

CONSTRUCTING THE PAST:  
COMMUNICATING WITH OBJECTS IN BURGUNDIAN  
ARCHAEOLOGY MUSEUMS

by

Susan Elizabeth Wallace

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Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_ Advisor  
\_\_\_\_\_ Reader  
\_\_\_\_\_ Reader

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## INTRODUCTION

Control of history and interpretations of history have become growing concerns over the past decade in the United States. Certain issues have gained widespread attention in the national news and have stimulated public awareness. The controversy over the ownership of Native American skeletal remains and grave objects held by universities and museums across the country culminated in the "Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act" (Public Law 101-601), signed into law in November of 1990. In 1991 the National Museum of American Art in Washington, D.C. ignited controversy with their revisionist exhibition *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920*. And in 1992, preparations for the Columbian Quincentenary gave rise to increasingly bitter debates over whether Columbus should be depicted as a heroic explorer and discoverer of a "New World," or as an inept navigator whose stumbling upon the Americas led to slavery and genocide of millions of Native Americans.

It is interesting to note that all of these controversies over the varying interpretations of history have targeted museums, giving lie to the old belief that museums are objective, apolitical portrayals of a static past. Instead, museums are being recognized as the institutions unofficial-

ly-officially charged with the didactic presentations of history to the general public, and are increasingly being called upon to justify their interpretation by a variety of interest groups who see the exhibits as bolstering or undermining their various agendas. No matter how objective a museum might try to be in the presentation of the past, it may be called to task for perceived sins of omission or commission. It has become clear that whoever controls perceptions of history has great political and ideological power and that museums, by their very definition as collectors, preservers, and exhibitors of the past, have that control.

With all the hullabaloo over history in museums in the United States, it is interesting to note that very little public attention has been paid to museums' control and interpretation of the past in France. There has been some call for museum reform (a "New Museology") from the academic left, but the public, when they can be induced to visit a museum, accept that what they see *is* history—that is, historical fact—and generally do not question the interpretation. With the 1992/3 dissolution of borders in the European Community (EC) and the concomitant nationalistic antagonisms, one wonders if this will long remain true.

The transition from European nations to European Union (EU) is not proving to be easy, and conflicts are erupting: the United Kingdom refused to lose its Pound Sterling to the new "Ecu"; there is widespread British resentment to the new

"Chunnel" (the Channel Tunnel); in the summer of 1990 French farmers burned a truckload of live sheep from Britain and other truckloads of beef to protest importation of foreign meat that was driving down prices; and in the autumn of 1990 protesting Spanish truckers blocked all the passes through the Pyrenees Mountains for a week. In 1992 French farmers blocked all major north-south roads to protest against the abolition of farm subsidies as dictated by EC treaty agreements and won; Denmark voted not to ratify the Maastricht Treaty, and France passed it only narrowly. The 1993 European monetary crisis showed that conditions had not improved much, and in 1994 Norway voted not to join the EU.

The EU, instead of truly uniting Europe, seems rather to be increasing national hostilities and promoting nationalism. Even more disturbing is the growing trend of nationalistic exclusiveness in Western Europe, as countries faced with economic difficulties of their own try to stem the flow of immigrants from Eastern Europe and North Africa, with the residents of the countries becoming increasingly antagonistic towards the immigrants whom they perceive as a threat to their jobs, as can be seen in the recurring outbreaks of Neo-Nazi violence against foreigners in Germany and the resulting revocation of their long-standing asylum policy.

The leaders of the EU might be tempted to look to the past for answers to their current problems, since the Valois kings of sixteenth-century France faced similar problems in creating a unified France out of numerous duchies and

princedom which harbored centuries old antagonisms. What the Valois created was the nationalistic myth of "Nos ancêtres, les Gaulois" ("Our ancestor, the Gauls"), harkening back to the Iron Age when "Gallia est omnis" ("Gaul is a whole") (Caesar 1979:2/3). This was a time far enough removed not to raise any personal feelings in people, yet when the lands claimed by France constituted a unit, and, though it was "divided into three parts" (Caesar 1979:3) (similar to the various divisions in France), Vercingetorix arose to become the first leader of a unified gaul, much as the Valois desired to be rulers of a unified France (and any other lands they could get their hands on). The promotion of the idea of a common Gaulish ancestry has the triple function of creating local roots for the people (our ancestors, the Gauls), creating a link between the different ethnic groups in France and justification for national unity (Gaul was a "whole"), and justification for imperialistic policies (all the lands of the Gauls should be part of France) (Viallaneix and Ehrhard 1982). It also created a common history for all the people of France to fulfill a political need.<sup>1</sup>

