the multiplicity of remembrances seeking to impose one predominant narrative. Reactions to a predominant narrative are too often the creation either of “too little” or “too much” memory, or of screen-like, compensatory memories.

2. Extract from **Paul Vergès' speech** in *Sucre amer*, Yann Le Masson, director, 1963.

There exist in Reunion remembrances that intersected, sometimes clashed, and sometimes ignored one another. The memory of a twenty-year-old woman who came from Gujarat in 1930 cannot be the same as that of a twenty-year-old man who came from Mozambique in 1930. That of a young woman working as a cleaning woman for the BUMIDOM (*Bureau Migrations des Départements d'Outremer*) in 1972, that of a young man working at the Citroen factory in 1974. The so-called “Creuse child” [Reunionese children sent in the 1960s to the French impoverished region of Creuse by the Direction of Social and Sanitary Action—to remove them from a ‘bad environment’, i.e. from poor families] does not have the same recollection of mainland France as the student who went to Montpellier. The little geranium planter and the construction worker. The woman working in the sugar cane field and the lower middle-class woman. The memory of the Reunionese “poilus” (World War I veterans) and of the men who joined up with Free France. That of an unemployed single mother and a married schoolteacher with children, the storekeeper and the company director... Remembrances are shaped by family history, cultural and religious environment and socio-economic history. But these singular memories do not prevent there being shared remembrances around culinary, religious rites and customs, around inter-generational transmission, social and political struggles, that transcend ethno-cultural differences, differences of sex and class... Individual, fragmented, local remembrances belong to a same place, Reunion, and meet in a common space. Nor should we forget the forgotten remembrances that, once they surface from oblivion, form new configurations and require altering the stories (thus, the current memories in making of the Malagasies and the Comorans in Reunion).

Memory is not history, it is not scientific. It is an individual or a group reconstruction of past events. It can spawn an abuse of memory, a “tyranny of memory” when the past prevents the present, weighs on it like a tombstone. The notion of *devoir de mémoire* (duty to remember)

can also produce excesses, preventing the *mourning process* and the *remembrance process*. The commemorative obsession that arises along with the duty to remember proposes a memorial model of history where conflicts and complexity are evacuated and replaced by a soothing memory erasing rough areas, dynamic and dialectic contradictions. Associating memory and justice can then help avoid this pitfall, since the contradictory debate in the space of justice shows the darker aspects of an event, and once justice is granted, a pacified memory can give way to the task of the historian who cannot be a judge. However, the museum is not *a court of justice* where history is on trial but a place where revision and rewriting in light of growing awareness can come about. Nor is the museum *a funerary monument* to glorify the dead but a place where the world bequeathed by the ancestors is presented. The scientific task of the historian, the anthropologist, the ethnologist, has its place in the MCUR but must not cover over the space of memories. It is possible to juxtapose the historic fact *and* its interpretation, its recollection by the group who experienced it. A fact: the Direction of social and sanitary action sends Reunionese children “for their own good” to the Creuse—dates, letters, reports—but the children’s and their parents’ testimonies restore the memorial trace. A fact: a slave ship unloads its cargo at Reunion—number of slaves, price—*and* the slave route restores a cultural trajectory. A fact: a group of Chinese arrive in 1890 *and* the trajectory restores both the social cultural life of the province they come from and their life once they reach the island.

To build a *shared narrative* we first must share these memories, let them be heard, then move on from collective memory to the task of history that allows to reinterpret the memory and prevent it from causing withdrawal, blindness and deafness to the grievances of others, from deploying screen-memories that mask the complexity of events, and give voice to the memories of those who have been forgotten, said to be voiceless.

REFIGURING MATERIAL &

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The material culture —the island itself, factories, fishing ports, docks, houses, forests, ruins, ravines, stations, sacred places— should be preserved, but the way this preservation is carried out should be discussed. Do we want to just save them from destruction? Turn them into tourist attractions? Give them back a social context? All that at once? We know what the transformation of a place, a building into a memorial site can lead to: it can lose its soul, become a consumer item.

The creation of the Museum of Robben Island in post-apartheid South Africa raised relevant questions for us: to whom does Robben Island belong? To the prisoners? To the Muslim community of Cape Town for whom the island was a pilgrimage site? How can its political dimension be preserved? When the number of visitors began to grow and the company in charge of the site wanted to open a shop, “The Original Robben Island Trading Store” with souvenirs and T-shirts, the former prisoners were upset at the idea the island was being turned into a commodity (Deacon, 1998). The project of a shop was rejected but the question remained: how can the site be preserved as a space of living remembrance and prevent its history from being erased? Can Robben Island be allowed to become a place where visitors come for a picnic without knowing anything about what it once was, a prison of

IMMATERIAL CULTURE

torture and exile? Even the fact of putting fresh paint on the walls, making the place “bearable” was criticized. Visitors could be induced to believe the place was not so bad after all...

In Reunion, the Stella Matutina Museum raises similar questions: nothing has been kept of the atmosphere of a sugar mill, the noise, the filth, the hierarchy, the struggles, the social relations, it has all been erased. The visitor learns how sugar was processed, who worked in the factory, but the space has been taken out of its social and cultural environment. True, the aim of the project was an industrial museum, but revised notions on the museology and museography of industrial sites enable us to analyze the limits and problems of a merely technical conception of industry. The train stations of Saint-Denis and of Saint-Pierre have also lost every historical and cultural reference, their social history has been evacuated. Most of the sugar factories have been dismantled, the sheds neglected or torn down, the fishing ports abandoned for marinas where there is no social life... Beyond a preservation that has become urgent, the following approach should guide our reflection: *context is essential for providing meaning*. Sugar cane as an object is meaningless, it is the entire world around it that gives it meaning for the island with its figures: slave, indentured worker, farm worker, planter, overseer, woman

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in the fields, servants in the homes of the factory manager, the factory engineer and its surrounding meaningful spaces: Chinese store, temple, church, factory manager's house. The *boutik sinwa* is a site of remembrance in that it was both a family place and a social place. We could quote many examples but what we mean to underscore is the relationship of memory/history/representation.

A reflection on buildings, industrial remnants, sites of popular memory, implies a reflection on the habitat and architecture. The vernacular architecture of the past is disappearing; what remains are popular "Creole" style houses built forty, fifty years ago, and houses of wealthy "**Grands blancs**" reminiscent of colonial houses the world over. *Bidonvilles* (shanty towns) with their particular organization of space (private vs. public, spaces for animals, for plants) have been torn down before visual and audio recording had been made on the lives of their inhabitants (there are a few notable exceptions). Popular neighborhoods have been gentrified.

The mutations and deep transformations of society, its need for housing and all the facilities that go with it (schools, day care centers, playgrounds, stores, movie theaters...) radically altered the landscape and lifestyles. The clash between these mutations and these needs led to the creation of the "lambrequin Creole house," a neo-Creole style. This invention of nostalgia produces theme park or folkloric town centers. The tension between modernization and nostalgia leads to a fictitious model of an illusory "Creole art de vivre", a desire to embellish the environment *and* a falling back on conventional forms. As a result, architects and planners either forgot or folklorized vernacular forms they were unable or unwilling to adjust to modern requirements. But they were equally unable to invent new forms, so they chose conventional

solutions. Where the Japanese architect Shigeru Ban pleaded for an architecture with simple materials but perceived differently, the Creole house in itself cannot be an architectural tradition; it cannot be transposed as it is, in the constraints and situations of the modern world. If the change from shantytown to social housing was hardly ever designed in a dialogue with the inhabitants, the time has come to reflect on the materials and forms of a third-millennium architecture in a densely populated island. The material culture world is caught between revised colonial forms (elite Creole architecture) and metropolitan urban models. The creation of new forms of habitat should be drawn from the encounter between vernacular inventions that allow for natural air conditioning and flow, a balanced relation between plants and housing and postmodern proposals.

The immaterial culture —In 2003, UNESCO, the Calbouste-Gulbenkian Foundation, the French Committee for UNESCO, the *Maison des Cultures du Monde* and the Assihal Forum Foundation held a seminar on immaterial culture. The *Agreement for the safeguard of the immaterial culture* defined "intangible cultural heritage" as the practices, representations and expressions, knowledges and skills that communities and groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as an integral part of their cultural identity.

Intangible culture refers to the following spheres:

- O**ral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle for the non-material cultural heritage;
- P**erforming arts;
- S**ocial practices, rituals and festive events;
- K**nowledges and practices concerning nature and the universe;
- S**kills pertaining to traditional crafts.

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The immaterial cultural heritage provides populations and communities with a sense of identity and continuity; the safeguarding of this heritage promotes, nurtures and favors the development of cultural diversity and creativity.³

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The Charter on the immaterial cultural heritage insists on the importance of sensitizing populations to this form of heritage so it can be preserved and passed on.

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The notion of immaterial culture, despite its problems, is of the utmost importance for Reunion since our material heritage mainly shows the lives of a very small part of the population: mansions, churches, temples, industrial relics of the sugar mills. Further, how can we “archive” and safeguard cuisine, ethno-medical skills, vernacular aesthetics, and all these expressions of a culture transmitted by gestures and passed on orally? Should we “showcase” them? Then these practices, these skills would lose what kept them alive, their link with live social practices. “Without human transmission, the [immaterial] culture disappears”, François-Pierre Le Souarnec argues in *Le patrimoine culturel immatériel* (2004). The preservation of the non-material heritage is bound to creation and not to “showcasing”.

At the conference on transcultural studies (University of Bremen, Sept. 2004) and the seminar “Place: Aesthetics, Politics, Poetics” (Institute for Romance Studies, London, Sept. 2004) where the MCUR project was

3. UNESCO, *Convention for the Safeguard of Intangible Cultural Heritage*, signed in Paris, 17 October 2003.

presented, the questions on memory, history, representation aroused lively discussions. Should an exhibition place be made a memorial? A space of reparation? How can conflicts be represented? In London, an Israeli architect spoke of the problems raised by the architecture for an exhibition place on the Israel-Palestine conflict: how can conflict be staged to allow reconciliation? In Bremen, we discussed the place of music and urban practices. For Reunion, urbanized very quickly and where the change in the habitat happened in just a few years, we have to pay attention to emerging cultural forms or to the way old traditions are reshaped in the new housing places. How does the funeral vigil happen? How do parents and children settle in? What have been the impacts of modernized housing on women's lives? To come back to the question of the immaterial culture, we must remember that all the practices where this culture is performed (carnivals, *Batay kok*, christenings, walking on fire, cuisine, wakes, performances...) are *social practices* that evolved and still do, and that immaterial culture is always connected to a material practice and localized site.

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The festival “Origines Contrôlées” at Toulouse (October 2004) endeavored to represent the bond between memory and civic awareness. “There are discriminations and they derive from our past and the way it was handled or hidden,” the organizers claim. To support their hypothesis, *Tactikcollectif*, the association that initiated the project, made a two-year survey in the city on the subject of immigrant memories. The replies could be grouped along three major axes: rediscovering “grandparents' history”, understanding who “we are”, changing the “viewpoint”. These major axes are the same as in Reunion: personal (singular history) and collective (the place in the city as a citizen) merge to suggest a new viewpoint and propose a common story. The physical territory of the island is recorded in the material and non-material culture: the island is a part and parcel of our culture.

The wealth of the Reunionese immaterial culture —*tisaneurs*, singers, tales, rituals, cuisine, gardens, customs, beliefs...— is unquestionable. Figures such as Le Rwa Kaf, **Gramoun** Baba, Gramoun Bébé, Firmin

Viry, **Granmoun** Lélé are known and respected as memory carriers. In the past few years, associations have been formed around concern for the preservation of memory and tradition. They are divided about what should be done and how to understand immaterial culture, either as vernacular knowledge, a space of nostalgia, or an opportunity to reconstruct tradition? These collection-gathering initiatives have uncovered several problems: the existence of a feeling of shame, the lack of publicly asserted pride that this vernacular knowledge is *knowledge*; and, too often when the knowledge was collected the source-people were not associated nor their contribution acknowledged. Hence a legitimate sense of not recognizing themselves in the restitution and of having been looted. Finally, the textual and visual collecting media (documentary films, DVD) often still lack conceptual tools for replacing knowledge and its expressions in a comparative and theoretical framework. Most of the time they are merely a description in words or images.

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Jean-Aimé Rakotoarisora, Director of the Museum of Antananarivo, in the seminar devoted to non-material culture organized by ICOM (International Council of Museums, 2004), has pointed out that the “methodology should essentially be founded on a real dialogue with the concerned communities, the only holders of this wealth”.

He added that if it is our duty to preserve vernacular heritage, we have to question our right to use it since

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The immaterial is one of the last ramparts of our respective communities against all the forms of aggression their leaders exposed them to, sometimes with the passive complicity of the international agencies supposed

to help them in their everyday life.

Do we have the right to deprive them of this protection?

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It is essential to understand that the collecting process for restitution threatens to transform the meanings of the items and practices often linked to the private, family or spiritual and sacred space.

During the Reunion Island Convention on Culture, October 2004, the participants in the “Heritage” workshop proposed drawing up the inventory of the material and non-material cultural heritage under these main headings:

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What should be intangible, that cannot be subject either to consumer or administrative logic because it appeals to the very foundations of history and the imaginary (toponymy, myths, legends, places);

What should be made accessible to the general public and could be introduced in the economic circuit (museums, cultural centers);

What could belong to the commercial circuit (crafts, ethno-medicine, etc.).

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These remarks led us to suggest the necessity of an intensive reflection proposing conceptual tools and a methodology for collecting vernacular knowledge and the training of collectors, photographers and documentary filmmakers, teaching them the most sophisticated methods.

The MCUR has already created an award, *Zarboutan Nout Kiltir*, (see annexes) that acknowledges the contribution of a woman or man to the preservation, creation, transmission and valorization of Reunionese immaterial culture. Georges Condominas has written that the live heritage is

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Myths and prayers, tales and legends, proverbs and maxims, magic formulas, songs, lullabies, poems, puns, riddles, gestures of rituals, ceremonies, unwritten plays, puppets, mime, traditional dances, martial arts, healers' and botanists' medicine, fishing and hunting skills, craftsmanship, all the oral space we are steeped in.

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The Creole language will be given a major role in the MCUR as an itinerary of a constantly vivified archive. It is the very space of a common heritage constantly enriched by practices and contributions. In the very heterogeneity presiding its formation, the Creole language necessarily bears the stamp of the languages, dreams, imaginaries that ruled over its birth, unconscious, underground, cryptic. But one way or another it surfaces in the everyday speech of exchange, in poetic speech, in the texts of the *ségas* and the *maloyas*, proverbs, puns, riddles. It indeed surfaces, but altered by encounters that shape the imaginary of the place; it surfaces in crossings and appropriations. A legend, *Granmer Kal*, was developed by blending myths from India, Madagascar, Africa, with the ongoing and changing popular oral traditions. This memory is linked to the slaves' fear of the master and his powers, a specific perception of the supernatural.

Creole language is alive and evolving. It is a *vector of knowledge about practices and imaginaries*. Singers, poets, storytellers, and all those who speak it *safeguard and transmit entire areas of the living Reunionese cultural world*, giving them the means to survive and develop. To contribute to its development, the MCUR endorses the creation of an Observatory of Creole languages. At the University of Aix-en-Provence as at the University of Reunion there are research laboratories in the Creole languages and socio-linguistics of Creole, but an authentic socio-linguistic survey of the uses and practices of contemporary Creole is lacking. This task would be performed by such an Observatory and the data would not only foster scientific research, but contribute to literary, musical, artistic creation sponsored by the MCUR as well.

Immaterial culture cannot be limited to memory or tradition. Next to past practices it is important to take into consideration new ones like hip hop, rap, contemporary dances, etc., the transformation of older existing practices (christenings, wakes, weddings, carnival...) and the creolization of imported practices (table manners, French cuisine, world music.).

REVISING THE NOTION OF CIVILIZATION

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The House of Civilizations' goal is to underscore that all the contributions from various continents were representative of areas of complex and hybrid civilizations, whether from Africa, Madagascar, Europe, or Dravidian and Muslim India [and that] we consider them all equal sources of enrichment.⁴

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The term “civilization” is a European invention and goes back to the eighteenth century. It expressed above all everything that had to do with city refinement, polished societies, a high level of culture. First used by the Physiocrats, it meant progress, reason. The sociologist Norbert Elias described the process of ‘civilization’ in Europe as that which drew a frontier between ‘civility’ and ‘brutality’, between bourgeois culture and feudal culture. As Europe presented itself as “civilized,” it was discovering “savages” and drawing a frontier between ‘civilized’ (Europeans) and ‘barbarians’ (all the non-Europeans). The notion of developmental phases of humanity arose —savagery, barbarism, civilization—, Europe having reached the final phase, and its mission being to bring the advantages of civilization to the rest of the world. A typology of ‘races’ made headway, and colonial exhibitions were the *mise en scène* of a hierarchy of civilizations. Europe saw itself as the only possessor of *modernity*, i.e. progress, reason, science versus magical thought, and it opposed modernity to *tradition* in which most societies were trapped. This approach prevailed until the end of World War I when Oswald Spengler proposed a more pessimistic view of the world: every civilization is inevitably fated to decline, he argued in *The Decline*

4. “Reunion at the crossroads of civilizations”, speech by Paul Vergès, September 1999.

of the West, (1918). These biological metaphors, either evolutionist (from savagery to civilization) or cyclical (life and death of civilizations) had a profound impact on the Western conception of civilization and culture, the latter often confused with the idea of civilization.

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Fernand Braudel, the historian of the *École des Annales*, rejected the cyclical vision. For him, a civilization was characterized both by its geography and its spaces, by the existence of a relatively homogeneous economic network and similar collective or shared mentalities (political, legal, religious norms...). Economy, politics and culture were interlocked in his conception of civilization. Braudel suggested the notion of "world-system" instead of "civilization". Scholars agree nowadays that it is fruitless to look for just one tradition. Each civilization was in touch with other ones. None of them were ever "pure". Hybridity, inter-culturality were always at work, more or less actively, but there are no societies without outer contacts. It is preferable to speak of "areas of civilization". At the 2003 congress of the *International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations*, the notion of "*mainstream civilizations*" was suggested. The main idea was that in every civilization there was conflict between different traditions, that no one civilization possesses modernity. In a same area of civilizations, one can observe multipolar configurations with shifting frontiers, integrating as much conflict as unity.

Recent studies therefore insist on the notion of *several modernities* and a decentralization of Europe. World history is no longer written

beginning with the European discoveries; hence Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Americas had to be situated in a broader and more complex history. A 1992 exhibition in Washington showed the state of Asian, African, and Oceanian civilizations at the same period, deconstructing the idea of Europe's centrality.

The MCUR adopts the concept of civilization as a cultural, historical, economic, political time-space with shifting frontiers. The civilizations from which are descended the inhabitants of Reunion are not closed, unchanging systems, and therefore spaces of nostalgic withdrawal, but rather dynamic spaces. Thus for slavery, it is important to show what were the social, cultural, economic and political organizations of the countries where the slaves were captured, in order to underscore the fact that they did not come from a "no place" without history or culture; the slave trade connected several systems, European bankers, African and Malagasy kingdoms, African, Arab and European slave trade networks; the slave trade created contact zones that made former contact zones overlap, those previously created by the trade of spices, slaves and other goods in the region; the deportation routes were also routes where cultures traveled; captives arrived with their own understanding of freedom and servitude and acted upon these beliefs which they adapted to new situations and ideas about freedom and servitude; slavery was a system with multiple ramifications that influence the financial, linguistic, imaginary and cultural world.

