

WHAT DOES THE 21ST CENTURY NEED OF ITS MUSEUMS?

Culture in the 21st century is characterised by high-speed information turnover, producing short attention spans and judgements of the world determined by the here and now, and by versions of life pedalled by a 'symbolic class' of people - politicians, journalists, advertisers, managers etc.

If it is agreed that a counterbalance is needed, then museums uniquely supply it. Museums exist within communities. They give those communities their sense of identity in time and space. In particular, through their collections, retained from generation to generation, they give people a sense of responsibility for legacy, a responsibility for those yet to be born. They can offer people, by investigating and debating versions of life, routes to the stuff of life.

Museums need to do two things now. In Scotland, they need to respond positively to the fact that, through new policy development at national level, they now have the opportunity to have themselves taken seriously as a social necessity. They need also to develop an understanding of themselves in terms more of their social role, less of their internal considerations - to develop from a perspective that museums exist because of their collections, to one that sees the museum purpose as maximising the meanings and value of cultural heritage in everyone's lives, the collections being a means to the end.

Government needs to do one thing now. If its job is to produce a healthy, confident, aspirational and creative society through an entitlement to culture, then they must clearly acknowledge that this has to be reflected in levels of core developmental subsidy (as opposed to one-off project funding). If we have the resources, we can deliver, and continue to deliver. Otherwise the policy will be a double whammy: state control of culture coupled with underfunding.

lan

From: peter.stott@falkirk.gov.uk
Sent: 24 September 2004 15:06
To: inform@scottishmuseums.org.uk
Cc: info
Subject: cultural commission consultation/shared vision[Scanned]



Attachment
Information. (552 B..



consultation.doc
(28 KB)

Hello,

Attached is a brief response to the consultation.

Peter Stott
Falkirk Museums