While rallying people around a common past worked in France, the past is no universal panacea, as the EU leaders likely realize. History must be used with care, as by

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<sup>1</sup>This history became so pervasive that it was taught in all schools and was written into all text books, such that, under the auspices of French colonialism, native children in Algeria and Senegal were taught that *their* ancestors were the Gauls.

picking and choosing one can support almost any political policy by appealing to the past. Hitler tried to legitimize his invasion and annexation of European countries by claiming to be creating an Aryan homeland. Recently, Greece has been running a major publicity campaign asserting that "Macedonia is Greece," because they are terrified that if and when the Serbs finish with Bosnia-Herzegovina, their next move would be to try to reunite the ancient region of Macedonia, which is currently split between Greece and Serbia.

In the midst of the problems faced by the EU, the splintering of Eastern Europe, and the unrest of French farmers and truckers, France is, nevertheless, in little danger of disintegrating into its historical regions. National unity is maintained through a sense of "Frenchness" that manifests itself most often in opposition to foreigners. But even so, with the social if not economic triumph of Socialism, regionalism is beginning to overshadow nationalism, and while old antagonisms are not being revived, pride in one's local roots—identifying oneself as Burgundian, or even more specifically as Auxerrois or Dijonnais—is growing. This regional identification is reflected in the local archaeology museums throughout France and amounts almost to a mandate: presentation of local history for the pride and empowerment of the community.

Before conducting research for this study, I assumed that French society would have a better sense of time and of its own history than would American society which has been removed from its early historical "roots." In France, the material evidence of history surrounds the people: they live in five-hundred-year-old buildings; thousand-year-old churches are common; and iron Age hill-forts are situated prominently on the tops of hills visible to all. I supposed that there would be a sense of historical continuity—a connectedness to the past—and time depth in French culture, and I hypothesized that it would be reflected in their constructions of history in museums.

Research showed that the time depth is there—nearly all towns can point to some material evidence of paleolithic occupation—but a real sense of connectedness to these early people and a feeling of continuity from the paleolithic to the present is lacking. Part of this discontinuity can be laid at the door of the mid-nineteenth-century chronological classifiers, such as Christian Jürgensen Thomsen and Gabriel de Mortillet, whose work is directly related to museums and will be discussed later. But much historical confusion results, despite a (now more amused than serious) insistence on recognizing "nos ancêtres, les Gaulois," from French history education in elementary and secondary schools not having been very successful (not to imply it has been more so in the United States). A realization of this failure could be seen as early as 1936 in the song "Au Lycée

Papillon" :

Vercingétorix né sous Louis-Philippe  
Battit les Chinois, un soir à Ronc' vaux.  
[Simon 1989:7]

[Vercingetorix, born during the reign of Louis-Philippe, / Battled the Chinese, one evening at Roncesvalles.<sup>2</sup> (My translation)]

The general public in France are no more in touch with their history than the acknowledgedly ahistorical Americans.

Nevertheless, amidst people who believe Napoleon was king of France, there are many active local historical societies throughout France. Often having been founded in the early nineteenth century and known generically as "*sociétés savantes*," these societies are made up of the local intelligentsia who take a keen interest in the history of their locality and frequently produce publications relating to local historical and current issues. While their members may be considered to be the "cultural elite" of provincial France, they are generally respected and often ignored by the community at large, but in local politics they maintain some clout. They are also those most interested in the local archaeology museums.

The members of the *sociétés savantes* feel a connectedness to the past. The perceived connection may be a modern romantic construct, such as the "Celtic" fires lit on Saint

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<sup>2</sup>Vercingetorix, first leader of a unified Gaul, died in 46 B.C. Louis-Philippe (1733-1850) was king of France from 1830 until 1848. Roncesvalles is the site of a legendary ambush of the Frankish army by the Saracens (or Basques, depending on which legend you read) in 778, as related in the *chanson de geste* the *Song of Roland*.