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MAPPING THE INDOCEANIC

The Indian Ocean is the oldest sea space humans shaped into an area of exchanges: it has a 5000-years history, when the Atlantic, as a space shaped by humans, is 500 years old and the Pacific 2000 years old. For the Malagasy historian Solofo Randrianja, the Indian Ocean:

“

contains several historical zones”, to borrow Fernand Braudel’s expression. At one time or other in the history of the rim, each civilization tried to exert control over the Ocean and the circulation of wares and men, therefore boosting decisive elements for the interpenetration of cultures. This process led to the formation of exchange networks that lasted several centuries. From a historical angle we should speak of globalizations that led to “regionalizations”

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CULTURAL SPACE

(Vergès, 2000). Randrianja claims that, between the fourth and the sixth century A.D.:

“

The southwest part of the Indian Ocean gradually entered a *time world* characterized and defined by one or more dominant poles. Control over communication and exchange networks was often a source of contest. Circulation within a world system was built on the basis of processes of polarization and tensions undergoing transformations.

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Its expanse, the many seas that form the Indian Ocean as well as their coasts make it, more than any other ocean, deserve the name of *crossroads of civilizations*, materialized by the existence of what the anthropologist Paul Ottino (1974a, 1974b) called *fringe civilizations* that thrived in various islands and archipelagos, a notion echoed by that of “contact zone” (Pratt, 1992).

The Indian Ocean connects six worlds: Eastern Asia, Southern Asia, the Muslim world, Africa, Europe and the islands. Arabs, Chinese, Malays and Indians shared the knowledge of seafaring across the ocean. Marco Polo pointed out that in the fifteenth century Chinese maps of Indian Ocean were far more accurate than European maps. In the tenth century the travels of the Chinese fleets to the eastern coasts of Africa constituted a nodal moment: up to thirteen ships each with 1000 men made the trip. Each ship had cabins, suites, bathrooms and toilets for the tradesmen, their wives and mistresses. The sailors grew vegetables, ginger and other food on board. There were astronomers, scholars, interpreters. These expeditions culminated with those of Zheng He, the great navigator of the Ming dynasty, just before the Forbidden City banned overseas travel. These contacts and exchanges mapped a trading space with its laws, rules, and sites of negotiation.

Exchanges between China, India and Africa preceded the arrival of Islam in the seventh century. The majority of the population on the Ocean shores converted to Islam, and a large amount of transoceanic trade

went under the control of Muslim merchants. The presence of Islam in East Africa led to the creation of the Swahili culture (early eleventh century). A trading capitalism was set up, with bank credit, accounting, organization of supply and demand, trading posts... Cosmopolitan cities arose (Barendse, 2002).

Kiri N. Chaudhuri, the Indian Ocean historian, insists on a long history that radically challenges the Eurocentric narrative of globalization and capitalism. "Capitalism as a commercial activity was widespread in the Indian Ocean" and migratory movements in India and China followed the developments of the economy, he has argued. There existed of course inequalities and tensions but the point here is to underline the existence of a cultural space with its ruptures and transformations. Europeans did nothing more than adopt the routes of production, exchange and finance. They did not create them but they sought to introduce commercial monopoly in a world based on free capitalistic exchange, and they speeded up and intensified the slave trade.

Randrianja wrote about current formations in the Indian Ocean:



Even today the Indian Ocean continues to contain the most important sea routes connecting the Middle East, Africa, Asia, with Europe and America. In particular a large part of crude oil and its by-products extracted from the wells in the Persian Gulf and Indonesia transit through it. *The Indoceanic space can be globally defined as the ensemble of continental and insular territories geographically connected to the Indian Ocean.*

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Thus the coastal or landlocked zones whose transit to the sea goes toward the Indian Ocean belong to this space. In the short span of time of the postcolonial era, will the intergovernmental organizations succeed in revitalizing the inter-islands links that the rise of nation-States contributed to weaken? Regarding the Indian Ocean area, the C.O.I. (Commission of the Indian Ocean), the S.A.D.C. (Southern African

Development Company) and the I.O.R.A.R.C. (Indian Ocean Rim Association of Regional Cooperation) are samples of these inter-state bodies that strive to formalize links that used to exist or that have to be invented. It is risky to claim these bodies arose *sui generis*. They were built up around points of convergence that do not only refer to material interests even if officially that is their claim. These *bodies are also cultural facts* because they inherited their shape from history. To a certain extent this explains *the multiplicity of groupings* that often overlap the same geographic realities several times. For the Indian Ocean region, the existence of the C.O.I. and the I.O.R.A.R.C. cannot merely be explained by the determination of certain States to assume leadership, which is true, but only in a short-term view of history.

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The historical study of this contact zone reveals the permanency of a regionalization in which geography, history and culture interact to give rise to an awareness and a reality beneficial to diasporas and institutions. These exchanges undergo external and internal evolutions in which we can observe the *formation of districts, recomposing new territorial shapes within globalization*. This region also experienced more than one globalization: that of pre-European empires, the one produced by slave trade and slavery, the one of European empires, each with its types of informal economy. Defined from this angle, the Indoceanic space no longer appears to be a homogeneous space, at least its potential homogeneousness disappears in the differences that characterise its components.

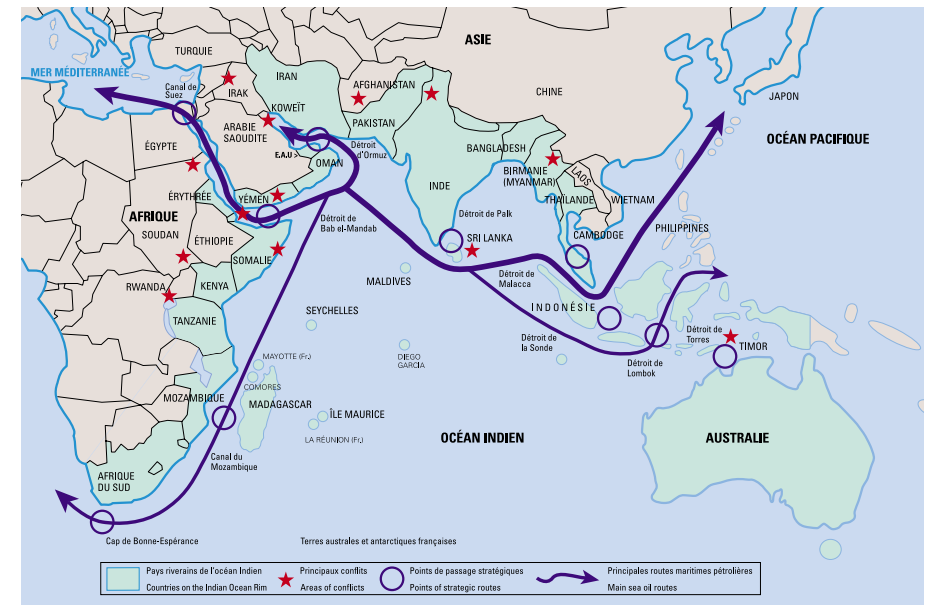
The Indian Ocean remains a *cultural space of encounters, conflicts and exchanges between areas of civilization*. It is up to the MCUR to represent the cartographies of these layered cultural areas that have been interacting for 5000 years. It is important to underscore that Reunion belongs to an oceanic space with a long history, to a cultural space of contacts and conflicts. Its population comes from these areas of civilization. Showing the existence of these networks before and since the arrival of Europeans helps replace the island in a broader, more complex space. The place of origin is not the place of lost purity. It is a place of culture, with a social, political and economic organization. The individual is a member of a group, whether it be of French villages, of villages of Mozambique, of southern China, southern India, western Madagascar... There are bits of Europe, Asia, and Africa... that meet and these bits and pieces of culture in contact with one another never remain intact. Nor is the native place the place of an elite: it would be reductive to represent India as the Mughal Court, France as the Court of Versailles... The native place is already a place of mixing and creation, crossed by resistance and tensions. History is always the history of interculturality, conflicts and exchanges.

The notion of *contact zone* is central: according to the definition of the anthropologist Mary-Louise Pratt, it is “a space of colonial encounters,

the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality and intractable conflict”. The MCUR will develop knowledge on a contact zone useful in thinking about globalization and its effects. Slave trade and slavery created a globalization and subsequent contact zones themselves interacting with previously created contact zones. Our own knowledge about the experience of globalization and contact can be said to be far-reaching.

The geographic map of the Indian Ocean today shows the flow of potential tensions, a reality Reunion cannot ignore.

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The Indian Ocean is a crossroad of flows of commerce, contacts and conflicts. Several are shown on this map.

FIGURING REUNIONESE

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How, are we, a people striving so hard to imitate others, indeed how, using the different origins of our population, are we to exalt, enrich, get to know and explore what some call their roots, yet prevent this cultural enrichment of our society from provoking centrifugal forces? How on the contrary can we enable it to contribute to exchange, coherency, the recognition of the equality of one and all, the originality of each and everyone's contribution, and prove that by doing so we have been able with our Reunionese creation to assimilate all these values, without being assimilated by one or the other of them?⁵

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UNITY

In the course of history, social and cultural antagonisms have been intense and encouraged by the colonial power. Yet at times movements arose that sought to overcome these antagonisms in the name of a common interest, as we see on the one hand in the unity of the labor movement and on the other in the cooperation between labor and peasant struggles around the sugar mills in the 1930s and the 1960s. The cultural movement of the 1970s also created conditions for unity around issues like language, cultural claims and the reinterpretation of history. Political parties have also been examples of a desire of unity around interests that go way beyond the narrow interests of a clan or ethno-religious groups. All this is evidence of aspirations to overcome reified antagonisms and contribute to developing a *shared Reunionese space*.

The political, cultural and social gains of the past thirty years have spawned new aspirations, enriching the content and forms of this unity, which has to take into account the cultural and religious diversity.

This *unity-in-becoming* requires a combination of research and practical actions that imply:

Historical research —reexamining the past to reinterpret it, to transform memory into history, to mourn the past and build a shared narrative;

5. Excerpt from Paul Vergès' speech, September 1999.

Sociological research, retracing the formation of social groups, the structuring of relations between men and women, inter-generational relations, transmission of taboos, networks, customs;

Anthropological research —anthropology of politics, anthropology of religions, of culture and society;

Philosophical research —philosophy of religions, of theories about life and death;

Research on the geographic, human and animal territory: what relations do the Reunionese have with their land, with nature?

Research on practices of solidarity within society, and between Reunion and the peoples of the region.

Unity in formation has to be backed up by an effort of self-criticism by the Reunionese. For a number of observers, social solidarity is currently at risk. Selfish individualism, fear of the Other, fear of change giving a sense of helplessness, consumerism as the goal of life, none of this would be conducive to new solidarities: “Why worry about my neighbor who cannot give me anything since he is in the same situation as I am (unemployed, poor...)? Each man in his own home, each man for himself. I don’t care what happens on the other side of the **baro**...”

The problems and anxieties of Reunionese society cannot be ignored. Yet we should also be able to identify the new voices, new expressions, new aspirations that prove the positive results of the cross-culturality

under way. Between an autistic optimism and a nostalgic pessimism we should find a middle path, receptive to the island and to the world. Saying “it was better before” expresses a failure to understand these mutations rather than a truth (“better before”: poverty, malnutrition, repression?). *Reunionese unity still remains to be built, but it does not start from nothing*. It rests on a long tradition of solidarity. In Reunion we are only too often prone to forget what was done by the women and men who came before us —magazines, associations, publications, struggles, artistic expressions... Speaking of a postcolonial era does not in the least mean forgetting the “colonial”, but the point is to pay attention to everything that is lasting inscription, transmission, safeguarded interest, to what reveals the *delay-effect* of the former situation (Balandier, 2003). Re-appropriation of the cultural, political, economic history of the island will contribute to the construction of unity, to the *re-appropriation of the island as a shared possession to be safeguarded, developed and passed on*.

Reunionese unity is a unity that keeps in sight the positive results of creolization as an inter-cultural practice. Reunionese society shall keep its capacity to integrate, transform, and assimilate what is brought to it and shall seek to avoid shaping a fossilized identity that produces Others so as to exclude them.

That is the meaning of the name *House* (Maison): the place itself is the space where this unity is built and continues to evolve.

REFIGURING THE PROCESSES OF CREOLIZATION

90 A series of notions have been suggested to describe the interaction of cultural processes and practices. W.E.B. Du Bois spoke of *dual consciousness*, the sense of always seeing oneself in the other's eye, perceiving one's existence gauged by contempt and pity. For Du Bois, this consciousness was tragic. To Frantz Fanon, the duality of the colonized person's psyche should not lead to the construction of a black consciousness, of a black identity. Quite the opposite. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, he argued that this claim was sterile and reactionary. Fanon affirmed that he was "a Man" and not a "Black" and called for a new humanism where none of the racialized categories would exist.

Postcolonial theory has sought to introduce greater complexity in the analysis of mixing; highly suspicious of binary oppositions, it insisted on in-betweenness, exchange, contact. The colonized person always speaks at least *two* languages, always knows at least *two* cultures, but often does not see this as a privilege since one of these two languages or cultures is marginalized, ignored, despised. Yet this richness must be re-appropriated. Multi-cultural, pluri-religious, métissage, hybridity, all these are Reunion's experience since the beginning of its history. What a Rushdie celebrates today, and yesterday a Gilberto Freyre, is our own

Reunionese experience: mixing, impurity. Fernando Ortiz spoke of transculturation, a "process whereby a new reality arises, transformed and complex, a reality that is not the mechanical sum of features nor even a mosaic, but something new, original and independent". In Reunion authors suggested calling it *Créolie* (Aubry), *batarsité* (Waro), *Banyan people* (Vergès, 1993), *zanbrokal people*. Behind the names a same reality is described, impure, moving.

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For Stuart Hall, the contact of cultures that produced creolization appeared in a well-defined space, the colonial space. On the one hand, cultural domination, appropriation and expropriation, a brutal break with the past, with a world that has been lost, a regime based on institutionalized racism and violence; on the other, métissage, a relation with history that differs from that of defined nations, stories based on exile, travel and the trauma of separation (2003).

Creolization refers to a dynamic process which comes about by forgetting, abandoning the illusion of authenticity and of entity of native cultures. All that is left of them are traces. The matrix of creolization was the slave system in the larger Indoceanic world. The human being was

subject to a series of traumas and violence that produced aphasia and amnesia. Studies in psychology that examined the effects of brutal violence on memory, speech and the ability to fully integrate this experience describe how out of self-protection human beings sometimes have to 'forget' their victimization, and how the facts are often remembered through morbid symptoms, depressive thoughts, nightmares.

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Seized and torn from his familiar world, forced to march to the port, sold to the traders, locked up in the hold of the ship; then the Middle Passage, another sale, the arrival at the plantation: each time the slave has to learn a new set of meanings while his own has collapsed. The slaving system was a machine the captive was put through to become a slave *and* the creolization process transformed him into a "Reunionese". He was no longer African, Malagasy, Indian, Malay. The newcomer had to adjust to an unfamiliar world where communication was broken off: what does that word mean? That gesture? How am I to understand this call? The process of creolization implied a constant effort at translation with its losses, betrayal and transformation of meanings. The slave was taught to be "Creole" by the slaves who were there before him, who were often suspicious of him since he represented a danger, for he did not yet know the ruses, the resistance practices, and his perceived naiveté in front of plantation rules as well as his refusal to adopt new practices could be a danger for those who had already built themselves a space, no matter how small. But these newcomers also played a positive role in the creolization process since they brought with them more lively traces (even if already adulterated) of traditions, languages and customs. They instilled new

life in culture, cuisine, religious practices. The same process occurred for each arriving group.

Creolization implies a revision of the notion of origin. Creolization should neither produce nostalgia nor a fiction of authenticity. It is both a very radical notion and one very hard to defend today. Radical because it challenges all the usual approaches to issues of identity that glorify roots, blood bonds, the immutability of references to identity. Hard to defend because our time either spawns processes of identity withdrawals, to which the notion of an identity subject to dynamic constants seems illusory, or glorifying an ahistorical flexibility of the Self. The first process leads one to withdraw into what one knows, into a re-enchantment of tradition, the second rests on the idea that one can live without bonds and connection. The creolization process is a dynamic of loss, of borrowing, a space of translation and the creation of something new that adds to the creolized culture but that will again be challenged by the next wave of slaves, of indentured workers, settlers, and currently, by immigrants from mainland France or the Comoros.

9 3

"Constraint shapes a particular receptivity in survivors, a flexibility in social practices, a mobility of the eye and perception, an aptitude to combine the most scattered elements", Serge Gruzinski writes. Reunionese culture comes from creolization practices where fragments of stories, memories of gestures, scattered knowledges merge with formerly creolized fragments. Creolization is not about permanent nomadism but about the possibility to borrow from unfamiliar practices, beliefs, ideas and the possibility to maintain the familiar.

REFIGURING IDENTITY

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This notion has become so important nowadays that it seems necessary to clarify the theoretical framework we adopted. The notion of the individual's identity as socially and politically neutral was the European answer to the definition of the subject. Labor, feminist, gay, queer, anti-colonial, psychoanalysis, postcolonial movements challenged this approach by reintroducing class, ethnic, cultural and gender differences. In Reunion the recent popularity of the notion highlights an urgency, that of inscribing one's presence on this island, of answering the question "who am I?" The fictitious narrative of Reunion society being of French culture has long been belied but it took years for counter-narratives to be allowed to be publicly debated. The debate around cultural identities was ideologized, if you dared to affirm you were not French, you were accused by the powers of being "anti-French," a "communalist," an enemy of universalism. French abstract universalism which had been in some instances taken up by the colonized to attack white colonial communalism—if 'men' are born equals, then we are your equals—, revealed its limits.

Built by the European imperialisms as radically different, the colonized world reexamined the radical "Otherness" in which it had been imprisoned by the colonial order. Among the first generation of francophone postcolonial critics, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi

insisted on the binary opposition that had imposed two overall categories: "colonizer" and "colonized", thereby erasing gender, ethnic, cultural and class differences. Latest sociology and psychology studies, cognizant of postcolonial theory, have been criticizing the theory of a reified, fixed identity (rooted in the soil, stock, blood) and advanced a series of proposals: identity is always a work in progress, never entirely achieved; it is a creative and performative act (you build yourself as a *Malbar, Kaf*, and so on); it is plural—*each identity is plural* because individuals see themselves as members of several units at the same time; it is subject to outside and/or centrifugal pressures (the effects of events on the reinforcing or weakening of identity). Natacha Gagné explains: "giving yourself an identity means translating into a homogeneous discourse a heterogeneous group of languages. So the discourse in which we pronounce our identity is a creative act" (2001).

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To Ulf Hannerz, identity and culture both refer to the practice of meaning, meaning which people create and that creates people as individuals and members of a society. The individual view of meaning in this case derives from an individual's insertion in different social networks, and culture derives from the network of all the individual views. In other words, *becoming Reunionese is a creative, performative act*. One could

become Reunionese by giving meaning to its practices —cultural creation— and these meanings would create the Reunionese individual, who only exists within social and cultural networks. An example: the child receives at birth and by rites a *personal and social* identity, she will grow up in these networks (family, quarter, boy and girl pals, beliefs) that will give her her identity and she will perform her identity by appropriating and giving meaning to what she experiences and does (“that’s the way you do if you are Reunionese”).

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The heterogeneity of Reunionese society raises the question of what founds shared identity. The lack of strong ethnic or national markers blurs the perception of identity in a world ruled by strong civilizational categories founded on *primordia*, language, skin color, ethnicity... How can “being Reunionese” be *imagized*? The questioning is multiplied by the minor and outlying situation of Reunion compared to larger, more powerful units such as the French State, the European Community, that each has the means to offer cultural ex-

pressions with a high added value. This results in a proneness to reinforce the signs of belonging to a community in order to ‘exist’ in the French ensemble by borrowing “visible” and recognizable categories either linked to ‘civilization’ (Chinese, Indian, European) or to “color” (Black, White). Yet, what many Reunionese display is their attachment to the Reunionese territory and shared practices. That is where the process of identification takes place, in this articulation of interlocking loyalties. Reunionese unity is not exclusive, it takes into account a shifting of articulations and tensions. It is its own diversity that is the very condition of Reunionese unity. Identity then is the performative practice through diverse practices that build the idea that one is Reunionese. Works by anthropologists on Reunion rituals and cultural practices have shown the importance the Reunionese give to processes of negotiation among different expressions and references (Pourchez, Nicaise,), because one cannot risk forgetting one ancestor, one deity.

