

MAAOA

Musée d'Arts Africains Océaniens Amérindiens

[Re]thinking the MAAOA Reflection Committee

1 – Be(ing) in collections SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

12 september 2025

8am (New York) – 12am (Dakar) – 2pm (Paris) – 11pm (Port Villa)

video conferencing



[Re]think the MAAOA

Reflection Committee

OBJECTIVES

Already led by other institutions in France and abroad, the reflection that is beginning for the MAAOA goes beyond the framework of a single project to redesign the visit itinerary. With its collections at the heart of this approach, this project is guided by the importance of heritage, ethical, social, societal and environmental issues that animate not only the world of museums, but also the public and therefore society as a whole.

The work of the reflection committee aims to ensure the reassessment of scientific expectations and the scope of the institution's missions, in line with the Transversal Scientific and Cultural Project of the Museums of Marseille (PSCES). The result will be both a methodological framework for implementation and the definition of the lines of force in the programmatic specifications. .

Beyond this primary objective, the work of the reflection committee also aims to draft an ethical charter that will lay down the fundamentals, intrinsically thought as evolutionary, of the scientific and moral identity of the institution.

Four topics lead this open reflection and will guide the work of this committee:

[Be(ing) in collections
Be(ing) in dialogue
Be(ing) in networked
Be(ing) in resonance]

The questioning of each of these subjects will go beyond an exclusively museum and historical approach, opening up the process to transversal themes such as absence and emptiness, terroir and ecology, of circulation and movement or even creation and cooperation. Our exchanges will also be enriched by the confrontation of the project with enlightening concepts such as those of mutant objects, post-heritage, multiperspectivity, diasporic objects, and identity in rhizomes.

The only certainty at this stage is that the MAAOA will be neither quite the same nor quite another, but only what WE, museum professionals, visitors, researchers, thinkers, artists, citizens... , let's do some.

Benoît MARTIN
Director of the MAAOA

1 - Opening committee - Be(ing) in collections

*Go to Marseille. Marseille will respond to you. This city is a lesson.
The guilty indifference of contemporaries does not disarm her.
Attentive, she listens to the voice of the wider world and, drawing on her experience,
she engages, in our name, the conversation with the whole earth.*

Albert Londres, *Marseille porte du sud*, 1927

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

Welcoming remarks and presentation of the sequene 5'

INTRODUCTORY TALK 15'

- Introduction by the Director of the Museums of Marseille / Nicolas Misery 10'
- Presentation of the project [Re]thinking the MAAOA / Benoît Martin 5'

INTRODUCTION 30'

- Introduction by the President of the committee / Pr Souleymane Bachir Diagne 20'
- Presentation of the theme and expectations of the first committee / Benoît Martin 10'

DISCUSSIONS 90'

At the heart of the approach initiated by MAAOA are its collections. They are both at the origin of its creation, have drawn its initial identity and lead directly and indirectly to the reflections and questions that we, the reflection committee, grasp, like all society, today. It is therefore around them, their stories, their shortcomings but also their contradictions that our first exchanges are structured.

The MAAOA collections in a few words

- 4160 subjects-objects and ancestral human remains preserved in the collections
- 990 subjects-objects and ancestral human remains presented in three exhibition rooms at the Centre de la Vieille Charité
- From multiple origins:
 - Significant private donations and bequests, markers of Marseille's history
 - Acquisitions and collections by the MAAOA scientific teams
 - Repositories of sensitive collections that are sources of contemporary debate

Orientation 1: Be(ing) in collections / Be(ing) in museums



The central place of collections in the history of MAAOA invites us to question the links between collections and museums, not only the nature and role of these links, but also their scientific and historical positioning. It also invites us to question their political, symbolic and societal weight within a changing and polymorphic ecosystem with, as a framework, that of the Scientific, Cultural, Educational and Social Project of the Museums of Marseille.

Orientation 2: Be(ing) in collections / Be(ing) the world



The subject-objects and ancestral human remains that make up MAAOA's collections are fragments of reality, voluntary or involuntary witness actors in history and its geography at local, national, and international levels. These collections are thus worlds that open to the perception of a common history, past, present and future and that make possible the continuous recomposition of ecologies not substitutive but cumulative.

Orientation 3: Be(ing) in collections / Be(ing) and collections



The subject-objects and ancestral human remains that make up the collections are inextricably linked to the beings who punctuate their history: creators, users, collectors, sellers, collectors, researchers, contemplators... Composed of an original plurivocity, it is up to us to rethink their positioning within the museum in order to make these individualities visible and to make audible these narratives, even those that are discordant, not in a quest for globalization, of erasure, but of relational transparency opening up to contemporary dialogue.

Orientation 4: Be(ing) in collections / Be(ing) collected



As a heterogeneous or homogeneous whole, the result of a subjective construction but intellectually, aesthetically, and emotionally thought out as coherent, collections are revealing of intentions. If being collected is a construction through the prism of the I, it is up to the museum to multiply decentrings in order to question choices, to understand ruptures but also to go beyond gaps, the forgetfulness, to give rise to states of understanding that are fertile for new narratives offered to all.

REVIEW

20'

CONCLUSION

10'