John's Eve (23 June, which is also Midsummer's Eve) in parts of Burgundy whose recent origins actually date to the 1920s (Crumley and Marquardt 1987). Or the connection may result from finding Roman coins in the garden of a generations-held family farm. Either way, the society members have an interest in the past and in how the past is presented in museums. The perceived connection to the past means that it is *their* past, and, having thus appropriated it, they feel justified in exercising some control over how their past is displayed. Since many of the early provincial archaeology museums were founded by the *sociétés savantes*, they had direct control over the presentation of the past.

Museums (appearances often to the contrary) are not static institutions, and their interpretations of the past change to meet the changing needs of the society they serve. As societies for various reasons (likely often financial) often gave over control of the museums they had founded to the local or State government (in the form of the Direction des musées de France [DMF], established in 1945 [Frèches 1979]), trained museum conservateurs took over care of the collections and their presentation.

One of the first tasks of these new conservateurs would have been to make some sense of the diverse, often highly eclectic, collections of the museums. Even in non-society founded museums, the collections had frequently been assembled haphazardly. Since the end of the nineteenth century, the major organizing principle for archaeological collec-

tions had been chronology. While the National Museum of Antiquities at Saint-Germain-en-Laye might organize its collections to present an overview of the entirety of French archaeology and prehistory, the smaller provincial museums usually only had bits and pieces of the archaeological past—a Merovingian cemetery, a Gallo-Roman villa, or a paleolithic camp site—that were difficult to organize to present a coherent picture of the past of the nation.

It was possible, though, to construct a picture of the past of the locality. A small town might not be the nation in miniature, but it might have been a very important center of pottery production in the Gallo-Roman period, like Gueugnon, or it might have been the site of a thriving paleolithic tool industry, like Avallon, or it could possess any other small, but significant, mark of distinction. Local history was what the society museums and the other provincial museums were best developed for. But importance attached to local history only really came into its own with the growing popularity of socialism in the 1960s and 70s, culminating in the election of François Mitterrand as President of France in 1981.

Socialism, with its focus on decentralization and the support of regionalism, was just what the provincial museums needed to give legitimacy to their collections. A region—and a museum's collection—was important for itself, not just for its place in the grand national scheme of things. Another aspect of socialism also was the importance of "la

*vie quotidienne*"—daily life—again, exactly where the provincial museums' strength lay. Focus shifted away from "masterpieces" to things that were more characteristic and could shed light on how people actually lived; potsherds became as important as, if not more important than, gold jewelry.

It is also telling that with the establishment of a socialist government, many provincial museums began programs of renovation and reinstallation. The money diverted to the regions for this purpose cannot be overlooked, but equally important was the realization that a story could be told by using the objects located in the small museums, however mundane they might seem. Nearly all of the museums in this study that have a conservateur have either recently renovated and reinstalled their archaeological collections, are in the process of doing so, or are in the planning stages. Often, if the museum also has a fine arts section, this is left alone, and only the archaeology section is redone. The focus of the new exhibits and installations is almost always themes or objects relating to daily life.

The change has been gradual enough that it is invisible from the inside. Not a single conservateur when asked if and how politics has influenced their exhibits recognized the shift in focus as related to politics. In fact, they did not usually mention the shift to exhibits related to daily life, probably because they were nearly all new enough to the field that they had been trained during or after the change in focus and, therefore, did not recognize it as a

change—a focus on daily life was just the way museums should be set up. (While I cannot be certain, I do not believe that any conservateur I interviewed was over fifty years old, and I believe the majority was under forty.)

With all the changes occurring in Burgundian archaeology museums, the renovations, the focus on daily life, and the importance of common-place objects, all the museums I visited nevertheless had their own unique feel. Their approaches to presenting the past, while often similar, were never identical. The information they wanted to convey and the objects with which they had to convey it combined to resulted in exhibits that were different from museum to museum.

This differentness is part of the nature of museums, due to the uniqueness of the objects they hold in their collections. This study will look at what it means to be a museum, how archaeology collections and museums have developed in France, how museum professionals work with those collections within the museums, and how they construct the past in archaeology museums in Burgundy.

## THE ORIGINS OF THE MUSEUM

According to the International Council of Museums (ICOM), any "non-profit making, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment" is considered to be a museum (ICOM 1990:3). The American Association of Museums (AAM) defines a museum as "an organized and permanent nonprofit institution, essentially educational or aesthetic in purpose, with professional staff, which owns and utilizes tangible objects, cares for them and exhibits them to the public on some regular schedule" (AAM 1978:9). Both of these definitions stress education and public accessibility as key features of museums, but historically this has rarely been the case.