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POSTCOLONIALITY IN REUNION

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Postcolonial scholars have repeatedly pointed out that the notion of postcoloniality is far from being a temporal marker (colony/independence) that would imply a historical chronology shaped by European colonization. It strives above all to indicate a mapping of powers, a division of space, to analyze the contradictions spawned by colonialism that come back in other forms and to which new ones are added.

Recent transformations imposed by a strong liberalization of the market and new forms of hegemonic power have required new tools of analysis. Postcolonial theory is exploring new situations: massive, accelerated migrations, social destructuring, resurfacing of policies where brutality and force are the rule, explosions of violence, single-voiced domination of the liberal market economy approach where everything is for consumption, everything is for sale... Postcolonial theory seeks to be trans-disciplinary, heedful of fringe expressions, "minorities", and new places of resistance (music, visual arts, urban cultures...), attentive to the new forms of power and exploitation, to new cartographies (emergence of new regions, of new exchange routes, of new cosmopolitan cities...). History cannot be linear, the Nation cannot be the supreme

referent, roots cannot be valorized and glorified when colonial power already inscribed displacement and exile, looting and predatory economy as its organizing principles.

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Postcolonial methodology provides notions that help to grasp the multifarious Reunionese world, notions borrowed from anthropology, sociology and psychoanalysis. We reject the tradition/modernity opposition, emphasize the interaction between the two fields, the *co-existence of traditions within modernity, just as the possibility of a modernity influenced by tradition*. Reunion has many such spaces of interaction, it is a land of mimicry, borrowing and creation and its society, far from being in conflict with its past as many observers would like us to believe, works on this past, hatches solutions. The field of ethno-therapy is especially exemplary of this "solution finding" (Pourchez, 2004). Traditions co-exist, are reinterpreted and a resolution negotiated temporarily for each situation requires new negotiations. The approach that seeks to invent tradition as the territory of a Reunionese authenticity where orality is opposed to writing, country to city, popular know-how to intellectual knowledge, woman as "mother" to "modern" woman, is reactionary. Soil,

orality, popular knowledge are representations, constructed approaches with strong ideological contents that can produce a sacralisation of the soil in Maurras' sense of the word, along with xenophobia, excluding all those, women or men, who are not seen as belonging to the close circle.

Reunion is in a postcolonial situation, because postcoloniality is not just national independence, or the end of a colonial status. Reunionese postcoloniality is a critical analytical approach leading to actions and practices of struggle and solidarity. It raises the question of citizenship, of a citizenship won through a long struggle, and challenges its normative conception, revealing its history of conflict and masked exclusion (workers, women, colonized deprived of civic and social rights). It raises the question of the colony's place and role in the development of the French national identity and republican doctrine, and of France's self-image. The colony participated in the French history, it was not a surplus or its unreasonable elsewhere. The colony shaped the very body of the Republic.

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Reunionese postcoloniality questions the discriminatory representations between ethno-cultural groups and the stereotyped representations of the Indian Ocean peoples and cultures. It proceeds to deconstruct the interpretation of history, by making slavery not just a historical period but an organizational structure of human relations that persists in social relations, imaginaries, relations to the land, to work, to time, to life. It analyzes new forms of brutality and violence under way in the new globalization era and suggests practices of solidarity with the groups and peoples subject to this violence. It is heedful of every contemporary form of artistic expression as well as the development and proliferation of media, bound to a new economy and industry of culture. Postcolonial method also helps to go beyond the issue of binary confrontation imposed by colonialism between colony and mainland. This does not mean denying the role of anti-colonialism, since as Gayatri Chakravorty points out, there are times when the first claim can only be the struggle of the "damned of the earth" and essentialism, a

political strategy. Postcolonial theory examines all the complex events appearing in Reunionese society without viewing them a priori as resulting from this sole binary confrontation. It considers local emergences, regional conflicts, and the interaction between various emergences.

Accordingly, the notion of flows is a central notion in our methodology. The anthropologist Alfred Kroeber early on insisted on "the exchange of cultural material between civilizations", observing that "no civilization is a static object, but is influenced by *flow* and exchange processes". Arjun Appadurai suggested analyzing the global economy in terms of "landscapes", landscapes of the media, of techniques, finance, images, ethnies (*ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, ideoscapes*). For Reunion this implies examining the civilizations of the countries of origin in their dynamics, their interaction with other civilizations. The cultures of the inhabitants of the eastern coast of Africa where a great number of slaves were captured were not fossilized cultures out of touch with other civilizations. The presence of Islam, exchanges between Madagascar and Africa spawned cultural transformations and exchanges. It will be essential to emphasize this aspect, the Reunionese public having been sensitive to the colonial view of Africa: a continent of tradition, catastrophe or animal reserves. There are no scholars of Africa at the University of Reunion, and in spite of travel stereotypes persist. The "African" is still a remote ancestor, and speaking of him has more to do with an emotional attitude or an ideologization than with the desire to discover the world where this ancestor lived and what the world of those who lived there is today.

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The notion of flows will be applied to the territory of Reunion, studying exchanges between different inland areas. It is fashionable to make the area of Mafate (a place in Reunion surrounded by high mountains, crossed by rivers and difficult to reach as there are no roads) an isolate whose study would reveal a world shielded for ages from mutations. The anecdote about people who have never seen the sea is used to represent this isolate. Of course it was isolated, but we should not overlook the

exchanges between Mafate and Cilaos, Mafate and Sans Souci, nor forget those between Mafate, Rivière des Galets and Le Port. Imposing a narrative on a space is an attempt to give one version of a story that cancels a reality to satisfy ideological imperatives. The exchanges between the inland areas of the island should be studied in their complexity. No space is a natural, perfect isolate.

The notion of flows is central because it counters the idea of a static world that was only influenced by the modern outside. Scholars of Africa like Igor Kopytoff or observers of contact zones like Renato Rosaldo and Robert Alvarez all underscore the porosity of boundaries, the ability to adjust, to improvise on behalf of groups without economic or political power. What the notion of flows seeks to underscore is this *trans-national trans-continental* aspect as opposed to a European thought that encourages the idea of an ethnicized, pure, unaltered national identity.

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In Reunion we often hear about the need to bring in people from outside because the Reunionese are said to be too withdrawn upon themselves. The outside is seen as a miracle solution for every ailment. It is out of the question to belittle the positive side of the “detour”, the encounter with something foreign, something unfamiliar. But idealizing the outside conceals a series of questions: Which outside? What is this outside that would cure the Reunionese of their ‘anxiety’?

And, what exactly is this “anxiety”? What are its causes? Is it the universal human anxiety? Is it “insular” anxiety? Is it purely psychological, or does it have historical sources as well? We claim we should look at Reunionese “anxiety” from different angles. Here is an island, which never “mattered” much to its colonial metropole that however hindered any attempt at autonomy. Here is a population at length deprived of rights, with a past of dehumanization, contempt, racism and violence, and a present of economic crisis with a high rate of unemployment.

What is exactly this outside that would cure us? For a long time, and even now, it has been France (“*la métropole*”). But which France was that? The France of feminist movements? Of labor movements? Of urban cultures? Of immigrants? Of intellectuals, artists, filmmakers, writers who renewed creation and thought? None of those, it was instead an immemorial, non-conflictual France. What is called *métropole* is a place without a history, without a culture, without a present. It is a fiction that does not take into consideration the regional diversity of hexagonal France, or the inequalities, differences between regions that compose the national ensemble, differences and inequalities that are the object of so many debates in France. The encounter between France and Reunion needs to be worked on, so that the French of the *métropole* learn something about Reunion and the Reunionese can present themselves as equal partners. These remarks lead us to a second question: What are the modalities enabling the outside/inside encounter to be productive? In recent years Reunion has received dozens and dozens of visits from France. Not a week goes by without a visit from someone from “over there”. Yet we still hear the reproach that the society is too insular. Why does the graft not take? It is surely because the space of the outside/inside encounter, far from being a space of encounter, is a space of unequal exchanges, even so far from being a space of encounter that suspicion prevails. Our assumption is that this lack can be explained by the Reunionese’s difficulty to re-appropriate their territory, and the place that the *métropole* has taken in the collective imaginary, produced by the media, the powers, and that has partly colonized the unconscious. The MCUR will strive to transform by restoring their place to the other civilization areas and replacing Reunion in its own regional space, in the European space to which it is connected, and to deconstruct “metropole’ in order to reconsider “France”.

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CULTURE, DEMOCRACY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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The MCUR intends to become a laboratory in which the connection between culture and economic development can be fostered, structured and discussed. The opposition between culture and economic and social needs is belied by many economists, including the Nobel-prize winner Amartya Sen. As the 2004 report of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) recalled: “If we want our world to attain the Millennial Objectives for development and at last eradicate poverty, it must begin by winning the challenge of learning how to build societies capable of integration that respect cultural diversities. Not just because the possibility for countries to really concentrate on other priorities such as economic growth, health and education of all citizens depend on it. But because allowing individuals to enjoy a full and complete cultural expression is in itself an important development objective.”

Culture “is not a fossilized ensemble of values and practices. It is constantly recreated, as the individuals question, adapt and redefine their values and practices according to changing realities and exchanges of ideas”. The UNDP experts are clear:

“

Another dimension of human development, difficult to measure and even to define, is vital: cultural freedom is essential for individuals to be able to live as they wish. Cultural freedom is one of the mainstays of human development. As a consequence we should seek to promote it specifically without being satisfied with advances in social, political and economic fields that are not sufficient to guarantee cultural freedom. Cultural freedom means giving individuals the freedom to choose their identities —and lead the lives they wish— without excluding other choices that are important for them (those relative to education, health or employment).

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The UNDP report studies all the development indicators and bears out that respect for cultural diversity does not threaten economic development but instead contributes to it, and that nothing opposes democracy, economic development and cultural diversity.

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Human development cannot just be measured in economic growth figures. Of course they are correlated, but the use of resources is just as important —are they used for developing weapons, building palaces or providing drinking water? Education, a life saved from epidemics, endemic disease, women's participation in the social and political life are all criteria of human development. Experts of the United Nations and the European Community, and even the World Bank (!), all pointed out that economic development cannot simply be measured by growth statistics. The 2003 report on human development, drafted for the UNDP by intellectuals from Arab countries, also clearly showed the connection between democracy, economic development and cultural openness. Institutions along with countless experts now have undertaken to criticize a purely economist approach to economic development. Their studies emphasize the inevitable relation between human development and economic development. Nobody lives by salaried work alone; each person to live needs to be integrated in a social and cultural network that gives meaning to her life.

Economic arguments against the MCUR project reveal a vision of social relations based on interest alone. Other criticisms demonstrate an approach of culture conceived as "old civilizations." Hence, the following

remark: "Is not the history of Reunion too young to be represented?" would mean that only "old cultures" deserve to have a museum. If this logic prevailed, African-Americans would not be allowed to have a museum, nor immigrants in France.

The prioritization of economic objectives is also opposed to the MCUR. "Is not the building of solar water-heaters, of schools, or devising policies to give work to the jobless more urgent than a museum?" This reveals again a peculiar understanding of economy and culture. The MCUR will contribute to economic development by encouraging cultural integration rather than assimilation. In a diversified society, democracy and equitable growth contribute to that integration but they are not enough. "Recognizing differences, supporting diversity and reducing the asymmetries of power", to borrow the conclusions of the UNDP 2004 report on human development, should be the mainstays of the MCUR's cultural and scientific program. In a society where the social situation is particularly worrisome and fraught with strong tensions: 100.000 unemployed for an active population of 300.000; already several generations of unemployed; 120.000 illiterates; 180.000 living off the RMI (welfare); 300.000 enrolled in the CMU (granted free medical assistance), a society confronted with serious disruptions in social bonds, the elaboration of solutions has to take into consideration the cultural, the social and the economy.

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Recent urban policies for the city of Johannesburg develop the relation between culture and economic development. During apartheid, the downtown area was reserved to Whites and business offices. As soon as apar-

theid ended, the downtown lost its business community and its offices were often barricaded and the few housing buildings were deserted while the sidewalks were thronged with a poor black population. The place was abandoned and stigmatized by the middle-class. Since then the Johannesburg city council has undertaken to renovate the downtown area, to bring back business and cultural life. To achieve this it turned to culture, that it did not just identify with facilities but with the creation and recovery of public places, the integration of marginal and informal economies, selling cigarettes, food stands, small businesses such as public photographers, hair stylists... (Bremner, 2004) The Faraday Muti Market built by Mphethi Morojele and Luyanda Mpahlwa, two young South-African architects, now accommodates the traditional ethno-medicines market hitherto relegated beside a freeway. The policy has begun to bear results: restaurants have opened, jazz clubs, theaters, recording studios, art galleries, business offices and housing buildings have been renovated to allow social, economic and cultural mixing; new small jobs have appeared.

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The MCUR's cultural project should have positive effects on economic development. Once history and culture have been re-appropriated and accepted, the individual can be freed from the most traumatizing aspect of the past, find its place in the world and look toward the future. Re-appropriation produces respect of the Other and the environment perceived as a shared possession to be preserved, protected and passed on. Re-appropriation induces a freeing of creative possibilities in the fields of art, research, crafts, and enterprise. Whereas the skill of Reunionese artisans is widely recognized, their creativity has tended to decline. To

be competitive on the national and international market, the arts-and-crafts professions need to renew their inspiration. This cannot come about without fruitful confrontation, and the latter becomes possible when there is an assured, accepted cultural base. The MCUR, by reinserting Reunionese history and culture in the long, rich history of the civilizations that spawned them, and putting Reunion in touch with contemporary creations in these areas will legitimize a wide range of references providing inspiration for creativity in fields such as architecture, arts and crafts. This culture-development synergy results in a qualitative development of economic and cultural products that should open a domestic and foreign market.

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The tourist industry raises challenging questions for developing countries: it creates jobs yet encourages inequalities and tends to enclose cultural difference in the theme park model. In Reunion, the island has until now been sold as an exotic place without history and its diversity reduced to a Benetton-like ad. Conscious of the challenge, the MCUR seeks to offer alternative ways to discover the island's history and culture. It will contribute to setting up a qualitative policy of training in the tourist profession, cultural mediation and management, and in cultural professions adapted to local needs.

A postcolonial museography integrates the remarks we made and seeks to shift the point of view, to help content arise where it is not expected. It represents the change of rhythm the event creates and that marks a new temporality. It shifts the gaze, displaces meaning, and offers new angles of vision and understanding.

Zorey Baro Batarsité Bonbon piman Boutik
sinwa Brèd Créolie Engagisme Gramoun
Kabar Kabardock Kalbanon Kaz Kine Kour
Ladilafé Malbar Malogé Maloya Marrons
Marsh dann fé Pilon Kalou Rice-cooker
Samoussa Séga Servis kabaré Servis kaf
Servis makwalé Shemin la vi Shemin la mor
Sirandane Tisaneur Vane Zanbrokal Zarab
Zarboutan nout kiltir Zorey Baro Batarsité
Bonbon piman Boutik sinwa Brèd Créolie
Engagisme Gramoun Kabar Kabardock Kaf
Kalbanon Kaz Kine Kour Ladilafé Malbar
Malogé Maloya Marrons Marsh dann fé
Pilon Kalou Rice-cooker Samoussa Séga
Servis kabaré Servis kaf Servis makwalé
Shemin la vi Shemin la mor Sirandane
Tisaneur Vane Zanbrokal Zarab Zarboutan
nout kiltir Zorey Baro Batarsité Bonbon

MCUR | PROJECT FOR A MUSEUM OF THE PRESENT

THE CULTURAL PROJECT OF LA MAISON DES CIVILISATIONS ET DE L'UNITÉ RÉUNIONNAISE

THE CULTURAL PROJECT

The MCUR wishes to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life and to promote social transformations by encouraging curiosity and forestalling the individual's temptation to impose its own truth. The MCUR's hope is to provide Reunion with the means to take part in the international debate on contemporary artistic creation (art, architecture, photography...) as well as on geopolitical and social issues. The MCUR intends to assert and voice a Reunionese view of the world and to offer a comparative approach for a critical appraisal of local practices and productions. *The challenge of the cultural project* is to propose a series of visual practices and forms of representation that answer to the requirements of a museum of the living present: representing plurality but avoiding a mere juxtaposition of objects; addressing the limits of representation yet using the means of representation; questioning the capacity of the object to reconstitute a memory yet using the object or its idea; working with the absence of vernacular objects prior to the 1890s; working with immaterial culture as the reservoir of cultural

and social archives; working through a diversity of sites: the island, the Indian Ocean world, Europe, France; intermixing social, geopolitical and cultural history... **The routes and itineraries of the elements of Reunionese culture** will be retraced to restore both their singularity and their universality. The approach will avoid essentialism, idealization of roots and the illusion of uniqueness. It will add legibility and visibility to forms of social, sexual, religious, and cultural alterity. Each itinerary will be shown in all its concrete aspects and the Indoceanic area presented as a path, a crossroads of exchanges, encounters and conflicts, a space of itineraries and routes. **In the Reunionese experience the place of the culture** known as immaterial claims a central position and therefore requires an effort of translation and visualization. How can things like love, friendship, fear, violence be visualized? We have to appeal to all five senses and not just to sight and we must not forget to display expressions of popular sociability: christenings, wakes, picnics, the shopping mall... We have to astonish, to set up the "little shock that will allow to fix the experience in people's memories" (Benjamin, 1989).

- ■ ■ The goal of the MCUR's cultural policy is to explain the plurality of Reunionese identities together with their unity, produced by mixing, ongoing interculturality, and to encourage their current expression. The cultural and scientific policy should constantly contribute to reinforce the existing equilibrium by encouraging the various cultural expressions and enhancing their diversity, and by encouraging intercultural exchanges and dialogue in connection with economic and social development.

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The MCUR is a live instrument for discovery and thought that not only preserves and transmits but extends and develops what was received:

Receiving and understanding the past: *a museum space of synthesis*
(remembrance and preservation)

Sharing the present: *a cultural center*, center for gathering and meeting
(creation and expression)

Imagining and building the future: *a model resource and research center*
(reflection and diffusion)

Transversality is essential for the success of the facilities: the layout of the different cultural functions should encourage interdisciplinary and intercultural exchanges and cast bridges between education and practice, diffusion and creation.

The cultural policy rests on two complementary vehicles:

The main exhibition, that above all puts Reunionese history and culture in perspective starting from the present, then extends the reflection by questioning contemporary social and cultural dynamics.

Three main activities are envisaged to incite the visitor to become an actor of her visit, these activities being central to the Reunionese imaginary:

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The presence of oral literatures and expressions (tales, legends, quips, live testimonies and so on) through actors or direct witnesses;

The presence of music, instrumental or vocal;

The presence of the moving image: films (fiction and documentary), via video (artistic or documentary), photographs (art, private and public archives), via NTIC and other forms of visualization.

A year-round cultural program hosted in the temporary exhibitions space, auditorium and agora, art gallery, offering an ensemble of events: exhibitions, symposiums, lectures, performances, discussions, films, festivals...

Among the themes around which the issues of the Reunionese identity will be developed in a constant reference, to the creolization process:

1. Written, oral, and artistic expression,
2. Food,
3. Health, sexuality, body and education,
4. Philosophies of life, relationship with the world, profane and sacred,
5. Ways of inhabiting, Space,
6. Dress and appearance,
7. Sociability and solidarity.

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The analysis, investigation, illustration and presentation of these themes in their interaction constitute the material for exhibitions throughout the sequences of the main exhibition.

To visualize and materialize the various forms of expression of these themes, we selected four modes of mediation. The idea was to imagine a series of links that could display creolization processes and practices in the time-spaces that rhythm the main exhibition.

1. Routes and itineraries: of individuals, objects, tastes, ideas, rites, plants, sounds,
2. Social, cultural practices, rituals: ways of imagining and dealing with birth and death, disease and suffering, joyful events and celebrations, pleasure and rites of passage, civic duties and political activities,
3. Sounds, landscapes, tastes, smells: the constitution of memories and esthetics,
4. Maps: visualizing the world through contrasting cartographies.

