

PAPER

INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL COOPERATION IN MUSEUMS OF UZBEKISTAN: EXPERIENCE OF EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

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Abstract

This article analyzes the initiatives of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in the 1950s aimed at strengthening cultural ties through cooperation with museums in Uzbekistan. It also explores historical processes related to the promotion of museum activities via anniversary symposia and international events organized by UNESCO in the 1950s. The study examines processes of cultural exchange and professional development through traveling exhibitions based on catalogs and projects developed by ICOM. The article also presents the scale of events organized to strengthen international relations in the context of global socio-political challenges in the second half of the 20th century.

Key words: ICOM, UNESCO, international cultural events, cultural exchange, cultural projects, traveling exhibitions, symposia, international scientific-practical conferences, resolutions, international cultural-diplomatic relations.

Introduction

Museums play an irreplaceable role in cultural relations, enriching world cultures and fostering mutual respect among nations. The concept of museology emerged as a scientific category in the mid-19th century and gained broader recognition

in the 20th century through the adoption of several international and national regulatory and advisory documents. Since the 1950s, UNESCO has organized various symposia and international conferences to promote the development of museum activities at the global level. These events aimed to improve museum operations and implement educational

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programs. The establishment of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in 1946 ensured international cooperation among museums, fostering professional development and exchange.

Research Methodology

Existing scientific literature on the activities of Uzbek museums during this period primarily analyzes them in the context of political and ideological propaganda. Works by L.M. Landa and Yu.I. Glass, as well as publications prepared by X. Sodiqova, Yu. Glass, and Ye. Soylov, provide guidance and analyze the general state of central Uzbek museum exhibitions significant to visitors of that time. Additionally, research by N. Sodiqova stands out, offering detailed studies of nearly a century of museum development, achievements, international cultural relations, and challenges in Uzbekistan, excluding the ideological aspects introduced during that period. Archival materials from the Uzbek National Archive concerning the activities of the Museum Department under the Ministry of Culture served as an important source for examining the processes of international cultural cooperation in museum activities.

Analysis and Results

The cooperation between ICOM and the Soviet Union expanded the scope of museum activities and enhanced participation in the global museum network. It strengthened ties between museums and facilitated the exchange of knowledge. ICOM conferences were held in 1948, 1950, 1953, and 1958. The detailed report of the III General Conference in Italy in 1953 further elaborated the activities of separate museum sections, including Archaeology and History Museums, Science and Educational Museums, Art and Ethnography Museums, and the Promotion of Museums. Scientific research related to these areas was published regularly.

By the 1950s, efforts were made to strengthen cultural diplomacy through museums. International events and exhibitions aimed to present “intellectual and cultural” processes opposing “negative ideological” influences. During this period, Soviet museums maintained cultural contacts with 120 countries. In 1953,

the III ICOM Conference established a separate committee on museum promotion, addressing cooperation with schools, traveling exhibitions, educational clubs, and the role of museums in education. The artistic and aesthetic development of the audience, including children’s art and practical art workshops, museum androgogy, tours, lectures, and conferences, was emphasized. Exhibition environment and architectural space were highlighted as key factors in cultivating artistic taste.

The Uzbekistan State Art Museum developed educational programs based on school pedagogy, enhancing knowledge and skills about the cultures of different peoples. From 1956, several schools in Tashkent began teaching foreign Eastern languages, fostering internationalism and cultural awareness among the younger generation. Art competitions for students and amateur artists facilitated participation in International Friendship Club festivals.

At the IV ICOM Conference in Switzerland in 1956, issues of exhibition layout and museum etiquette codes were analyzed. Representatives from Central Asian museums participated only from 1958 onwards. On March 5–6, 1958, the Minister of Culture of the Uzbek SSR, A.M. Qo‘chqorov, and the deputy director of the Department for the Protection of Fine Arts and Monuments, A. Paramonov, participated for the first time at an ICOM Committee meeting in Moscow. The meeting focused on museum architecture, featuring presentations on gallery design and modern museum buildings. This provided participants with valuable insights, as museum architecture in Uzbekistan was still emerging based on Soviet architectural policies and socialist realism functionalism. The second day of the committee meeting included discussions and reports, such as K.I. Butenko’s presentation on promoting fine arts in museums. National committees supporting ICOM’s programs were established to provide assistance and coordination, reporting annually on activities. By 1958, these committees operated in 43 countries, implementing international museum standards.