## ANTIQUITY

The word "museum" derives (through the Latin) from the Greek word *mouseion*, which means "a seat of the Muses" (OED 1989), the nine sister goddesses in Greek mythology who were the patronesses of memory, inspiration, and the creative arts. While any place dedicated to learning and the arts could, in theory, have been called a *mouseion*, in the third

century B.C. the term came to be used to refer to a part of the great scholarly complex in Alexandria, Egypt, founded by Ptolemy I (Soter), and considered one of the major intellectual centers of the ancient world. Along with the famed Alexandrian Library, the Mouseion was situated in the royal quarter of Alexandria, known as the Bruchium (Jones 1971:55). While not conforming to the modern conception of a museum,

The Mouseion of Alexandria had some objects, including statues of thinkers, astronomical and surgical instruments, elephant trunks and animal hides, and a botanical and zoological park, but it was chiefly a university or philosophical academy—a kind of institute of advanced study with many prominent scholars in residence and supported by the state. [Alexander 1979:6]

Intended to aid in research and reserved for the use of those scholars, the collections of the Mouseion were not accessible to the general public.

Collections of works of art more or less open to the public did exist in ancient Greece. According to Bazin, by the third century B.C. various kinds of ex-votos were being brought to Greek temples where they were watched over by a sort of curator-priest known as a *hieropoei*, and by "the end of the antique world these treasuries of the sanctuaries were visited frequently, not only by devout pilgrims but also by tourists" (Bazin 1967:14). One such tourist was Pausanias, a Greek traveller and writer of the second century A.D. In his *Description of Greece* Pausanias writes that to the left of the Propylaea, or gateway, to the Acropolis in Athens there was a "building with pictures" (Pausanias

1931:1.xxii.6). About ten meters long by fifteen meters wide, the building had two windows and a door in the south wall opening onto a porch with three Doric columns. "The walls [of this building] show no traces of frescoes—probably the pictures described by Pausanias were painted on detachable boards or set up on easels" (Pausanias 1935:29). The building is also sometimes called the Pinakothekē (*pinakēs* meaning "paintings executed on wood," and *thekē* meaning "case"). While these panel-paintings may have served as ex-votos, their subject matter was often secular—most described by Pausanias had Homeric themes (Pausanias 1931:1.xxii.6)—and apparently were accessible to anyone interested, as Pausanias was.

While the Pinakothekē is the first known collection open to the general public, the act of collecting objects of interest has a much older history. (Indeed, collecting is not even a specifically human trait, for while humans are the only primates that collect and keep certain objects, other animals, such as pack rats and magpies, are renowned for their collecting propensities; nevertheless, humans are the only creatures who habitually *display* their collections.) How long humans have been collecting and displaying certain objects is unknown, but during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II (d. 562 B.C.) a building was constructed in Babylon that contained statues, commemorative stelae, objects from other cultures, such as the Hittites, and ancient objects from Ur (Oates 1979:152). Some scholars consider this

building and collection, as well as similar ones found at Nippur and Ur, to have been museums (Oates 1979; Woolley 1962), that at Nippur even containing an "archaeological collection" (Oates 1979:162); and in his excavation report Woolley even identified one object as a clay "museum label" (Woolley 1979:14, 111). More recently, scholars have questioned this assessment, considering such collections to have been temple treasure hoards (Mooney 1982), but whatever their function, the collections did exist.

The Romans were also avid collectors and prized Hellenistic statuary for their gardens and baths. They bought, or plundered, or copied what they liked. The Roman aristocracy took pride in erecting statues in forums, temples, porticoes, baths—"In short, Rome had no museum per se but all of Rome was a museum" (Bazin 1967:23). That Rome may also have had art galleries open to the public by the first century A.D. is suggested by Petronius Arbiter (Bazin 1967:20). In the *Satyricon*, the speaker and an old man discuss paintings and sculpture at which they are looking, and reference is made to "Some people who were walking in the galleries" (Petronius 1936:90).

Collecting was not limited to the West and the Middle East. Collections existed in early China and Japan. The Chinese stressed a philosophical and religious veneration of the past, and Emperor Hui-tsung (d. 1126) enlarged the Hsüan-ho palace to hold his collection of ten thousand archaeological objects and 6,396 paintings by 231 different

artists (Bazin 1967:23). Earlier, in Japan, a building known as the Shōsō-in was constructed on the grounds of the Todiji Monastery at Nara (near Kyoto) to receive the collection of the emperor Shomu (d. 756 A.D.), which contained Tang objects, objects sent from the Middle East, and 66,000 pieces of textiles, and, as it is regularly open to the public, might be considered to be the oldest continuing operating museum in the world (Bazin 1967:29, 34-35).