STAGING HISTORY AND CULTURE

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Every act of colonization is an act of violence. Reunion society was born of an act of violence. There was no native population, no pre-colonial past when the French took possession of the island in 1642. Slavery and colonialism left their mark on Reunion. This violence will be shown in its various forms: slavery, indentured labor, colonialism, denial of voting rights, regimes of exclusion and brutality, culture of contempt. The Reunionese people emerged out of this history and by their acts of creation and resistance contributed to history and the creation of a culture. These intersecting histories —violence, resistance, creation— cannot be rendered by merely presenting a series of texts, they have to be *visualized*.

The visual translation of cultural history and contacts raises a number of problems. Which objects, texts, archives will translate the multi-layered culture? Collections of items, when there are any, are in European museums; documents and archives for the most part reflect the colonizers' viewpoint; in Reunion objects, furniture, documents essentially record the life of a tiny elite and, even so, they rarely predate the mid-nineteenth century. With what objects will we represent the periods of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? Popular objects are rare and, as we said earlier, rarely antedate the 1890s. Memory traces are mostly oral. How can we imagine an exhibition of inter-cultural contacts and creolization processes without objects that act as mediators of memory?

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The example of *slavery museums* is telling. They often tell the story starting from a certain number of recurrent themes: sale price of the slaves, the Middle Passage, living conditions in the plantations. The tragedy is amplified to arouse emotion and generate guilt. Whether it be the House of Slaves at Gorée Island, the Liverpool or Cincinnati museums, very little is said about the intra-African trade, the activity of Arab slave traders, the role of slavery in the local social economy, the slaves' lives *before* their capture, the social organization of the slave-trading societies. The narrative is one of moral condemnation of an obviously atrocious system, but its extreme complexity is concealed behind simplifications that do not let the public grasp the way it affected the societies and cultures involved in it. Most of the iconography comes from abolitionist propaganda. True, there are very few documents whose authors are slaves, they exist mostly in the United States and England but in France no slave ever wrote down her life. Such a representation of slavery does not integrate the extreme diversity of the slaves' responses to a regime of violence and brutality and a space of cultural contact.

By its complexity, slavery as a cultural, social and economic system demands an effort of reflection. In the abolitionist account, modern slavery has a narrative pattern and an explanatory perspective: it was a pre-capitalist, pre-modern system that has nothing to do with the values

of European civilizations. We have to go beyond that narrative and representation and show bonded and indentured labor both as historical periods *and* as systems prefiguring post-modern forms of exploitation in today's globalization. Colonial history and even public account of slavery on Reunion tend to minimize its brutality. One often hears that "slavery on Reunion was not as oppressive and brutal as in the French Antilles." Why this rewriting of slavery? We claim it is owed to a very narrow understanding of slavery. The fact that in Reunion captives were not bought only in Africa, but also in Madagascar and other countries, challenged the racial analogy African = slave and led to the lazy conclusion that there was not a conflict between Whites (free) and Blacks (enslaved).

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The racial analogy African/slave must be revised in Reunion to include other configurations such as Malagasies, Malays... The most important form of resistance was marooning. There were revolts, of course, some of them involving large numbers of slaves, but the topography of the island (high, difficult mountains to climb offering sites of escape and refuge) favored marooning. The later has not been included among the heroic narrative in French historiography on slavery. Finally, the history of exploitation in Reunion must integrate a more important period of indentured labor, setting the island in a more complex narrative of bonded and forced labor than in the French Antilles. The "Asian" contributions (India, China, Muslim) were clearly greater. Reunion has a historiography on slavery and indentured work but still neglects gender and cultural history. It remains a history of facts and numbers. To the narrative of a "benevolent" slave system and a positivist historiography, the MCUR will oppose the voices of the maroons, the rebels, the silent resisters, the

mothers who killed their babies... To the narrative of a mythical past, the MCUR will oppose the narrative of the everyday lives of the slaves, the imbalance in the sex ratio strongly favoring males, high mortality and low fertility rates and violent relations between genders. Plantation organization foreshadowed the modern factory, and its relation with labor and modernity will be explained. In short, slavery cannot be represented only through the "chains of bondage"; the mill, the songs, the rituals, the labor organization, the gender relations are equally important. The slaves are our ancestors, the *indentured workers* our parents; colonialism was brutal; the development of the island suffered considerable delays; improvement of living conditions is very recent on the scale of Reunionese history and when it occurred, it produced new inequalities and discriminations; and today unity is threatened by outside and inside forces.

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How can we stage these multi-layered stories in the MCUR? Historical documents and archives will of course be on exhibit, but it is worthwhile to design their presentation in connection with the lack of documents coming from the slaves, to think about the function of pro-slavery images as well as anti-slavery iconography. We should not forget that a great number of relics were destroyed and still are. Do we above all want to inspire pity? If so, the visitor can leave the MCUR reinforced in her indignation, certain of her innocence and her moral righteousness. But on the other hand, beyond an inevitable sense of pity, we wish to stimulate thinking about the pro-slavery system, to produce a long-term effect making the visitor curious, eager to know more. But how can slavery be made *palpable*? How can colonialism, its day to day banality and brutality be made visible?

Faced with these issues, some museums have turned to the virtual, to digital technologies (NTIC). The NTIC swift development and the easy access they offer to many and various databanks make them indispensable. The announcement of the European Gallica project (digitalizing books and documents) and other online libraries are among their most striking aspects. It is clearly an opportunity for an island like ours afflicted with financial and climatic problems of access and preservation of written work and of objects. Mediators will be provided to help the visitor learn to handle the equipment. We do not underestimate the cost of production due to technological innovation, costs of copyrights and images, and legal issues. Tool maintenance has to be perfect, nothing is more irritating than machines that do not work. But this investment obviously has a big return: once the interactive areas are set up they are flexible for maintenance and highly attractive to the public. Nor should we underestimate the sophistication of a public nurtured on television, clips, reality shows, documentaries. We have to do at least as well if not better. The visitor is also entitled to expect to use the equipment for long spans of time: how can the demand be managed? NTIC have these advantages: flexibility, creativity, dynamism, they appeal to young people whom the MCUR wants to attract. Nor should we overestimate the resistance of those who are less familiar with these tools. Studies have shown that if NTIC are conceived for popular use and democratized they are far less intimidating than written texts. Reunion counts 120 000 illiterate and this technology will make knowledge more accessible. The NTIC program launched with the Inuits proves that a group previously unfamiliar with such tools can grasp them very quickly.

George MacDonald and Stephen Alford in their report "Toward the virtual museum: a time of crisis and change for the third millennium" highlight the positive aspect of NTIC for groups who have not yet had access to museums, who have above all an oral and non-material culture or whose culture was looted by museums:



It may seem ironic that the North American autochthonous cultures, almost wiped out by the European colonization, now can use tools produced by the other civilization providing them with the opportunity to preserve and bring back to life their heritage. Whereas the native collectivities used to be relatively isolated from one another and far from the main social trends, today computer and TV technologies enable them to be connected, to exchange ideas and information and create the sense of a virtual community, particularly for Native Indians living in an urban context that overlaps traditional definitions of rootedness... The Native Indian Policy Center, easily accessible on internet, is essentially an electronic

reflection group whose aim is to enable the great native spirits of the country to examine the orientation elements concerning the native peoples of the United States. They can directly consult reports and accounts of principles to back up actions for developing native organizations' policies. For example the Oneidas of the State of New York created a website where they can present their views on issues like economic sovereignty and cultural rebirth.

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The authors of the project for a *Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée* at Marseille point out that museums of civilizations are "museums of ideas", "philosophy museums"; their collections "do not deal with the universality of Beauty but seek to teach the relativity of cultures and the diversity of references." What is shown is not "art" but ways of living and of thinking, and new technologies offer means to present ways of thinking and living, practices and processes. The *Museum of the Moving Image* in New York, that presents moving pictures in every form (film, TC, video, online games), suggests the use of this medium for Reunion's contemporary period: TV

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archives, private archive films, documentaries and advertisements seem perfectly suited to reconstitute diverse memories, sites and expressions.

NTIC offer flexibility allowing to connect oral cultures, music, languages and immaterial memories. For MacDonald and Alford it would be dangerous in the long term to ignore NTIC:

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Institutions dedicated to the preservation of the patrimony cannot think they can attract future generations if they do not follow the evolution of tastes and behaviors regarding access to information. People who want to be entertained or educated prefer television and internet to museums. The trend can only be accentuated as the two technologies converge and future generations acquire, more easily than we have, the skills and habits they need to use the computer and browse the net.

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SPATIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE MCUR

THE SUGGESTED SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

An online library: A true multi-lingual library worthy of that name on the concerned civilization areas —China, Europe (including France), Africa, India, Muslim world, insular world— would mean hundreds of thousands of books and documents in different languages and on different disciplines (history, anthropology, sociology, ethnology, philosophy, religion). Such a library would be a very expensive project, requiring heavy maintenance and resources (human and financial). It would also prioritize the written archive whereas we wish to present the archives of those who left no written work but whose contribution to culture was fundamental, as well as access to contemporary creations, artistic and scholarly.

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A virtual online library will allow visitors, students, pupils or any other public to log on to archives of foundations (this list is not exhaustive, just examples) such as the Gulbenkian Foundation, the Mandela Foundation, universities such as the Nehru University at Delhi, the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, the University of Beida in Beijing, newspapers like *Times of India*, *The Far Eastern Economic Review*, academic journals, art gallery sites, museums such as Centre Culturel Tjibaou, Museum of Apartheid, archives such as the Colonial Archives at Aix-en-Provence, Archives of Mozambique, international and regional institutions —UN, UNESCO, COI, EU, Indian Ocean Rim—, governments...

An online library is an important endeavor requiring rigorous preparation, implying a significant effort (preparing key words, identifying sites and sources...) but it can take advantage of local skills in computers and data processing. It will also enable the visitor to gain access to the local network of cultural and religious associations and other information on cultural events. This means creating an easily accessible MCUR Internet site. The center would also feature databanks on the Reunionese immaterial culture and a space to screen films and DVD.

A bookshop and boutique: The bookshop will be specialized in Indian Ocean literatures including children's books. It will also offer exhibition catalogs, reviews and MCUR productions —books, DVD, CD-ROM. The boutique will offer a selection of quality crafted items as well as exhibition by-products (postcards, T-shirts, agendas...). Visitors can come to the bookshop-boutique without having to visit the exhibitions.

Spaces for oral literature (tales, riddles, hip hop, poetry, slam): For schoolchildren and visitors, it is the opportunity for encountering actors performing oral literature or for listening to individuals testifying about their struggles, their work, their lives. The performative aspect of speech, the manner in which speaking “makes you be,” creates *being*, is known since the oldest humanity. Hassane Kouyaté who developed the project of “La Maison de la Parole. Centre Régional des arts du récit et de la littérature orale” (The House of Speech. Regional Center of the arts of storytelling and oral literature) in Burkina Faso explains: “The art of speech is an ancient art; it is also a contemporary art nurtured by tradition and oral literature.” Orality is “a more than millennial artistic object,” Kouyaté adds. For the public, the encounter with memory carriers is significant because it helps them to boost their knowledge of a period, an event, a person, but even more important to place themselves personally within a context, to discover effects or consequences on the current situation. We imagine also regular encounters right in the exhibition space itself (see the “Contes” (Tales) program of the Quebec

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Museum of Civilization), with storytellers, *granmouns*, former workers, farmers. The speech that launches the *maloya*, the political speech that stages the person who pronounces it and the community called upon by the speech, the conversation among *dalons* (friends) are familiar performative acts that call upon a group.

Reunionese oral expressions are not just manifestations of an oral tradition, they are the expression of an ancestral learning transmitted from one generation to the next. This learning records the experience of a shackled life (life of the slave, the indentured worker, the colonized, the poor). It is not folklore but knowledge. It is also a relationship with the Other since speech is always addressed to someone else. Speech shapes the city, the culture, the world. It is not a place of communication without contention (different meaning given to the words —see the word Liberty for the slave or the master, divergent interests, the polysemic notion of work, etc...) but it shapes the public space. Reunionese speech: riddles, lullabies, sacred text, vocabulary of love, of tenderness, of death, hatred and anger... makes, creates the Reunionese world while it is being uttered, while it is transmitted.

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The MCUR archives (catalogs and other productions): These archives would be put on line (see, for instance, www.inIVA.org/archive or the UNESCO DigiArts site in Africa www.portal.unesco.org/digarts).

Studios and offices for writers, actors, artists, scholars in residence, each time in relation with a local institution: a dancer in residence who might be able to work with the regional dance center, a digital artist with the ILOI (Institut de l'Image de l'Océan Indien), an actor with local stages, a scholar with the university, a writer with a writing workshop... The resident will be selected for her capacity to give a conference, a seminar, work with local artists, writers, actors. The aim for the resident is to get to know Reunionese culture and share her skills and for the Reunionese to teach and learn.

A space for debate designed as an agora: not from above to below, but convivial and receptive to conversation. Concert and theater halls should be designed in relation with very effective existing structures.

A cafeteria: where you can have a simple lunch, or a coffee, a pastry. The cafeteria's ambition is not to represent solely Reunionese cuisine (obviously it is not excluded but there are already a great many small restaurants offering very good Reunionese cuisine for lunch). Close to the bookshop-boutique, it will allow the visitor to linger and leaf through books, catalogs and see the articles on sale. It is important to design a bright room overlooking a garden with a very modern interior design contrary to most restaurants in Reunion which are gloomy, highly air conditioned and closed to nature.

An art gallery showing Reunionese and international artists. This space is not a mere exhibition space, it should be a place of reflection, encounter, confrontation and discussion on the place and practices of contemporary art, receptive to the most dynamic sources in the postcolonial world. The gallery will seek to stage intersecting expressions. The MCUR should consider also the integration of contemporary art in the main exhibition. Contemporary artists could be asked to contribute to the evocation of the past.

1 2 9

A concert hall and theater emphasizing experimentation. The many concert halls and theaters in Reunion (keeping into account the projects of huge concert hall at St-Denis, a multiplex at St-Paul and so on) do not justify the creation of just one more of the same thing. On the other hand, creating a place where experiments can be staged will give these MCUR facilities an identity related to its project: encouraging and fostering experiments. A slam session with stage readings, performances, installations, dance with poetry, and innovatory forms of performances could be staged. The hall could also feature stage readings of Indian Ocean literary texts and poetic performances.

A gastronomical restaurant serving Reunionese and regional cuisine with a very modern design. South Africa and Australia offer interesting examples of restaurant architectures connected to the environment and climate (see *The Cradle of Humanity* restaurant near Johannesburg).

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE CONCEPTION OF SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

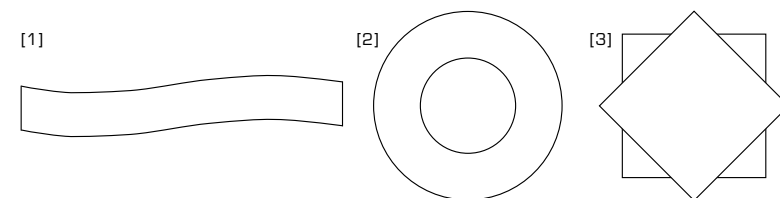
The idea is to express spatially the interlocking of worlds that produces the Reunionese world.

130 **We** already pointed out *the importance of intersecting each area with a garden*. The garden (*kour*) is a key factor in the Reunionese imaginary and in vernacular esthetics. In large building complexes it disappears as a private space but we can observe the Reunionese's inventiveness and the way they turn balconies into tropical gardens. These gardens would be places for pausing, meditating, day-dreaming, meeting, reading. One should be able to imagine going there, sitting down and reading or dreaming. The gardens would be part of the MCUR's attraction. Wells of light, gardens of medicinal herbs, trees and plants, that would draw birds, places of silence... There is a long tradition of integrating gardens within the architecture of space such as the gardens of the Alhambra in Granada, of the Mosque in Cordoba, of the Convent of the Augustines at Toulouse... or more recently the architecture of plant walls, such as those of the Cartier Foundation in Paris by Michel Blanc.

The nature/culture integration would meet the philosophy of the project that wishes to show the interaction of human and nature in Reunion. The intersection of spaces of exhibit and gardens reflects a critical

approach to the relation between culture and nature, a relation which has, for historical reasons, a different meaning in the colonial space than in the West. In the colonial narrative, the colony had no landscape, it had "nature," either harsh and hostile or lush and prolific. In both instances, it was not conducive to esthetic meditation, Europeans were crushed by "colonial nature." Travel diaries, colonial settlers' diaries were long laments on "blazing sun," "debilitating monsoons," "arid land." Nature had to be tamed, as it stood for untamed, uncivilized humans and landscapes. Wild, waiting to be transformed and made productive, colonized nature stood as a mirror of its inhabitants. Rereading nature and landscape would challenge the colonial interpretation and help reconstitute what nature and landscape represented for enslaved, colonized and contemporary Reunionese.

The design of the main exhibition rooms should be conceived as a network: not an $A + B + C = \dots$ model but an architecture taking into consideration the conception of time-spaces. The visitor would have access to manifold references giving visibility to the diffracted, complex world of Reunionese society. For instance: drawings 1 or 2, or drawing 3, a central room onto which other rooms open.



The presence of screen terminals enabling visitors to have access to public records and registers of the slave ships, indentured workers and colonists (this could be arranged in connection with the Bourbon Genealogical Circle), to see the maps of slaves' routes, of the maroons' world, of diasporic formations and of places of remembrance...

MUSEOGRAPHY FOR A MUSEUM OF THE PRESENT

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The spatial organization of the main exhibition stages the notion of exchange: why not consider *either* rooms arranged in a circle rather than lined up one after the other, giving onto one or several areas, places of meditation and rest where the visitor absorbs what was seen, then resumes the visit going where she feels the urge, *or* rooms separated by gardens that might be inspired by those of the native civilizations and would be spaces of meditation and rest, rhythming the visit with moments of silence.

That layout will not exclude a visit in chronological order, but would leave room for other interpretations and trajectories. Such a spatial arrangement was used in biennials and appreciated by the public, who did not

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feel “lost”. It would look like a “Creole house in reverse”: the garden inside, the rooms around the garden, but keeping the design of the Creole house where the rooms are arranged around a central axis. This organization of space should also allow to shift partitions so as to transform the space and suggest other perspectives.

In brief, these suggestions imply that *the interior/exterior arrangement should reflect the Reunionese notion of space*, yet at the same time subverting it since the Creole courtyard is often a withdrawn space, closed to the visitor. We might also think about a lesson on space integrating the complexity of the Creole world, a world both divided *and* unified.

THE EXHIBITION: INDICATIONS

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The museographic program anticipates the creation of a single exhibition, synchronic and diachronic. The chronology adopted does not follow the chronology of textbooks: it focuses on the transformations produced by the merging of local, French and international events, follows the dynamic process of local conflicts and practices. It will point out the connection between a series of interrelated events. Again the challenge is to avoid a mere juxtaposition of data. There must be an overarching span. Although we should avoid a teleological narrative, we have to offer signposts, otherwise the visitor is assaulted with a profusion of data which blur the asperities, conflicts, lacks, losses. Deconstructing a narrative yet following a historical chronology and respecting vernacular interpretations will guide the architecture of the exhibition. We suggest however that in each sequence a room remains devoted to a temporary exhibition that highlights a detail of the period or allows for different interpretations of an event.

The chronology with this change of focus aims at being constructive and creative by providing the visitor with an autonomous interpretative space. The exhibition opens with the present then turns to the

Indoceanic world as it was before the island was colonized. The physical territory of the island is staged in an ocean whose rims are inhabited by people endowed with complex and rich social and cultural organizations. The visitor is invited to grasp the long history of the Indian Ocean as a cultural space of encounters, exchanges and conflicts. History did not start with European colonization, and the present cartography of routes can be read alongside older cartographies.

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The visitor is further invited to discern the crossings and interactions between the various contributions of incoming groups and to understand the Creolization processes under way since the beginning of colonization. The exhibition presents the movement between diversity and unity, between the world and Reunion, Reunion and the world.