At the 1958 ICOM meeting, Italian art historian Lionello Venturi presented on “Museums and

the Promotion of Fine Arts.” He proposed principles for displaying artworks to enhance audience perception, emphasizing the role of rare works in exhibitions and the use of “collection exhibitions” for ease of display and selection. Venturi also advocated for presenting artworks in chronologically consistent frameworks to reflect the development of national art schools. These practices, at the time, were implemented primarily in the Louvre Museum.

ICOM highlighted the importance of funding and facilitating international exchanges of exhibitions and exhibits. Agreements were signed to enhance the activities of museums in Asia and strengthen links between European and Asian museums, expanding cultural tourism resources through museum-based archaeological preservation. Archival records of the Uzbek SSR Ministry of Culture detail the creation of files with 586 periodicals, 20,000 museum documents, and 12,000 photographs, along with a museum card index. By 1960, ICOM developed a general basic catalog of museums; however, Uzbek museums were not included due to the lack of initial data.

Since 195X, UNESCO organized traveling exhibitions of “Art Reproductions,” including “Leonardo da Vinci,” “Japanese Prints,” “Persian Miniatures,” and “18th-Century World Paintings” in Soviet museums. These initiatives strengthened international cultural exchanges and diplomatic ties, allowing the USSR to promote its political image and leverage economic and cultural benefits. For example, in 1952, the Uzbekistan Art Museum hosted an exhibition celebrating the 500th anniversary of Leonardo da Vinci, including works such as *Madonna with Flower*, *Madonna Litta*, *Madonna of the Rocks*, and *Mona Lisa*, alongside reproductions of his scientific and anatomical sketches and autographs. Lectures on his life and work were given in April.

From 1957, UNESCO approved a ten-year project to promote balanced cultural exchange between East and West, developing activities for Asian and African museums and facilitating collections exchanges. The ICOM journal *MUSEUM* regularly covered professional issues but included no analytical articles by Uzbek museum specialists, except for the work of Russian art historian J.A.

Masulevich and architect S.S. Davidov.

The ICOM News bulletin, published six times a year in English and French, provided summaries of ICOM conventions, sessions, publications, and updates on museum activities worldwide. Unfortunately, Soviet museums did not subscribe due to funding issues. In September 1957, Amsterdam hosted a joint ICOM session on the preservation and restoration of fine arts, including painting and manuscript miniatures. In 1958, meetings addressed museum architecture, new construction, and adaptation of historical buildings, coinciding with the emergence of functional architecture in Soviet museum buildings. In Uzbekistan, by the late 1960s, only regional museum buildings were constructed; by the 1970s, central art and history museums developed distinctive architectural forms, enabling modern exhibition layouts.

By 1959, ICOM elected 15 full members and 35 correspondent members from Soviet states, enhancing the international development of museum activities. Within the 1960s, the Soviet Union sent nearly 250 exhibitions of historically significant collections worldwide, contributing to international cultural heritage promotion in collaboration with ICOM and UNESCO. Exhibitions, such as the “Treasure of Scythian Art,” were shown in the USA, France, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Yugoslavia, leaving a strong impression on international audiences.

Visits by foreign dignitaries further reinforced museums’ role in cultural diplomacy. High-level officials from China, Poland, and Albania visited the Uzbekistan State Art Museum. The All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries developed programs in the 1950s to facilitate foreign visits to museums and cultural sites, focusing on international exchange in art, literature, and other cultural fields. For example, Norwegian delegation member Liza Shede described the development of national culture and museum infrastructure in Uzbekistan during a 1953 press conference.

The organization of international festivals and exhibitions, including Sri Lankan and Moroccan participation, highlighted Uzbekistan’s cultural presence abroad and fostered diplomatic relations.

The establishment of the Uzbekistan Society in 1958 aimed to strengthen friendship and cultural ties with foreign countries.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The development of museum communications and tourism was significantly influenced by the establishment of international museum organizations such as ICOM. By the 1950s, achievements in cultural relations defined the progress of museums and facilitated their international presence under the influence of Soviet museums. Collections and exhibition exchanges were conducted with countries across all continents, with Soviet museums maintaining cultural contacts with 120 countries. The creation of the Uzbekistan Society in 1958 further institutionalized friendship and cultural cooperation with foreign nations, strengthening the role of museums in international relations.

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