#### THE MIDDLE AGES

In the West, during the Middle Ages, collecting continued, in the tradition of the Pinakothek, in the great cathedrals and monasteries of Europe and Byzantium (though the collections were not usually open to the public). The first cathedral treasuries date to the seventh and eighth centuries and proliferated with royal patronage during the Carolingian epoch (Bazin 1967:31). The "treasures" consisted primarily of relics of saints and martyrs in reliquaries, frequently made of precious metals and encrusted with gems and semi-precious stones. Donations of other costly objects, such as silver candlesticks and altar plates, by wealthy patrons hoping to secure a place in Heaven helped swell the treasuries. Crusader zeal in pillaging art objects from the East while ostensibly making the world "safe for Christianity" also contributed to the growth of these treasuries and to the collections of the nobility.

The Crusader movements, however questionable their

motivations and effects, exposed many people to Middle Eastern culture, and, like visitors to foreign countries today, they often brought souvenirs back to Europe. During the Fourth Crusade (1202-1204), which originally was directed against Egypt, European crusaders instead occupied Constantinople with the supposed intention of unifying the eastern and western factions of the Christian Church. This failed, and, after being driven out for a short time, the crusaders retook and sacked the city, plundering much of its vast wealth, including relics and works of art.

Many of these objects made their way back to Western Europe and subsequently showed up in private collections and ecclesiastical treasuries. It is estimated that "Nine tenths of the Treasury of San Marco [St. Mark's Basilica] in Venice comes from this booty" (Bazin 1967:32). A prime example of such an object that made its way from Byzantium to the royal collections of France and beyond is the so-called "Rubens Vase" currently in the collection of the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, Maryland. This magnificent agate vase, carved in high relief with vine leaves and satyr heads, is believed to have been created in an imperial workshop in Constantinople during the fourth or fifth century for a Byzantine emperor. Probably as a result of the Fourth Crusade, in the mid-fourteenth century the vase appears in the inventory of the collection of Duke Louis I of Anjou (d. 1382) (Ross 1943; Alcouffe 1973).

The subsequent history of the "Rubens Vase" also serves

to illustrate the peregrinations of many works of art during this time. At some point, the vase passed into the extensive collection of Louis' brother, King Charles V of France (d. 1380). Then, early in the fifteenth century, the vase was donated, along with some similar precious objects, to the cathedral of Notre-Dame de Paris by the wife of Charles VI (Alcouffe 1973). Notre-Dame appears to have curated the vase for two hundred years (a vase of its description shows up on various inventories of the cathedral treasury), but in 1593 the vase was sold for revenues (possibly a candidate for sale because of its pagan subject matter) (Alcouffe 1973).<sup>1</sup> It turned up in the Paris flea market in 1619, where it was bought by the famous Flemish painter and antiquarian, Peter Paul Rubens (Ross 1943; Alcouffe 1973). Rubens had to sell the vase a few years later, and the vase supposedly was sent to the Grand Mogul in India (himself a voracious collector) in 1628, but was lost in a shipwreck before it arrived. It may never have left Europe, though, for it reappeared mysteriously almost a century later in France, and subsequently passed again into well-documented collections (Ross 1943).

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<sup>1</sup>An alternative hypothesis is that the "Rubens Vase" is not the vase described in the Notre-Dame inventory and that instead it remained in the royal collection at Fontainebleau until it was stolen during the sack of the palace by the Huguenots in 1590 (Ross 1943:20-21).

COLLECTORS AND COLLECTIONS:  
THE LATE MIDDLE AGES AND THE RENAISSANCE

While the history of the "Rubens Vase" may seem romantic, it was not atypical of that of many valuable art objects during the Middle Ages (and after). Wealthy, aristocratic collectors accumulated and surrounded themselves with objects of beauty. Many such objects passed into the collections of kings and emperors, not only because they usually had the most money, but also because it was customary to give to one's liege an object he particularly admired, in order to curry favor. The transfer of the "Rubens Vase" from the duke of Anjou to the king of France is typical of such a gift.