The transformations of the "Reunion" territory —land distribution, partitioning between "small" territories (mountain/coast, Upper/Lower, East/West, North/South, private/public, sacred/secular, female/male)— is broached and the exhibition deals with the past, the present and the future of the territory. How was it inhabited? By whom? Why? How will it be inhabited?

The reflection on what is usually called “territorial development” should be at the heart of the discussion. In ten, twenty years, how will the Reunionese live in an island where only 20% of the land is building land? What are the lessons of the past that can contribute to the debate on the present and the future?

The exhibition starts from the interrogations of the present and its issues, then the visitor moves between different worlds and different temporalities. Thus the physical and geographic territory of the island is situated in an ocean whose rims were inhabited by populations with advanced cultures and social organizations.

The civilizations and cultures of the “native” countries are shown throughout history as well as their impact upon the island culture and history.

The visitor is invited to grasp the crossed contributions from the beginning of colonization and all through Reunionese history up to today.

The series of sequences suggests a reading which relates events in the history of the Indian Ocean with events in Reunion, while within each sequence the local translation of social and cultural practices is highlighted. The museographic program integrates the following sequences:

Sequence 1: Prologue to the exhibition.

Sequence 2: The Indoceanic world (before 1498 and up to 1665)

Sequence 3: French colonization (1665-1764)

Sequence 4: Masters and Slaves (1764-1848)

Sequence 5: Modernization and diversification of the social context (1848-1920)

Sequence 6: The era of claims (1920-1946-1960)

Sequence 7: New conflicts, new territories (1960-1990)

Sequence 8: Today...issues and stakes

The exhibition is based on the crossed interpretation of “histories.” It is of great importance to understand *history as a crossed interpretation of events* where sociology, anthropology, philosophy, philosophy of religions,

geography, knowledge on fauna and flora, and art history have a role to play. History alone cannot explain the polysemy of a moment that encompasses the analysis of the actors’ perceptions, representations, tales, myths and seeks to explain and understand the actors’ role in this particular event. The Reunionese singular and original point of view on world events is shown through texts and visual archives.

The concept of “several exhibitions in one” implies creating exhibition areas with several distinct points of view as well as connections facilitating circulation from one space to the other.

The exhibition rests on two “representations”:

History and civilizations of the countries from which the inhabitants came and are still coming (India, China, the Muslim world, Africa, France, Europe, and the islands of the Indian Ocean),

History, cultures and Creolization processes in Reunion.

“History and civilizations of the countries from which the inhabitants came and are still coming,” thereafter “native countries”, presents the history and cultures in these countries prior to the immigrations towards Reunion, at the time of these movements of populations and up to the present time. The name “native countries” covers all the countries from which at one time or another the components of the Reunionese population came: Madagascar, India, Mozambique, Tanzania, France, China, Malaysia, Vietnam, Comoros, Maurice...

In this section, the MCUR underscores events that had effects on Reunion, even if these repercussions are not obvious at first sight. Hence, the poverty of the French peasantry in the seventeenth century partly explains the arrival of the first colonizers on the island. The abolitionist movements in the United States and England as well as the abolition in Maurice had consequences on slavery in the French colonies. The Haitian revolution had an influence on the slave system in Reunion and its abolition. The colonization of China by European empires and the poverty of the Chinese peasantry led to the organization of emigration (indentured labor) to the Indian Ocean.

“History, cultures and Creolization processes in Reunion” gives visibility to the events of the island. We suggest another chronology than the one experienced *either* as a mirror reflection of the history of mainland France (Revolution, Empire, Republic...) *or* as one that would be solely organized around international economic upheavals.

Our divisions are arbitrary as are all divisions, but they offer another vision, seek to shift the gaze (making the island of Reunion its center) and aim at being open and dynamic (to take into account future discoveries). By approaching Creolization and Reunionese unity from several angles, this dimension of the exhibition shows the originality of “Reunionese ways of being in the world” and opens up discussion on contemporary issues.

Creolization process is understood as a dynamics between loss and loan where the unity of differences does not cancel differences nor require their assimilation, but where unity is altered by new differences. There is an ethos of Creolization that strives to preserve the balance between unity and diversity in the name of the common past of violence, deportation and exile. It is an ethics of translation, the space where cultural practices confront one another and borrow from one another to create a new space in which the individual negotiates its identity.

The content of the sequences is thought out in connection with the logic of crossed contributions. Reunionese society is not the product of closed categories as in for instance, a colonist from Picardy + a slave from Mozambique + an Indian indentured worker + a Muslim tradesman + a Chinese shopkeeper = Reunion. Instead the content is conceived as what each group brought to the others, how what each group brought altered what existed already, opening a new dimension in the local worldview, new practices, new culinary tastes, new vocabulary, new beliefs.

The term “melting pot”, radically contested by minorities and scholars, is not appropriate. The term, invented to meet the demands of minority

groups in the United States to have their history and culture integrated in the national narration, has been criticized for its a-historical and apolitical character, denying discriminations, tensions and conflicts and suggesting a homogeneous mixture. The term *métissage* in French, is strongly linked to biological notions and therefore rejected by many scholars and cultural actors. The notion of Creolization as we outlined it above seems more pertinent (and *Reunionization* could be the local form of Creolization, but we wish to avoid an excessive territorialization of a term). The anthropologist Jean Benoist, a scholar of Creole societies, argues that there is *no Creolization without contention, tension between marked contrasts and unity, contrasts shaped by unity and unity shaped by contrasts* and both, unity and contrasts produced by the same economic and political structure.

In each time-space, we advocate the existence of a room for a temporary exhibition, a “temporary-room” that highlights *one* aspect of this time-space for the duration of a year for instance. Thus an object, a ritual, a form, an event is highlighted; for instance:

In sequence 4, that exhibit could show all the aspects of a slave’s trial, prosecution, witness evidence, verdict;

In sequence 5, it could tell the story of a sports association, a union, a political party. The room could be devoted to an exhibition on the itinerary of ginger, saffron, *Brèd*, so familiar to Reunionese cuisine that we have forgotten there was a time when these ingredients were not part of Reunion cuisine nor were cultivated or found on Reunion.

In sequence 6, the room could house an exhibition on radio-talent shows, newspapers, balls.

This room would give flexibility to the exhibition and allow the inclusion of recent discoveries or reinterpretations of history and cultures.

These temporary shows are focused on local artifacts, events, figures and part of the time sequence. They differ from the main temporary exhibition area which is devoted to an exhibition connected with the theme

of the yearly cultural program. Works by contemporary artists who reinterpret the past can be integrated, offering the visitor another visual dimension than the one found in history archives. These works belong to the exhibition and not to the gallery of contemporary art. The work of Isaac Julien on the experience of Blackness, of the Benin artist Georges Adéagbo on everyday objects, of the Atlas Group Collective on the war in Lebanon, of the group Multiplicities on globalization and war, of the Black Audio Film Collective on urban music, racial unrest and stereotypes in London, of Chantal Ackerman on the Mexico-United States border are examples of interventions and commentaries on history by contemporary artists.

ROUTES, PATHS AND ITINERARIES

1 4 0

This first modality is metonymical of the constitution of the Reunionese people and culture. No ancestor is autochthonous, we have claimed. Thus the genealogical relationship of each Reunionese passes through an itinerary, a movement, a displacement.

The path is the metaphor of exile that crosses routes of trade and empire but is symbolically different. It evokes the trails of the maroons and their resistance, the appropriation of the territory by fishermen's, farm-hand's trails, the market women's, the vagabond's... These paths and trails outline another cartography, another archive of the island. The path draws the ancestor's course: the one leading from him to us and the one leading us back to him.

The display of the itineraries of persons, objects, rites, culinary practices, ingredients of recipes, of sounds, allows the visitor to follow the routes and itineraries of Reunionese culture. They are a *mise-en-scène* of its dynamism, its capacity to absorb and to mimic. These itineraries show the routes of multiple levels of culture. Nothing is fossilized, nothing is pure and yet continuity emerges. "Reality is polymorphic, formed by multiple identities and constant metamorphoses," and "it is at the heart of metamorphosis and precarity that the true continuity of things lies", Serge Gruzinsky has argued (1999). From the place of origin, whence the ancestor came, to the world she contributed to build and bequeathed to us, the itinerary brings back a life. The richness of a world is restored, and the neutral category ("Slave", "*engagé*", "*Kaf*", "*Malbar*", "Muslim"), one that negates singularity (how old? what gender? what place of origin: city, country, coast?), fades away before the combined individual *and* collective experience that shaped the Reunionese world. Hence, we could follow:

1 4 1

The itinerary of an object —furniture, drum, pestle, **rice-cooker**— that is associated with a time-space. Where does it come from? How did the item get to Reunion? How was it integrated in the home, in the public space? The everyday object —TV, radio— is presented in its context but the object is not shown as "passive". We can see how it transformed users' lives (what was the impact of TV serials? of the radio? On the way men/women relations and social relations are perceived?), and how people transform it. These displays of itineraries reintroduce the everyday object in culture. There is no highbrow/lowbrow culture separation.

The itinerary of a rite —*servis kaf*, walking on fire...— Where does it come from? How did it get to Reunion? How was it transformed? How was it integrated in the home, the public space? How has it evolved?

The itinerary of a person: a woman or a man whose trajectory the visitor follows from the native world with information on the social

organization, the culture, the economy of that place, up to when she settled in Reunion. How does the trajectory transform the individual? How does she reinvent herself? How is her identity, her life transformed by the colonial system? These singular and convoluted itineraries show the complexity and diversity of contributions. They also bring back to life the forgotten stories of hundreds of thousands of persons who came to this island.

The itinerary of a spice, a medicinal plant, a vegetable, something having to do with cuisine and health. Where did saffron come from? How was it integrated in the cuisine? Brèd, cod, rice, manioc?. Where did knowledge about such and such a medicinal plant come from? The itineraries of plants and spices draw maps of trade and exchanges, see the example of the *Trade Wall* of the City of Sydney Museum that replaces Australia in the long span of time of Indoceanic history —before and during the empire.

1 4 2

SOCIAL, RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL PRACTICES

Through social practices individuals reassert their belonging to a group, a collective identity. Photo documents, film or audio testimonies will be used to describe these practices. For instance:

Sports practices: at what time does a certain sport practice appear? The story of sports clubs and associations.

Rituals around key moments of life (birth, marriage, death).

The sacred and the secular.

Balls.

Picnics.

Cuisine: preparation of ritual meals, table manners.

Unions: workers' voices and testimonies, the world of labor in its complexity, union vocabulary. Individual testimonies, archive photos, newspapers tell the story of a social practice.

SOUNDS, SMELLS, LANDSCAPES, TASTES

1 4 3

The world that surrounds us and contributes to building our cultural identity is not just a world of images. Sounds (birds, ocean, wind...), smells (rain, ripe jack-fruit, forests...), landscapes (waterfalls, cove, mountain, volcano...), tastes (green mango, *samoussa*, *bonbon piman*...), they all weave a web of reminiscences familiar to every Reunionese.

The central role of music in the Reunionese imaginary is integrated: mazurka, *séga*, quadrille, *maloya*, *malogé*... Aspects of the exhibition "Black President. The Art and Legacy of Fela Kuti" (London, 2004) offer suggestions: the visitor could go into a booth and listen to music, but also in the course of the exhibition there were headphones for listening to Fela's music so essential for contemporary Africa; films, documentaries, instruments, interviews tell the story of the musician's life and work.

Cuisine is another central site of practice and identification. It reflects the porosity and flexibility of Reunion culture with its capacity to absorb foreign elements. The exhibition “À Table” at the Grand Palais (2002) but also artists’ performances like the one presented at the Musée Léon Dierx (2004), the film series by Chinese-Canadian artist Cheuk Kwan on Chinese restaurants throughout the world (2005), the exhibition “Have You Eaten Yet?: The Chinese Restaurant in America” at the Museum of Chinese in the Americas (New York, 2005), or Canadian artist Karen Tam’s installation *Le Restaurant Montagne d’Or* at Montreal suggest ways to represent a practice which connects taste, images, memory, smells, esthetics and identity.

Sydney Mintz in *Sweetness and Power* (1985) and in *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom. Excursions into Eating, Culture and the Past* (1996), Jack Goody in *Cooking, Cuisine and Class* (1982) taught us to think about connections between cuisine, culture and history. The study of culinary practices is an important aspect of a cultural anthropology based on an approach of economic exchanges induced by historical transformations. The idea is to tell how this aspect of human and social life —cuisine— illustrates the way groups adapt culturally, or individuals gather around this practice. Cuisine is seen as a rich and complex symbolic space, belonging not just to a domestic sphere (therefore “female”) but as a culturally marked space, steeped in symbols and desires. It is a space where we can see how individuals invest social meaning in an everyday human activity, so “normal” it becomes “invisible”. The techniques employed to prepare a dish, the way of serving it, the hierarchy of courses, table manners, taboos, rites, it all has a story and this story gives this “ordinary” act of eating a rich social and cultural significance. Starting from suggestions made by Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff on the “social life of objects” (1986) and applying them to the object “cuisine”, we could follow the networks of migrations, comings and goings, and ramifications.

Following the evolution of culinary practices, a geopolitical history unfolds as well as its intersections with local revisions and transformations.

In recent years, on Reunion, the importation of fast food chains, of drinks such as wine, whisky, and soft drinks and the consumer habits of a status-driven middle class (offering food that cannot be found in Reunion: oysters, foie gras...) have transformed the culinary landscape. Yet, hybridity still affects these imports and one finds at the ubiquitous *Kamionbar* a combination of Creole food with “American” ones (labeled American for their association with fast food) such as the “American sandwich”: a baguette with cheese, mayonnaise, Chinese ha kao (**bouchons**), and hot chili sauce. The Creolization of culinary practices exists along with a quest for authenticity expressed in festivals of local products.

The cartography of sounds, smells and tastes will suggest the importance of these elements in Reunionese culture and give them a role and function often denied by high culture.

MAPS

Geopolitical and human maps present another geography than physical geography. They help the observer grasp a multiplicity of data on a same level. If a map is always a simplified image of diverse data, it nonetheless creates a perspective that mere quantified data does not easily represent. The success of the books edited by the geographer Yves Lacoste proves the appeal of such maps. Putting into perspective the Indian Ocean region with maps (starting with geographic and human maps of the Chinese and the Arabs) casts light on the interaction between the different parts of this world, without forgetting France and Europe.

Below are some examples of geographic maps that help visualize movement across the ocean. Demographic maps of Reunion would show the great disparities between the number of men and women until the first

half of the twentieth century, the rates of low life expectancy and high infant mortality, the territorial distribution of cities and villages. Maps of the cities of Reunion would show the organization in districts (rich/poor), land distribution, land divisions, and the discrete territorializations at work. Maps will be interactive, inviting the visitor to make new maps appear.

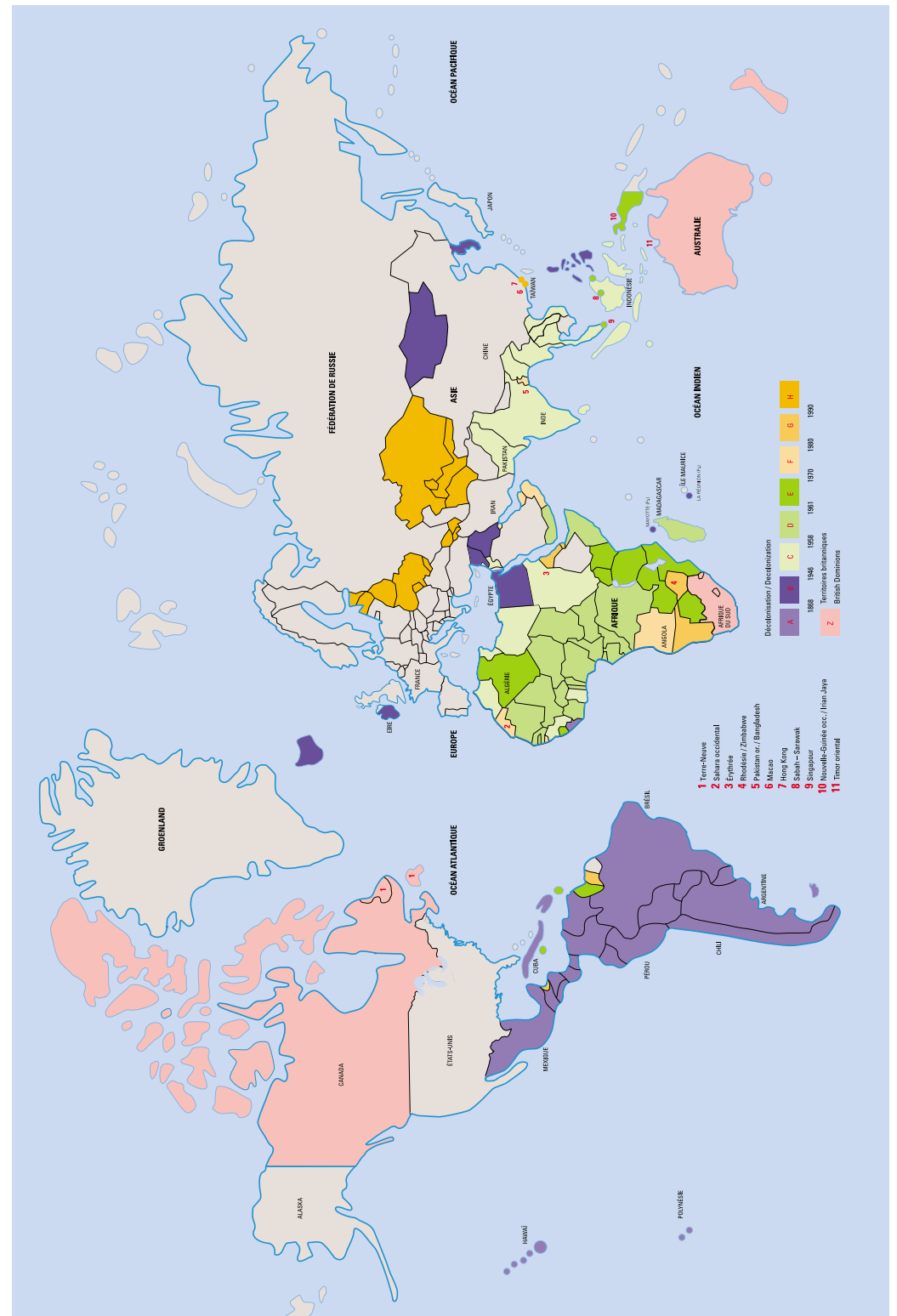
1 4 6

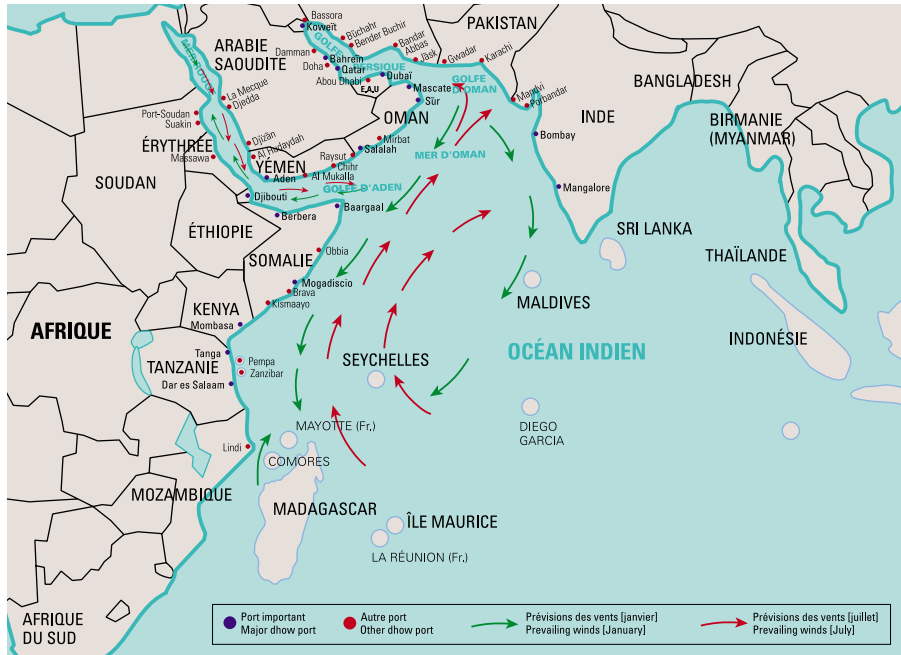
Maps would show the interaction between individuals and nature and its consequences: disappearance of districts, deviations of rivers, advance of cultivable soil on the forest, illegal hunting, pollution of lagoons and rivers, the increasing presence of the automobile, and how all deeply transform the physical territory.