While these aristocratic collectors were not consciously creating museums, their collections were the seeds of the museums of the future. As the collections grew, so did the passion for collecting, both objects of beauty and natural curiosities. Jean de France, King Charles V's brother, possessed a collection containing illuminated manuscripts, antique coins, cameos and intaglios, embroideries, sculptures, panel paintings, miniatures, ostrich eggs, shells, polar bear skins, and "unicorn horns" (Alexander 1979:19). An inventory of the collection of Charles V himself lists 3,906 precious (and very costly) objects (Pomian 1987:28), of which the "Rubens Vase" is only one example.

It was only natural that, as collections grew, special areas became designated to house and display them. In the

sixteenth century with the coming of the Renaissance, special terminology developed:

The gallery (Italian: *galleria*), a long grand hall lighted from the side, came to signify an exhibition area for pictures and sculpture. The cabinet (Italian : *gabinetto*) was usually a square-shaped room filled with stuffed animals, botanical rarities, small works of art such as medallions or statuettes, artifacts, and curios; the Germans called it *Wunderkammer* [the French, *cabinet de curiosité*]. [Alexander 1979:8]

Galleries and cabinets appeared in the residences of only the very wealthy elite, and the collections in them reflected the taste and personalities of their owners. Among the French, Marie de Medici, when Queen Mother, contributed to the growth of the royal collection by summoning "Rubens to Paris in 1622 to depict the most glorious scenes from her life in twenty-one great pictures" (Alexander 1979:20). As well as paintings, statues, and religious items, Cardinal Richelieu enjoyed collecting "bronzes, historical tapestries, textiles, furniture, and Chinese lacquers and ceramics" and built a special palace (the Palais-Cardinal, now the Palais-Royal) to house them (Alexander 1979:20-21).

Extensive collections contributed to the prestige of their owners, and friends and colleagues were often invited to view them, but they were not open to the public. In Italy the term *museo* came to be used to refer to these collections, especially to the *gabinetto* (EB), and the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) traces the first use of the English word "museum" to 1645, meaning, "A building or apartment dedicated to the pursuit of learning or the arts" (OED

1989). Invoking both the Muses and the great Museion of Alexandria, the term "museum" appealed to the collectors and to the intelligentsia and united the Renaissance's idealization of the ancient classical civilizations with the early Enlightenment's focus on empiricism as a means for explaining and understanding the world.

Gradually, during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, some private collectors began to admit members of the general public into their museums, while others donated their collections to institutions or governments specifically to be public museums. The first public museum—and the first that conformed to the modern concept of a museum—was the Ashmolean Museum, established at Oxford in 1683. Hudson describes it as, "the first modern museum, specifically designed to display its collections, organised so that the University could use it for teaching purposes, and regularly open to the public" (Hudson 1987:21). While largely a big Cabinet of Curiosities, the Ashmolean was still the first to unite public accessibility with an educational aim.

#### PUBLIC MUSEUMS IN FRANCE

While other European countries were beginning to open royal collections to the public, France lagged behind. Though Versailles and its collections had been accessible to the public since the reign of Louis XIV, and in 1750 Louis XV began exhibiting paintings and drawings at the Luxembourg Palace in Paris, there was still "a constant

agitation among the intellectuals of the enlightenment to open a permanent picture gallery, and the Palace of the Louvre was usually suggested as the appropriate place" (Alexander 1979:23).

Preparations for the exhibition of the royal collections in a gallery of the Louvre were begun by the Director General of Public Buildings, Count d'Angiviller, under Louis XVI (Alexander 1979:23), but the Revolution broke out before plans could be finalized. Less than four months later, considering the royal collections to be the property of all French citizens, the National Assembly of the new French Republic inaugurated the Louvre as the Musée Français (Gallet 1966; Tonelli 1990). This opening of the Louvre as a public museum put into action the political ideology of the Revolution—*liberté, égalité, fraternité*—and the museum was seen as an instrument of democracy in that it served to educate and elevate the masses (Hooper-Greenhill 1989). To make the paintings and sculpture truly accessible to the public (to whom the museum was open three days out of every ten), under the government known as the Directory (1795-9), "Each work was given an explanatory text, which gave information about the artist and the subject" (Hudson 1987:42). This and other innovations, such as a guide book to the museum, stressed that the museum was for the benefit of all the people, not just the elite, and "Administratively and legally, it formed part of the State education system" (Hudson 1987:42).