The land our ancestors bequeathed to us, we are duty bound to preserve it and transmit it to the next generations, avoid damaging it or thinking it is extensible, that there will always be a technological answer to its physical limits. The mapping of the consequences of our actions should highlight our responsibilities and alert us to the importance of thinking territory, economy and culture together.

Examples of maps:

Below, the map of decolonization and of the traffic of dhows:





INSTALLATIONS

Reflecting on representation, its limits and weaknesses, we tried to imagine ways of evoking moments without systematically resorting to visual means alone. Stressing evocation rather than representation, we wished to create a sensuous space. Evocation leaves room for one's own imagination, for dreams. It does not foreclose further meditation. A full restitution is impossible and the choice of evocation with its own problems (allusion rather than reconstruction) suggests however

Dhows, boats with a distinctive triangular sail, went around the southwest of the Indian Ocean, between

Africa and India and even farther east. Following the monsoon winds (S-O from May to September, N-E

from November to March), they carried slaves and goods, even heavy loads (horses, camels...).

what used to be without making the past an obstacle for creating the present. With this in mind, we imagined the following installations as indications rather than prescriptions, of *evocative performances*.

“Hunting the maroons”: resistance and longing for liberty are at the heart of the installation. The visitor is invited to enter a dark room. The disorientation would be followed by sounds: suddenly the visitor hears the sound of someone fleeing, the heavy breathing of a man running for life. What is evoked is the escape of a slave. On the walls of the room, images of branches, leaves, what the slave sees as he runs. Then in the distance, other sounds, those of barking dogs, of maroon hunters in Creole. The barking and shouts sound closer and closer, the maroon's breathing louder and louder; the hunters have seen their prey. It is no longer a man running for life but the sounds of a hunt where a man is the prey. All of a sudden, a shout in Malagasy, the maroon has chosen to leap into the void rather than being caught. The hunters are frustrated, they swear, wish they could bring back an ear to get their reward. Suddenly, the visitor is back in the dark and the silence.

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Such an installation, working around the absence of direct testimonies by maroons and hunters, exploits the reservoir of oral archives and uses current technologies (visual and auditory) to evoke a central moment in Reunion's vernacular memory of slavery.

“Exiles”: images and sounds evoking the moment of departure and its consequent feelings —exile, expectations, hopes, fears... *Departure into slavery*: slave port, representation of the areas where the slaves are gathered, voices of the traders and slaves in their respective tongues (Portuguese, Arab, Malagasy, languages of Mozambique, French), songs of exile, images of the receding coast, the slave ship, sound of the sea; *departure for war*: photographs, texts, reading of letters from Reunionese soldiers leaving for Madagascar, of Reunionese *pouilus*; *departure for the “métropole”*: creation of the

BUMIDOM, departures at the airport, farewell to families, songs (for example songs by Danyel Waro), images of the reception centers, the factory, the cold. Photographs, sounds, texts, pictures, newspaper excerpts, speeches, weave the context of the event.

“Pleasures and gambling”: The world of gambling —games of chance, *pari mutuel* (horserace betting), etc...: filmed reconstitution of a *kine* room with noises, words, atmosphere; balls: clothes, music, language of seduction, sex, alcohol.

ARCHITECTURE FOR A MUSEUM OF THE LIVING PRESENT

1 5 0

The architecture of the building should intensely interact with the contents. The architectural gesture should not just mark out Reunion on the map of international exhibition spaces, but match the goals of the Council of Reunion Region. In Reunion there are no buildings featuring an outstanding architecture *combining* aesthetic, climatic and environmental standards. If the exterior architecture is imposing, the interior organization is often mediocre, or vice versa. Interiors of public buildings are often poorly designed, with too much air conditioning, electric lights, in a country where there is plenty of light, bathrooms that are hard to find and badly designed, difficult or impossible to reach for people with reduced mobility... There are no buildings designed with the ambition to blend imaginary, nature, history, the history of Reunion and architecture and which try to foresee future climatic and social transformations.

At the MCUR, the inside/outside relationship should be intensely creative, with a strong involvement in the landscape. The maintenance of the building should be thought on a long-term basis, especially on an island where rain, winds, and erosion by salt breezes have proven to rapidly damage buildings. The MCUR will have numerous places for resting: everyone can remember exhausting visits to museums where the only chair is for the custodian of the room and one is left worn out. Maximum luminosity, legibility, comfort for those who work there, fluidity of circulation must be constantly integrated in the conception of the space. No false ceiling, no carpeting, no excessive air conditioning, no materials unsuited to the specificities of the Reunionese climate (burning sun and torrential rains), no windows you cannot open...

To sum it up: the relation between the architecture and the exhibition must be a strong one and seek to reflect the problematic. We insist on a high environmental quality of the MCUR building and the use of renewable energies. The building should contribute to a renewal of local architectural thinking and practices.

1 5 1

The MCUR wishes to participate in the international movement that in the past few years has proposed profoundly changed approaches to architecture. Serious studies have been performed on light, on the revival of traditional materials (bamboo, stone, wood), on the organization of flows. There are examples when the architectural gesture seeks to be a restitution of history. For instance, *Constitution Hall* in Johannesburg was built on the site of a prison where anti-apartheid militants were jailed. It not only did not try to erase the traces of that history but integrated them in the newly erected building. At Canberra in Australia, the National Museum integrates the history of the Aborigines' genocide. For the MCUR, the esthetics of the building cannot be founded on a conception of Beauty dissociated from the historical, social and political context and the contents of the museum. The building is not supposed to dwarf what is inside it. The architecture must also contribute to the movements for the transformation of society.

SEQUENCES

1. PROLOGUE TO THE EXHIBITION

None of the thematic developments below intend to be exhaustive. These are indications that should be pursued, transformed and enriched.

1 5 2 Goals of the sequence

The exhibition prologue is meant to define “where we are speaking from”, that is, to provide the visitor with a framework for interpreting the issues that will be developed throughout the exhibition. The prologue is a sort of airlock arousing in the visitor an emotional and sensorial response starting from her present, her knowledge and emotions.

Scenographic recommendations

Passing through this space the visitor is steeped in images, smells and sounds projected like so many traces of a present to display, a past to understand, a future to build:

Immersion in images like so many commonplaces and clichés on the island of Reunion, cheerful, carefree, colorful;

A sound break merging words from every indoceanic language;

A hallway with images contrasting with clichés and which lead to the questions: “How can we live together? How can we cope with our past? What society can we build?”

2. THE INDOCEANIC WORLD BEFORE 1498 AND UP TO 1665

Goals of the sequence

This historical sequence presents the Indian Ocean world, the cultural, political and economic cartography, before the Europeans arrived.

The visitor encounters the Indoceanic world: cosmopolitan cities (Calicut, Goa, Mombasa), networks of exchange (commercial, cultural, financial), of ideas and religions. The stories of Ibn Khaldoun, of Arab, African, Asian travelers and traders... are presented. The social, political and economic organization of this world is explicated.

The visitor is made aware of the extreme richness and diversity of the Indoceanic world the ancestors of the Reunionese came from.

Scenographic recommendations

The sequence is divided in two sub-sections: one before the arrival in 1498 of Europeans in the Indian Ocean (the connections between Europe and the Indian Ocean prior to 1498 had not affected the region the way European colonial conquest would) and after, when European imperialisms intervened in the Indoceanic world.

The first space is centered around the Indian Ocean; in the second, this world is subjected to the constraints of European imperialisms, and the island of Reunion emerges as a human society. The first globalization produced by colonization affects the area.

“Indian Ocean Cultures”

Before 1498:

Diversity of the Indian Ocean world,
Indian Ocean: its kingdoms, its social organizations, its routes of exchanges and trade,
The island (Reunion) on the Arab and Chinese maps,
The pre-European routes of slave trade,
The history of the travels of Chinese fleets in Africa,
Pre-Islamic world of the Indian Ocean,
Indonesian migrations,
History and philosophy, religions, anthropology of the African, Indonesian and Asian worlds,
Europe and France.

After 1498:

Arrival of European imperialisms. The Portuguese navigators (Vasco de Gama), followed by the Dutch, English and French. Colonization of the Indian Ocean by the European powers. What impact on trade? What new geopolitical and economic cartographies?
The first slave-trade ports,
The island on the routes of the European conquest.

3. FRENCH COLONIZATION, THE FIRST YEARS [1665-1764]

Goals of the sequence

On the one hand: the first settlers on the island and the impact on the territory; on the other hand: the emergence of Creolization processes. The territory of the island is affected, its fauna and flora. The brutality of the colonization gives rise to a deeply unequal society with the first practices of resistance (marooning is one of its expressions).

Scenographic recommendations

The Creolization processes are shown, by comparing cultural imaginaries and practices, merging objects, stories, testimonies and everyday practices.

Scenario “History and culture of the native countries”

France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,
The transformations in Eastern Africa linked to colonization and slave trade,
Slave-trade routes,
Madagascar: the main source of slaves for the island. Its culture and society,
The route to the Indies and the role of the Mascarenes Islands (Ile de France and Bourbon) on this route,
The era of coffee,
European colonization in the Indian Ocean: France/England rivalries,
Corsairs and pirates: their world and its impact on the island.

Scenario “History, culture and Creolization in Reunion”

1680: beginning of slavery. Arrival of Malagasy, African, and, in lesser numbers, Indian slaves,

1685: the Black Code, a code of laws that regulated the lives of slaves, techniques of discipline and punishment. Codification of a biopower,

1688: introduction of sugarcane and inclusion of the island in the world market,

1797: 734 inhabitants: 423 colonizers, 311 slaves (214 men, 97 women), 30 freedmen,

1729: Slave revolt, public execution of the leaders, public display of colonial power,

August 1764: The India Company cedes the island back to the King of France.

4. MASTERS AND SLAVES [1764-1848]

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How the territory (land, cultural, political, regional, economic) was shaped by the slave system.

Goals of the sequence

The slave system mechanisms, starting from the countries that practiced slave trading, passing through the reality experienced by all the levels of Reunionese society, up to the consequences on creolization and the territory of the island are explicated.

The visitor is invited to become aware of how this period shaped the island and its society in order to discern its traces in the contemporary world. Far from encouraging a moralizing vision of the period, this sequence helps think about the land, the juridical, cultural, political and

economic realities as they were set up by slavery and in such a way that they situate the island in a world economy of brutal exploitation.

Scenario “History and culture of the native countries”

Cultures and civilizations of the countries the slaves come from (West and East Africa, India and Malaysia, Madagascar),

The European world: the regions the colonizers come from,

Discussions on slavery in Europe and Africa: drama, literature, music, The figure of the Black in European art,

The French Revolution: 1794, first abolition of slavery,

Slave trade ports in Mozambique. Routes of slavery in Indian Ocean,

Africanization of slavery (Black/African = slave),

International and civil law regulating slavery,

The Haitian Revolution (1791),

England in the Indian Ocean,

Maurice: impact on Reunion when it becomes a British colony in 1815 and when slavery is abolished.

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Scenario “History, cultures, Creolization in Reunion”

Sugar and coffee. One century separates the onset of the organized cultivation of coffee (1715) from that of the sugar industry (1815),

1794: rejection by the colonial elite of the decree abolishing slavery,

The slave system: slaves (women and men); masters; freedmen, maroons,

Rise and growth of towns: the first steps of town-planning (hierarchization of districts, development of Saint-Denis, the capital),

Literature and drama. Written and oral expression: birth of a language, the era of scholars and poets (Antoine de Bertin, Evariste-Désiré de Forges de Parry), the press. First literature in Creole,

Local organization of racial hierarchy,

Partitioning of the territory: mountains (maroons) and coast,

Figures of maroons and rebels: Cimendef, Elie, Dimitile, Simangavole, Héva, Sarlave,

1810-1815: English occupation,

November 1811: slaves' uprising of Saint-Leu, bloody repression, The slave camp, the plantation, the sugar factory: figures of modernity, Violence of slavery: how the gendered body is produced, how slavery constructs precarious lives, *disposable* people, people who do not "matter," Reunionese debate on slavery: trials for slave uprisings, trial of Louis-Timagène Houat, positions taken by Leconte de Lisle and other intellectuals, **1848:** abolition of slavery. New rules, new labor laws, new techniques of discipline. 100.000 inhabitants, 60.000 slaves, including 3.440 Indians, 728 Chinese. Lack of democracy. Paradoxical citizenship: citizens *but* colonized, **New religious practices.**

5. MODERNIZATION AND DIVERSIFICATION OF THE SOCIAL BODY [1848-1920]

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Goals of the sequence

The abolition of slavery on 20th December 1848 is a turning point: 60.000 slaves become free. Tens of thousands of *engagés* (indentured workers) are brought to the island.

Concentration of property on the coast among a few families, colonization of the lower mountains of the island, pauperization of groups of whites, modernization of the sugar industry... These upheavals are not followed by a democratization in the political and cultural spheres. A tiny elite has access to literary and cultural activities and the expression of the popular

cultures is ignored, even negated. But resistance to the rule of the leading planters and factory-owners is organized and the first expressions of social and cultural claims are asserted.

Scenographic recommendations

Transformation of the social, cultural body and the landscape, Industrial revolution and the age of empires: consequences for Reunion, Abolition of slavery and organization of indentured labor.

Scenario "History and culture of the native countries

British imperialism in India,
British imperialism in South Africa,
France: Revolution of 1848, Second Empire, Third Republic. New social forces, new cultural practices,
1896: Madagascar is a French colony,
1896: the Comors Islands are united to Reunion,
China and European imperialisms: emigration of Chinese to the Indian Ocean,
Industrial Revolution and its impact on world economy,
The age of empires,
"Explorers" & "Missionaries": the French civilizing mission; French imperialism, Europe and its "Others".

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Scenario "History, cultures, creolization in Reunion"

Laws against vagrancy, repression, obligation to have a work contract, Institution of the "**macadam**": hard labor sentence for freedmen caught in vagrancy,
1874: opening of public schools –179 schools, 11.000 pupils including 5.723 girls,
The Industrial Revolution on the island. 1875: railway train, steam, roads, bridges, telegraph, ports, transformation of cities,
Rise of a working class,
First social claims, fate of freedmen: population of the *Hauts* (Heights),

The age of indentured workers: rights and obligations,
 Epidemics of cholera and malaria,
 Rise of a social city life,
 Social and cultural territories: *les Hauts/les Bas*, popular districts (La Source...),
 1878: first **Chan** temple,
 1885: arrival of the last Tamil *engagés* (indentured workers). There are now 45.426 *engagés* in the colony, 18.520 male Indians, 10.646 Africans,
 Arrivals from Europe,
 Malaria and other diseases: hundreds of victims every year,
 1902: uprising of the Chinese indentured workers at the Bois-Rouge sugar factory,
 1902: Creation of the Railroad Workers' Union,
 1914-1918: 10.000 Reunionese on the war front, 967 are killed,
 The Lazaret: buildings where Indian, Mozambican, Chinese *engagés* are taken upon their arrival,
 The first civic associations,
 Arrival of the first "**Zarabs**": the first Muslims of Reunion who come from India, precisely the Gujarat. The Noor-e-Islam mosque of Saint-Denis is founded in 1905,
 The Chinese *boutik*: Chinese immigrants often opened small grocery stores throughout the island. Their owners organized a system of monthly credit and sold every kind of goods and foodstuff. The *boutik* becomes a social and cultural space where gossip, fights, exchanges and games occur,
 Introduction of Hinduism by Tamils and its contribution to local practices and beliefs,
 Traditional medicines and medicinal plants from India, China, Africa, Madagascar and France transforming ethno-medical vernacular knowledge,
 Organization of a cultural life for the local elite: Société d'Acclimatation et d'Histoire Naturelle de La Réunion, Académie coloniale, Société des Sciences et Arts, museum, *séga*. The first museum is built, the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle inaugurated on 14 August 1855,
 Social and cultural practices of the freedmen and *engagés*.

6. THE AGE OF CLAIMS [1920-1946-1960]: END OF COLONIAL STATUS, DEMANDS FOR EQUALITY AND CULTURAL MOVEMENTS

Goals of the sequence

This sequence presents the transformations affecting Reunion around several pivotal moments: rise of labor unions, demand for a new status in 1936, participation in the Second World War, report on the great poverty of the population, end of the colonial status in 1946, onset of modernization of infrastructures, rise of a middle-class of civil servants, onset of mass media... The sequence evokes also the regional and international context (decolonization, the tripartite organization of the world —non-aligned countries, USSR and USA) and shows how these facts affect the perceptions and representations of the island and the world.

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Scenographic recommendations

Ruptures: crisis in the agricultural world, end of the colonial status,
New social and political claims,
Cultural and social movements (women's movements),
The Second World War and wars of decolonization: independence of India, China, Madagascar, Vietnam,
Modernization of the island: infrastructures and facilities.

Scenography "History and civilizations of the native countries"

Up to the Second World War:

The height of the French colonial empire, the colonial exhibitions,

The Reunionese in the colonial empire, their presence in Indochina,
 Artistic and literary movements in the 1930s in Paris. The Negritude
 movement,
 Independence movements in the region.

After 1945:

Rebellion in Madagascar (1947),
 National liberation struggles: Indochina, China, India, Algeria,
 The Cold War,
 The leisure society.

Scenography “History, cultures, Creolization in Reunion”

The Second World War:

Impoverishment of the population,
 Mobilization of young Reunionese who join in fighting the Nazis,
 1946: The end of a world: end of the colonial status of Reunion (1946)
 and new contradictions,
 Birth of a more diversified press, radio talent shows,
 Growing role of the unions,
 1959: creation of the Communist Party of Reunion,
 Creation of the Union of Reunionese women: birth of an anti-colonial,
 anti-racist, and social feminism,
 La Sakay: a Reunionese colony in Madagascar, the colonizing impulse of
 Reunion and its failure,
 League of Human Rights and other associations,
 The Catholic Church and its hold on society,
 Literature: the Leblonds and their followers,
 Persistence of the ancestral tongue in families: Gujarati, Chinese and Tamil,
 Popular balls,
 First expressions of an identity awareness, the Creole language,
 Development of the island: roads, electrification, health, social system,
 demographic growth, education.

7. NEW CONFLICTS, NEW TERRITORIES [1960-1990]

Goals of the sequence

In this sequence the visitor is invited to become aware of the diversity
 arisen in thirty years affecting the territory: population growth,
 urbanization, declining rural world, organization of emigration toward
 mainland France, consumer society, massive arrival of civil servants
 coming from mainland France, blossoming of artistic expressions
 (literature, music, drama, visual arts), new social discriminations, new
 gender roles, new needs...

These transformations are accompanied by a quest for what unites and
 a reflection on the place of the island in the French Republic, in its region,
 in Europe and the world.

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Scenographic recommendations

The exhibition space displays significant objects of popular culture:
 scopitone, posters, radio, TV, computers, projection of virtual images,
 optical theaters...,
 Rise of a consumer society,
 New identity claims,
 Local practices of a leisure society,
 Rise of local scientific research and of the university,
 Night life: discos...,
 New demographic and economic challenges,
 Diversification in the economic world: rise of a service industry,
 Accelerated but badly planned urbanization, neglect of environmental
 protection.

Scenography “History and Culture of the native countries”

Indian Ocean: new frontiers, new States: China, India, Africa, Madagascar, Maurice... the OUA, movement of non-aligned countries, “Indian Ocean Zone of Peace”,

Military bases in the Indian Ocean: installation on the Chagos Islands of a pivotal naval US base to counter the Soviet presence,

Independence of Madagascar (1958) and Mauritius (1968),

France: birth of the 5th Republic,

1968: social and cultural events through the world,

The Algerian War for national liberation: its impact on France and on Reunion,

Tourism as a new industry: new destinations, new representations of exoticism,

Intellectual movements: structuralism, cultural (New Wave, etc), literary, post-modernism, contemporary art,

The years of Pop,

The new culture industry,

The oil crisis of 1974.

Scenography “History, cultures, Creolization in Reunion”

The years 1960–1980:

End of the sugar cane hegemony. End of the great local landholdings, closing of sugar factories, multinationals taking over the sugar cane industry,

Birth of numerous cultural associations,

Religious revival: construction of temples, mosques. Arrival of new churches: Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses,

Affirmation of the *maloya* as a cultural qualifier,

Zoreys (metropolitans): mass arrivals, new ways of life (privileges, fashion, wealth),

Acceleration of a consumer and leisure society and its signifiers,

Rise of the automobile as a social qualifier,

Assertiveness of the Creole language.

The years 1980–1990:

Revitalization and diversification of Islam (Shiites, **Karanes** [Indomuslims], **Bohras** [Gujarati Muslims]),

Birth of the first independent radios. End of the audiovisual monopoly,

Decentralization law: creation of a ‘Region’,

Growing tourism and consequent modifications of the landscape: invention of the “terroir,” creation of table d’hôte, of B&B,

New representations of Reunion and its tourist territories: the “Deep South”, tours (cultic, cultural...)... How to sell Reunion?

Music: concerts, blossoming of music groups. All the groups, whatever their style, assume the heritage of Creole culture in the musical esthetics as well as in the lyrics written in Creole,

New sports: hang-gliding, paragliding, rock climbing, canoeing, bungee jumping, windsurfing, big game fishing, scuba diving... Reunion as a leisure park,

Rise of a contemporary art scene,

The environment: a new challenge,

The car: increase of its role in social life,

Cuisine: fast-food but also “Salon du Terroir” (Country cooking) and diversification of food,

Construction of a vacation area on the coast, at Saint-Gilles (bars, restaurants, boutiques), a “sea, sex and sun” world,

The “Métropole”: invention of a space. France becomes “la métropole,” a France without history, culture and conflicts, a fictitious France,

Evolution of the major economic activities sectors. Development of service industries,

Creation of the BUMIDOM: organization of immigration of unskilled workers to France. Birth of an organized diaspora.

8. TODAY... ISSUES AND STAKES

Thematic development

This sequence of the exhibit is designed as a space of questioning, a space of reflection on the challenges facing the Reunionese society and territory through a series of simulations.

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How shall we live together in a territory presenting huge physical and economic constraints:

Putting in perspective the current way of life to question possible futures (end of the demographic transition, climatic changes...),

Presenting Reunion as a laboratory of possibilities,

Showing the processes that starting from the reactions of today allow to discern paths and act on the future,

Creating awareness and a sense of responsibility, especially in the younger public.

Economy and Development

Now that the island has become, in administrative and political terms, a "European region", what is its place in Europe and the Indoceanic region?

What are the perspectives in terms of employment?

Territory and development

How can urban development continue in an island with such a constraining geography?

What are the solutions suggested by other countries faced with the same questions? 167

What society for Reunion?

How can we imagine and build an original and viable society considering this long common and conflictual history shaped by all sorts of contributions?

The weight of history and of socio-economic ruptures on social relations and men/women relations,

Social and demographic challenges.

What cultural life, what needs, what facilities?

What are Reunion's contributions to current debates on interculturality, multiculturalism, globalization?

How can the cultural heritage be preserved and valorized?

How can Reunion join in the international discussion on art, literature, architecture?

VISITORS, USERS AND PARTNERS

168 The MCUR accommodates multiple publics that are encouraged to come back. It targets the usual publics of cultural facilities, including school children, students, scholars, tourists, but also the general resident population, including from surrounding districts.

For several years now the introduction in museums of new media, hitherto reserved to communication in general, has changed the notion of "public". Audiovisual technology, interactive technologies, the multiplication of temporary exhibitions have led museum officials to reconsider the place of the visitor, no longer supposed to be quiet and neutral, withdrawing behind the work, but someone who intervenes and responds to the works.

This led to a new discipline, *museology*, that studies display methods and publics. The museum's first concern is for the visitors: what are their desires, their criticisms, what are they looking for in the museum... so many questions whose answers should lead to readjusting the place *to better serve the public*. The Committee for the renovation of the Grand Gallery of the Jardin des Plantes defined this goal in the following terms:

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Our approach is based first on the conception of the exhibition as a whole, as a specific environment with its own economy; second on the visitor's relationship with this whole as an ongoing process. The point is less to try to figure out what a visitor understands or even remembers at the end of a visit with respect to predefined objectives, than *to bring to light the appropriation processes the visit triggers and after which a construction of meaning takes place.*

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170 For Reunion, various studies showed that the Reunionese public is not yet used to regularly visit places seen as “museums”. For ages, even more than in France, the museum was reserved to a small elite (“France” refers here to mainland France. The term “métropole,” widely used by local and national media and elected officials does not allow uninformed readers to understand to which place it is referred and still resonates with colonial meaning). In Reunion there is no such thing as a “museum culture” and exhibitions must make enormous efforts to keep receiving visitors after the opening. Used to performances, festivities and activities all year round the Reunionese public now has demands that have to be taken into consideration. However, inquiries on the public’s responses reveal a discrepancy between the feeling that “It’s not about me” and the wide range of cultural facilities (a good deal being about consumption and entertainment) and events. This points to a frustration about the forms of representation, the sense of being neglected in the planning and an impression that the representation does not coincide with the image the Reunionese visitor has of her world. The lack of cultural institutions spawned an intense policy in the last twenty years to make up for lost time, and its positive effects should not be underestimated. Up to now however a common reflection on a common scientific base of shared notions has been lacking.

We believe Reunionese expectations for a place like the MCUR are underestimated. Cultural players, people in charge of cultural associations speak about the longing for a place where the Reunionese could *visualize* their cultural history, contribute to, and alter its visualization, a place that would provide tools of knowledge unlike those of academic knowledge,

helping them give meaning to their world. The capacity to instill a “museum urge” in the Reunionese public must be considered. Even in France and most Western countries museums have become popular only very recently. Clearly the success of exhibitions is the result of the operators’ effort to make the space more “accessible”, more “open” and to offer multiple activities (the Centre Pompidou was a forerunner of this policy); the desire created by a broader receptivity to the world of other cultures; and a younger public and more leisure time. Why could not the same thing happen in Reunion? And we should not underestimate the Reunionese’s fondness for something “new”, their sophistication acquired from travel, television programs and the internet. Exhibitions combining the familiar and the unknown will arouse emotions, surprise, wonder, thereby fostering in response a respect for differences. The MCUR will develop an ample policy to encourage the public: discount cards, admission fees varying with the visitors’ income, fidelity programs, different fees for different age groups, a museum circuit...

Tourists will be attracted to exhibitions responding to their taste for the non-European world, their curiosity about the Indoceanic world and creolization processes. It will provide a unique opportunity to grasp the many facets of areas of civilization as different as the Muslim, Chinese, Hindu, African, Madagascan and of insular cultures in their encounter with the European and French world. Shunning a production of exoticism reproducing an institutionalized image of the Other, the MCUR’s ambition is to create an *inventory, an index of differences*, to enable to rediscover and study the forces of creativity and diversification in the native countries of the groups that formed the population of the island.

The research group of the *Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée* advanced a suggestion the MCUR embraces: "thinking museography starting from the publics instead of from the collections... Designing a suggestive and contrasted presentation." We start from the Reunionese public's experience and expectations, appeal to the senses, auditory, visual, the sense of smell... Concentrate on suggestiveness, avoid didactic stodginess, give the public the feeling it is not at school, but instead make visitors feel surprised, free to dream, to meditate, and want to come back... As soon as it opens the MCUR will create a system to gather information about the public: *who* comes to *which* event, and *why*? This evaluation method used in many museums and foundations provides precious information and gives visibility to the public's expectations so as to satisfy them. This committee will appraise the public's expectations, their representations, their behaviors and memorization modes by asking basic questions such as the role of writing and the use of communication technologies. How can the place be made more attractive? How can the MCUR become a "live museum", an exhibition venue provoking discussion, stirring curiosity, making you want to linger, to come back?

The MCUR is not just one more cultural institution, it aims at being a complementary facility, not to compete with what Reunion already has, but to trigger new dynamics.

The many government-subsidized stages and places of artistic production and expression attest to the vigor and vitality of the cultural world in Reunion, a highly positive factor for the MCUR. Each of these

institutions fulfills a specific mission but it is obvious that none of them respond to the MCUR's goals. Indeed, on Reunion there is no permanent place of research, exchange and discussion, exhibitions on the theme of 'the native civilizations and Reunionese unity,' whose main goal is to observe, analyze and represent the "Reunion" territory, human and physical, in its historical and cultural aspects over the centuries, showing the bonds between the worlds (African, European, Asian, insular, Muslim) that formed the Indian Ocean and produced creolization.

There is nothing comparable to the exhibition as we envisage it: *a cross-section interpretation of events where sociology, anthropology, linguistics, philosophy, philosophy of religions, geography, art history are summoned, where the polysemy of a moment is presented with its various actors' perceptions, representations, stories, myths.* Up to now the Salazie and Cilaos ecomuseums, the Stella Matutina and Villèle museums have presented *aspects* of the history and culture, but it is not their role to offer this intersected interpretation, or to make Reunion and the civilization contributions that played a role in the rise of its culture the *central object* of display and research.

The MCUR is a site encouraging transversality, finding connections between issues that are a priori held to belong to different fields (so if the MCUR co-organizes a symposium on the environment, in the same way it will call upon the expertise of the Museum of Natural History, the Conservatoire des Mascariens, the Conservatoire du Littoral, university professors, associations for the preservation and valorization of nature and the institutions in charge of territorial development).

This transversality meets the demands of the world that cannot be understood with a single paradigm.

Reunion is “small,” and there are many who feel the creation of new structures would go against the interest of the existing ones, exhausting the capacities of a public still unused to regularly visiting exhibition venues. The challenge facing us is twofold: the lack of habit of frequenting exhibition facilities and the public’s supposed indifference. Now we should point out instead that creating such places boosts the production and networking of energies and resources and encourages the public to frequent several locations. Thus the Quebec Museum of Civilization did not cause a decline in the other institutions but instead introduced a new dynamic of networking and sharing of energies and expertise. Rather than being the head of a network, implying an arbitrary hierarchization, the MCUR should prove to be the instigator of an authentic networking of the island’s cultural structures and institutions: in this sense it aims to be a space of confrontation and dialogue.

The MCUR encourages research and will seek to develop local and international partnerships with universities and research institutions. The *Assises de la Recherche de l’Océan Indien* (Conference on Research in the Indian Ocean) organized in June 2003 by the Reunion Region revealed a lack of knowledge, concepts and methodologies in the fields of human and social sciences. Consequently, researchers expressed the will to develop trans-disciplinary research on the worlds of the Indian

Ocean by creating and creating networks. This shortfall in social and human sciences is greater than in the fields of health, climate, life and nature sciences for reasons linked to linguistic differences, indifference to trans-disciplinarity and a neo-colonial attitude. The MCUR’s ambition is by no means to replace universities or research centers. On the other hand it has the responsibility, in partnership with local or international research centers, to provide an impulse to transdisciplinary research in its own field: the Indoceanic sphere and creolization. It will do so by sponsoring international meetings and seminars with publication of the proceedings, by accommodating resident scholars who will direct select seminars, give public lectures and share the conclusions of their research and by soliciting scholars by requests for expertise and specific commissions on topics chosen by the MCUR Scientific Committee. This research will be enhanced by publications and an online and printed review.

The MCUR wishes also to work with the business world by setting up partnerships for co-productions (sponsoring), inspiring initiatives producing economic spin-offs. For instance, co-productions (CD-ROM, DVD) with local (University, museums...) and regional (Maputo, Durban...) institutions by production companies based in either Reunion or elsewhere. This co-production principle also applies to the issuance of catalogs for the exhibitions, publications of seminar and conference proceedings, as well as a bi-annual MCUR magazine. A publishing firm with an editorial policy of focusing on the production and diffusion of knowledge that pertains to the MCUR problematic.

Zorey Baro Batarsité Bonbon piman Boutik
sinwa Brèd Créolie Engagisme Gramoun
Kabab Kabardock Kalbanon Kaz Kine Kour
Ladilafé Malbar Malogé Maloya Marrons
Marsh dann fé Pilon Kalou Rice-cooker
Samoussa Séga Servis kabaré Servis kaf
Servis makwalé Shemin la vi Shemin la mor
Sirandane Tisaneur Vane Zanbrokal Zarab
Zarboutan nout kiltir Zorey Baro Batarsité
Bonbon piman Boutik sinwa Brèd Créolie
Engagisme Gramoun Kabab Kabardock Kaf
Kalbanon Kaz Kine Kour Ladilafé Malbar
Malogé Maloya Marrons Marsh dann fé
Pilon Kalou Rice-cooker Samoussa Séga
Servis kabaré Servis kaf Servis makwalé
Shemin la vi Shemin la mor Sirandane
Tisaneur Vane Zanbrokal Zarab Zarboutan
nout kiltir Zorey Baro Batarsité Bonbon

MCUR | PROJECT FOR A MUSEUM OF THE PRESENT

ANNEX

SPEECH BY PAUL VERGÈS,

PRESIDENT OF THE REGIONAL COUNCIL OF REUNION ISLAND, 1999

La Maison des civilisations et de l'unité réunionnaise. "Reunion Island: At the Crossroads of Civilisations"

I wish to address one issue among all those of major importance and sketch the topics that would be debated. It seems to me that when we consider what concrete actions should be taken in the next twenty years, we must look at the changes which will affect our country, our population and the countries surrounding us. On that basis, it is all too clear that the problem we will have to confront will be population growth. It is so common nowadays to hear: "In 2025 the island's population will be one million" even if the figure will be reached in 2026 or 2027. Be as it may, in a quarter of a century or so, we will be one million. This fact requires that land management, export and environment preservation policies be designed with, always in mind, the objective of sustainable development.

To put population growth in perspective, let us look at the countries surrounding us where the changes will be even more dramatic: when the population on Reunion Island will reach 1 million, the Mauritian population will be about 1.2 million, Madagascar 30 million and Tanzania about 40 million. When we compare the demographic transitions which will take place in Latin America, Africa and Asia, the countries of the Indian Ocean Rim will experience the highest demographic increase. Three billion of the forthcoming 8 billion world's population will live in the countries surrounding the Indian Ocean. Our own situation cannot but be affected. The European Union will then include 25 or 30 countries and the old prophecy of "Europe from the Atlantic to the Ural " may come true. In our region, the SADC, currently confronted with serious problems, will consolidate its unity. I suggest that we ponder on some observers' and researchers' attempts at figuring out what the future will be —not that I consider them to be among the greatest thinkers— but let me quote some of them. Francis Fukuyama's

(in)famous phrase "This is the end of history and the last man" is meant to imply that the liberal model would inevitably develop, overcome all obstacles, and that history will come to an end. Samuel Huntington has claimed that "the 21st century will be the century of a struggle between civilizations and clashes between cultures," the source of conflict and confrontation—including war. We do not know what lies in store for us in the future, but we do know that major events will take place in the Indian Ocean. The majority of Muslims will inhabit the countries bordering the Indian Ocean, the centre of gravity of Islam will drift towards South-East Asia, more precisely Indonesia.

We are on Reunion Island at the crossroads of all those transformations. Our society does not yet have a cohesion and unity considering its history of centuries of brutality— slavery and colonialism— along with processes of creolization and hybridization of incoming communities. We are right in the midst of a future cultural and religious maelstrom.

No sustainable development can be effective if it is not driven and supported by a vision and by political resolve—and this, when you come to think of it, is a *cultural challenge*. Our history is not a very old history. Our common identity is still in the making. We can be fairly optimistic when we see that during the three centuries of our existence all the waves of (forced or not) immigrations have merged and followed a convergent route. But we do not have the cohesion that old nations have achieved, and our society is still criss-crossed by social and cultural divisions, making the cohesion of our social fabric all but certain.

On that basis, I argue that we must open a dialogue with our neighbors, and enter a process of give and take of ideas taking into account our environment. It is urgent that we do so because whatever the qualities and capacities of the Reunionese people, our island can hardly accommodate more than one million inhabitants, in a world that will have a population of 8 or 10 billion.

Cultural difference, social cohesion and sustainable development

Given the present and forthcoming conflicts, be they cultural, religious or other, the problem is for us to ensure sustainable development and, as far as our own population is concerned, to live on as a unified society but maintaining its diversity. During a century of barbarity and strife rarely matched before, the 20th century, some progress was made through the development of new ideas and concepts. In that respect, the June 1992 Rio Conference, which highlighted the need of protecting biodiversity, was a considerable cultural breakthrough. It put human being and humankind right within the frame of the whole planet's environment, a planet which existed before the human race appeared and will probably survive the extinction of humankind. The Rio Conference underscored the idea that our environment is the result of a long evolution process; a process created through a complex balance between the realm of plants and the realm of animals, to which we belong, that human activity must not jeopardize what has been in existence for hundreds, thousands or millions of years, and that we must resist committing the crime of

destroying such or such species and cloning up plant and animal biodiversity as we wish, simply because we have the means to do so. Let evolution operate, but let us not destroy one single species: we have no idea what will emerge in the future, what role evolution will play in our environment or what use we can put science to—in the making of medical drugs for instance. However, what struck me most in the Rio Conference was that all the world leaders and all those who are fighting for the protection of the environment did manage to get together and push forward the concept of sustainable development, a remarkable progress in the history of humankind—even if the following years have shown what difficulties we are confronted with when it comes to preserving plant and animal biodiversity—, but that they never thought of *defending cultural diversity*.

I do agree that it is imperative, essential and vital to save dolphins, sea-lions, or such and such animal species: it shows that man is aware of the importance of preserving environment so as to hand it down to future generations in the best possible state. But why cannot we also turn our attention on artistic creation and on culture—the result of social life and relations and the individual's permanent attempt to conceive

and express the reasons of its existence, origin and destiny? Why shouldn't traditions, tales, music, dance, beliefs, religions, in other words all forms of human-made expressions, be protected just as much as an animal species? Entire groups of people have been erased, and the civilizations and cultures of many are endangered. Now that culture is understood to be part of economic development, are we going to give free rein to the liberal globalization of trade and markets? Are we going to let a standard, uniform way of life spread when diversity is an asset and the sign of complexity and creativity? I claim that we must refuse uniformity, which is the main danger of liberal globalization and promote a form of humanism and universality, that is diversity in each and every part of the world, because this is where the substance of human creativity lies.

“La Maison des Civilisations et de l'Unité Réunionnaise”: a factor of social cohesion

A question arises: How can we Reunionese, a people which has always been encouraged to imitate the West, can promote, enrich, understand and explore what some

call their “roots” yet on the basis of our own cultural differences? If we can demonstrate that our cultural diversity strengthens our society instead of pulling it apart, that it is a binding force for dialogue and cohesion, that we respect others as equals and acknowledge the originality of each respective contribution, then we can talk of a Reunionese miracle: we will have managed to creolize all the incoming values without being assimilated by any one of them, whereas the general tendency is to try to assimilate groups different from one's own and make them fit into one's own cultural values. I think that this is Reunion Island's contribution to the world. What Reunion Island is saying to the world is that on a 2,500 sq km territory and over three centuries, a people has managed to integrate different cultures through creolization, without their differences becoming antagonistic forces and tearing our society apart. We have often been on the brink of explosion, but we have so far managed to reconcile our differences through pragmatic solutions—and we are constantly striving to do so. This is the very foundation of our project of a “Maison des Civilisations.” Its very title means that all the ancestors of groups which came from various continents and belonged to diverse civilizations, be they from Africa,

■ ■ ■ Madagascar, Europe, Dravidian and Moslem India, with all the cultural aspects attached to them will be given recognition. By referring to the notion of "heritage," we enhance the value of those civilizations while situating them all on an equal footing.

Yet, it is not simply a "Maison des Civilisations," it is a "Maison des Civilisations et de l'Unité Réunionnaise." We wish to operate a recognition and a reinterpretation of the civilizations our ancestors belonged to *and* to stress the necessity to strive for unity and solidarity through and beyond the contradictions brought by our forebears. I am not naïve and I know perfectly well that this island has experienced suffering, oppression, conflict and injustice throughout its history. But history has also shown that we have always sought to reach hybridity and unity. And I think that if we are content with taking mere budgetary measures, if we only talk of rates, charges, financial

planning and the like, we will not succeed. We may improve our situation on the material level, but we will make no progress in strengthening the connections between the inhabitants of Reunion Island. Faced with the impending conflicts that the Indian Ocean region will witness tomorrow, unity is our most precious asset.

Every day we see conflicts in the making, and plenty more are in store. This, in my opinion, makes it just as essential for us to set up a "Maison des Civilisations et de l'Unité Réunionnaise" as to achieve harmonious land management. Let us find amity in our heads also. Let us speak a common language, share a common vocabulary, put a common meaning in words and concepts, and we will have the pre-requisite for sustainable development, social cohesion rooted in and reinforced by a commonwealth of values built by ourselves and nurtured by all the civilizations our population originates from.

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THE DECLARATION OF NUNEA FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY: YES TO UNIVERSALITY, NO TO UNIFORMITY

The diversity that has enriched human culture throughout the world and throughout history is under attack. The constraints of the liberal market, the organization of current globalization and their consequences such as the uniformization of cultural production and of ways of life threaten the expressions of human creativity. The world economic order seeks to impose its policy on thought and creation.

Cultural diversity has always been subjected to the barbarism of conquering powers. The examples are too numerous to list. Let us cite: the plunder of Samarkand by Genghis Khan in the 12th century, the decimation of the Amerindians and the extermination of Tasmanians, the destruction of African kingdoms by the slave trade, the destruction of works of art everywhere, the burning of the Mexican Codex in the 16th century...so many cultures and civilizations have vanished.

Today, the conquest of territories has given way to the conquest of the mind. The hegemonic control of the market produces the same threats as past imperial systems, the domination of the strongest and the denial of so-called minority cultures.

To deplore it is not sufficient and surely withdrawing from the world would not stop the process of current globalization. We must fight to radically transform the modes and finality of exchanges.

We want to oppose the vitality of a continuous and diversified creation against the morbid violence of uniformity. We seek the exchange of artifacts, creations and meanings rather than a mere exchange of commodities. If we all consume the same thing, we will fall into an endless repetition of the same and this will lead to the abolition of exchange itself. We are not resigning ourselves to the logics

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of destruction either of plant and animal life or of human creation. Humanity would be impoverished.

In the last century, a ruthless predator, man, damaged the environment on an unprecedented scale. He now has the means to destroy it on an irreversible scale.

In June 1992, the Rio Conference called upon the international community to safeguard the biodiversity necessary for the survival of the planet. Its declaration affirmed the common responsibility of human kind in that endeavor. The declaration for the safeguard of biodiversity constituted a progress in the history of humanity, an act towards the preservation of humankind.

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This is why we are today launching an appeal: *the step achieved in Rio must be prolonged by an identical collective movement to preserve cultural diversity.*

In industrialized countries, the claim for "cultural exception" and the refusal of a uniform and standardized world have been put forward as a legitimate defense of the right to expression, creativity

and as the affirmation of a philosophy of life. *This claim must apply to all.* The so-called minority cultures have the same rights. Their cultures are sites of creation. They must not be forgotten. Their peoples proclaim the right to share with the world their original cultural contribution, which is a component of the common heritage of humanity.

We are therefore launching the following appeal:

- For the preservation of cultural diversity and against uniformity that impoverishes the world
- For the recognition and expression of the cultures of the so-called minorities
- To prevent the stifling of the universal dimension of each and any human culture by globalization.

"A UNIFORM CULTURE IS THE DEATH OF ALL CULTURE!
YES TO UNIVERSALITY,
NO TO UNIFORMITY."

**Numea, December 17, 1999,
by Marie-Claude Tjibaou
(New Caledonia) and
Paul Vergès
(Reunion Island)**

COLLOQUIUMS

1. *Cultural diversity and cultural identity*, 18-19 December 2001. Publication of the symposium proceedings, November 2002.
2. *Routes and itineraries of Reunionese identity*, 17-18 December 2003, proceedings forthcoming in 2005.

CULTURAL CONVENTION WITH MOZAMBIQUE

In October 2003, a Region Reunion delegation led by the President, Mr. Paul Vergès, visited Mozambique. The cultural and scientific delegates for the MCUR met with Dr. N'Kaima, Minister of Culture of Mozambique, Helder Ossemane, Head of the Department of Francophone studies, at the Pedagogic University of Mozambique at Maputo, and with artists, writers, including Mia Couto, writer of international fame, biologist, teacher, and with cultural associations. They joined the ceremony in memory of the Mozambican slaves and indentured workers deported from Inhambane to Reunion. They witnessed a slavery-related performance at the Centro Cultural Mapico-Moderno Cabo-Delgado by Mr Luis Madal Panguaide in the presence of the President of the Region and

the governor of the province of Cabo Delgado. They met with the socio-professional and cultural players of the province of Cabo Delgado and discussed the cultural aspect of the visit. This trip renewed the intellectual and cultural bonds between Reunion and Mozambique, fostering the signature of a cultural convention between the Republic of Mozambique and the Region Reunion in October 2004.

VISIT

Visit of the Vice-Minister of Culture of Mozambique, His Excellency Luis Antonio Covane and His Excellency Cheikh Sy, Director of UNESCO for Africa, 17-21 December 2003.

The visit was opened with the exhibition *RE/unions*, in the Hall of the Region: photographs of Mozambique and the Indian Ocean and Makondé masks, paintings and recumbent statues by Krilin Pounoussamy.

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SEMINARS

Seminars were organized to prepare the scientific and cultural program. In 2001 and 2002, international and Reunionese scholars and curators, representatives of cultural and religious associations, the University, the Reunionese diaspora, elected representatives, union members and lay personalities met to discuss the fundamental principles of the MCUR cultural project.

1. Seminar 26-27 April 2001, Region Reunion

Guests

Marie-Claude Tjibaou,
President of the *Centre Culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou*, New Caledonia.

Lorna Abungu,
Director AFRICOM, founder of the Museum at Nairobi.

Annette Viel,
Parks Canada, co-worker with Roland Arpin and author of several books on new museums. Presently *maître de conférences* at the University of Dijon.

Jean Guibal,
Director of the *Musée Dauphinois*. Conservator of the patrimony of Isère.

Marita Wikander,
Director of communications for the Skansen Museum, Stockholm, the oldest national identity museum in Europe.

Denis-Michel Boëll,
chargé de mission at the *Inspection des Musées de France* in charge of overseas territories, of the Museum of Popular Arts and European museums such as "Confluences".

Jean Cuisenier,
President *Société Française d'Ethnologie*.

SCET-DOM Team

Claude Gehin,
regional co-director for SCET-DOM-TOM, engineer ESTP, architect DPLG, graduate of the *Institut d'urbanisme de Paris*.

Pierre Megrot,
in charge of the study group, graduate of HEC, graduate of the *Institut d'urbanisme de Paris*.

Jean-Louis Martinot-Lagarde,
architect DPLG, graduate of the *Centre d'études Supérieures en Histoire et Conservation des Monuments Anciens*, *architecte des Bâtiments de France*, *urbaniste en Chef de l'État*.

2. Seminar 9 June 2001, Paris

Participants

Paul Vergès,
President Regional Council of Reunion, Senator.

Jean Cuisenier,
Société Française d'Ethnologie.

Claude Gehin,
regional co-director for SCET-DOM-TOM.

Elisabeth Ponama,
Culture collaborator, President Region Reunion.

Yunouss Omarjee,
scholar.

Sonia Chane-Kune,
researcher, scholar.

Christian Ghasarian,
anthropologist, Professor at the University of Neufchatel.

Pierre Megrot,
in charge of the study group, graduate of HEC, graduate of the *Institut d'urbanisme de Paris*.

François Lombard, [†]
member of the International Union of Architects, *équipe de programmation et de définition culturelle*, SCET-DOM-TOM.

Richard Lee-Tin,
social anthropologist, in charge of a survey and interviews with economic, cultural and social players and scholars of Reunion and France.

Jean-Michel Puydebat,
consultant, Société Abaque.

Jean-Paul Vachet,
consultant, Société Abaque.

Françoise Vergès,
Professor, Political Science, London.

3- Seminar 10-11 July 2001, Région Réunion

This seminar gathered outside participants and the Reunionese members of the scientific board to share their reflections on the facilities proposed following the survey performed by Abaque.

Outside Participants

Jean Cuisenier,
Société française d'ethnologie.

Claude Gehin,
assistant regional director at the SCET-DOM-TOM.

Pierre Megrot,
in charge of the study group, graduate of HEC, graduate of the *Institut d'urbanisme de Paris*.

Richard Lee-Tin,
social anthropologist, in charge of a survey and interviews with economic, cultural and social players and scholars of Reunion and France.

Jean-Michel Puydebat,
consultant, Société Abaque.

Jean-Paul Vachet,
consultant, Société Abaque.

Christian Ghasarian,
professor, anthropologist at the University of Neufchâtel.

Denis-Michel Boëll,
chargé de mission at the *Inspection des Musées de France* in charge of overseas territories, of the Museum of Popular Arts and European museums such as "Confluences".

Jean-Jacques Guth,
European Commission.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE MCUR PROJECT

1960s:

Affirmation of the Reunionese identity and unity, its tongue, its culture, its history, within movements conveying decolonization-related issues.

1970s:

Growth of a cultural movement — artists, linguists, historians, scholars, musicians— asserting and diffusing the framework for a discourse on Reunionese identity, its tongue, its history, its rites and artistic expressions.

1999:

Speech by Mr. Paul Vergès, President of the Reunion Region, Senator, in which he presents the philosophy of the project of the Maison des Civilisations et de l'Unité Réunionnaise.

2000:

A Consultant Bureau, SCET, undertakes an inquiry on a regional scale. A questionnaire is sent to hundreds of cultural players and other representatives of culture, meeting with people in charge of cultural facilities and museum institutions on the island.

Seminars held on the island with museum directors, conservators and personalities.

Creation of a committee that takes an active part in the seminars.

2001:

Follow-up of the seminars.

Symposium on "Diversity and Identity" in December, proceedings published in 2002.

2002:

Creation of the *Association pour La Maison des Civilisations et de l'Unité Réunionnaise* (AMCUR): its role is to acquaint the population with the project.

International personalities sponsor the project.

2003:

A delegation visits Mozambique.

Visit of Mr. Covane, Vice-Minister of Culture of Mozambique.

Symposium on "Roots and itineraries of Reunionese Unity", proceedings forthcoming in 2005.

December: study reports, architectural and museographic report are handed in.

2004:

Final draft of the scientific and cultural program (PSC) of the MCUR.

Vote of the PSC by the Reunion Region.

Definitive choice of the site for the MCUR at Saint-Paul.

Creation of the honorary title *Zarboutan nout Kiltir* that acknowledges the role of a Reunionese woman or man in the preservation, creation and transmission of the Reunionese *non-material cultural heritage*. The title is first awarded to Gérose Barivoitse, known as Lo Rwa Kaf, on 20 December 2004; in 2005 to Firmin Viry and posthumously to Gramoun Baba, Granmoun Bébé and Granmoun Lélé.

Participation in the convention on culture held at the instigation of the Reunion Region.

2005:

PSC in French and English on line.

Onset of a program of collection of memorial objects of the living present.

GLOSSARY

AMCUR: Association pour la Maison des Civilisations et de l'Unité réunionnaise (Association for the House of Civilizations and the Reunionese Unity). Its principal objective is to acquaint the Reunionese population with the MCUR project via encounters, discussions, lectures.

Baro: Gate.

Batarsité: Métissage. "Batar", in Reunionese Creole, does not have the same connotations as "bastard" in French or English.

Batay kok: Cock fight.

Bohras: Group of Ismailis settled in the Indian Ocean Countries.

Bonbon piman: Very spicy fritter prepared with beans, finely ground and fried.

Bouchon: Small cylindrical pâté stuffed with meat and wrapped in a thin rice crepe.

Boutik sinwa: Neighborhood grocery store often run by Reunionese of Chinese birth and which also served refreshments. For a long time it was a vital economical and social space, until the arrival and the development of supermarkets.

Brèd: Plants whose leaves and/or stems are cooked in a bouillon or fricassee to accompany the main dish based on rice.

BUMIDOM: Bureau des Migrations des départements d'outre-mer (Office of Migrations of the Overseas

Departments). This institution, formed in the early 1960s, organized the massive departure toward "Metropolitan" France of an important number of Reunionese young people.

Chan: Chinese version of Zen Buddhism.

CMU: *Couverture maladie universelle* (Free medical assistance).

COI: Commission de l'océan Indien (Indian Ocean Commission). Regional authority which groups the islands of the southwest area of the Indian Ocean.

Créolie: Literary movement launched by Gilbert Aubry and Jean-François Sam-Long from an expression coined by Jean Albany.

Dalon: Friend (a masculine word only).

DASS: Direction des Affaires sanitaires et sociales (Direction of Sanitary and Social Affairs).

DRAC: Direction régionale des Affaires culturelles (Regional Direction of Cultural Affairs).

Engagisme: After the slave trade and slavery were outlawed, the big landowners hired workers under contracts, "indentured labor", from India, Mozambique, Madagascar, China, the Comoro Islands.

Gramoun, granmoun: Elderly person. Term expressing respect and admiration.

Grands blancs: Big landowners, some of whom turned to wholesale distribution and import-export.

ICOM: International Council of Museums.

ILOI: Institut de l'image de l'océan Indien (Indian Ocean Institute of the Image). This school, located in the town of Port in La Réunion, trains students in multimedia, conception of animated films, etc.

IORARC: Indian Ocean Rim Association of Regional Cooperation. Cooperation body of the Indian Ocean countries.

Jako: Sacred street dancer linked to Malbar religions practices. A devotee of the monkey-god Hanvman, he usually "performs" on January 1.

Kaf, Kafrine: Reunionese woman or man acknowledging an African or Malagasy origin. The word can have an affectionate connotation as well.

Kalbanon: Collective housing where the indentured workers lived, and then the farm workers on the large sugar plantations.

Kamionbar: Truck renovated to serve hot and cold food and drinks.

Karanes: Muslims, Shiites or Ismailis originally from the Indian Continent who have lived in Madagascar.

Kass Koko: Coconut harvest or breaking open the coconut.

Kaz: House. Any type of housing.

Kine: Lottery game.

Kour: Yard with lawn and trees, usually in front of the house.

Ladilafé: Rumors, often malicious.

Libre: Slave emancipated before the abolition of slavery (1848).

Macadam: Name given to forced labor after the abolition of slavery; vagrants were then sentenced to build roads.

Malbar: Reunionese woman or man acknowledging (or treated as such) an Indian origin (South of India or Bengal) or practicing rites linked to the Reunionese forms of Hinduism.

Malogé: Music born from the contact between reggae and maloya.

Maloya: Dance and song arisen from those of the slaves and the indentured workers, performed either on the occasion of mystical ceremonies celebrating the ancestors (*servis kabaré*, *servis kaf*, *servis makwalé*), or in a secular manner during public musical events (*kabar*). Maloya, marginalized for a long time, was brought back into vogue by the anti-colonial militants and the leaders of the Parti communiste réunionnais (Reunionese Communist Party) in the late 1960s. It is now often considered to be the "identitary" Reunionese music.

Marmay: Children.

Marron: Runaway plantation slaves organized in more or less large bands in the cirques and on the heights of the island.

Marsh dann fé: Malbar ceremony honoring the goddess Pandialé. After eighteen days of fasting, penitents walk over burning embers.

MCUR: Maison des civilisations et de l'unité réunionnaise (House of Civilizations and Reunionese Unity).

Moringue: Dance from Mozambique, brought by Mozambican and Malagasies, similar to capoeira.

NTIC: New technologies of information and communication.

OJA: Organisation de l'Unité africaine (Organization of African Unity).

Pilon: Stone mortar in which are ground with a kalou (pestle) the spices and chili pepper which feature in many Reunionese dishes.

PNUD: Programme des Nations unies pour le développement (United Nations Program for Development).

PSC: Scientific and Cultural Project.

Rice-cooker: Electric cooker for steaming rice.

RMI: Revenu minimum d'insertion (Minimum Welfare payment).

SADC: Southern African Development Community. Body which groups the countries of Austral Africa, including the islands of the southwest of the Indian Ocean.

Salle verte: Temporary construction made with leaves and branches for family gatherings (baptism, wedding...).

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Sarèt béf: Cart pulled by oxen.

SCET: Société centrale pour l'équipement du territoire (Central agency for territorial development).

Samoussa: Triangular-shaped fried turnover stuffed with meat, fish or cheese.

Séga: Dance and song, probably born of a contact between maloya and the quadrille.

Servis kabaré: Ceremony of Malagasy origin, to honor the ancestors.

Servis kaf: Ceremony originally from Mozambique to honor the ancients.

Shemin la vi, shemin la mor: "Chemins de vie, chemins de mort" (Ways of life, ways of death). Here it designates the social practices related to the different rites of passage, from birth to death.

Sirandane: Coded riddle.

Tisaneur: Specialist in medicinal plants, healer.

UFR: Union des Femmes de La Réunion (Union of the Women of Reunion). Created in 1958, this organization, close to the PCR, was the spearhead of a great many social campaigns.

UGTRF: Union générale des Travailleurs réunionnais en France (General Union of Reunionese workers in France). For a long time it federated the progressive student and worker movements of the Reunionese in France, notably from the 1960s to the 1990s.

Vane: Round basketwork, with a more or less flat bottom, in which rice or bréd are sorted out.

Zanbrokal: Dish consisting of saffron rice and beans cooked together. As a metaphor it means a mixture, métissage.

Zarab: Reunionese woman or man of Muslim origin, of Indian faith, usually from the Gujerat.

Zarboutan nout kiltir: "Pillar of our culture". This title, created by the MCUR, is awarded to a Reunionese woman or man who played (and still plays) an important role in the preservation, development, creation, and transmission of the Reunionese immaterial cultural heritage.

Zéguiy: Hindu ceremony in honor of the god Mourouga, son of Shiva.

Zorey: The word, the etymology of which is the object of discussion, designates the "Metropolitan" French born outside of Reunion (in continental France usually), residing and/or working on the island.

Zourit: Octopus.

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PROJECT FOR A MUSEUM OF THE PRESENT

La Maison des Civilisations et de l'Unité Réunionnaise : in this future museum of the present, scheduled to open in 2010 on Reunion Island, the history and culture of a Creole society without a pre-colonial past will be shown. 200 000 slaves, in their majority from Madagascar and East Africa, dozen of thousands of indentured workers from South India, the Comoros, Madagascar, Mozambique, thousands of Chinese, of Muslims from Gujarāt, and settlers from France and Europe contributed to the processes of creolization at work on the island. To this day, as a heterogeneous, pluri-cultural, pluri-lingual and pluri-religious society, Reunion Island embodies a singularity which is at the heart of many contemporary issues: making diversity the condition of a unity. In this text, postcolonial thinkers Françoise Vergès and Carpanin Marimoutou revisit for La Maison des Civilisations et de l'Unité Réunionnaise the methodology of a postcolonial museum of the present suggesting visual forms to show the unforeseen, unexpected and unpredictable consequences of the processes of creolization at play in the Indoceanic world and on Reunion island.



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