Various directors attempted to organize and reorganize the museum in the Louvre, renamed the Musée Central des Arts, but it really began to flower when the Baron Dominique Vivant Denon was placed in charge of it in 1803 and named Director General in 1804 by Napoleon. While the Revolutionary government had seen the museum in the Louvre as an institution for the people, Napoleon saw it as an instrument of national (and personal) glory (Alexander 1979). Denon was the perfect choice for director—extremely charismatic, a diplomat and artist, he had begun his career under Louis XV and had weathered all of the political storms of the times. While he is best known (and somewhat maligned) for his massive collecting campaigns throughout the countries conquered by Napoleon (to which most of the seized art works were returned under the Restoration government), Denon also undertook to catalogue the enormous collection and was one of the first museum directors to recognize the importance of and to employ conservation techniques to restore damaged paintings (Alexander 1983). He reorganized the Louvre as the Musée Napoléon and assisted in the establishment of twenty-two provincial museums founded by 1814 throughout France.

Even after Napoleon's defeat and the return of the seized art works to their proper owners, the Louvre continued to grow and acquired a vast number of archaeological artifacts from Greece and Egypt, as well as more paintings and other art works (Alexander 1979). But while certainly

the best known, the Louvre was not the only museum in Paris at this time. The Revolutionary government had created the Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle for natural history, the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers for machines and inventions, and in 1795 the Museum des Monuments Français in the former Convent of the Petits-Augustins for the preservation of historic sculpture. This last collection had been assembled during the revolution by Alexandre Lenoir, who was more or less salvaging what he could from church and state monuments threatened by the destructiveness of revolutionary zeal (Bann 1978:256). The first museum devoted to historic preservation, it was also the first to be arranged chronologically, with each room devoted to a different century (Bann 1978:256; Alexander 1979:83). Though closed in 1816, the collection was eventually moved to the Gallo-Roman baths next to the Hôtel de Cluny, now the Cluny Museum (Erlande-Brandenburg 1983).

From the mid-nineteenth century on, there was a trend to establish museums in France that shifted away from the national government to the numerous small "*sociétés savantes*" that were springing up everywhere. These societies consisted of local scholars, dilettantes, and amateurs interested in literature, history, and natural science.<sup>2</sup> They

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<sup>2</sup>The sheer number of these societies and their literary productivity can best be appreciated by reference to Lasteyrie du Saillant's voluminous 1849-1921 bibliography, compiled to deal specifically with the French *sociétés savantes* publications of works dealing with history and archaeology.

were part of what one scholar has called "the mid-nineteenth-century intellectual revolution," referring to the ways in which such people as Lyell, Darwin, and others were looking at nature, history, and the world and forcing a drastic reconsideration of the place of humans in it (Pearce 1990a:25). These societies also frequently conducted archaeological investigations, much in vogue at the time, and created museums in which to place their finds. Of the fourteen museums in this study founded during the nineteenth century, at least six were founded, or controlled after their foundation, by these scientific societies.<sup>3</sup>

Dominique Poulot, in a study of French museums in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, divides nineteenth-century museums into two broad types: those created by antiquarian or scientific societies in and for specific localities, and those created by the State for pedagogic purposes (Poulot 1983). The museums of the antiquarians were less interested in teaching the history of the world than in exploring the history of their own particular region. In a country where the government was becoming increasingly centralized, the local museums proclaimed the uniqueness of their area. As Poulot notes:

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<sup>3</sup>Autun 1839, the Société Éduenne des lettres, sciences et arts; Auxerre 1847, the Société des sciences historiques et naturelles de l'Yonne; Nevers 1850, the Association nivernaise des Lettres, Sciences et Arts; Avallon 1862, the Société d'études d'Avallon; Semur-en-Auxois 1865, the Société des Sciences historiques et naturelles de Semur; Châtillon-sur-Seine 1882, the Société archéologique du Châtillonnais.

D'une manière générale ces musées sont dédiés à la documentation historique d'une région, ou d'une ville, dont ils veulent sauvgarder l'originalité, dans le cours de l'histoire nationale. Il s'agit de musées étroitement liés à des portions de territoire, marqués par l'exigence d'une documentation sur le quotidien de l'histoire plutôt que par le souci d'exposer les plus grands chefs-d'oeuvre de l'art. [Poulot 1983:25]

[In a general manner, these museums are dedicated to the historic documentation of a region or a city, with the desire to safeguard its particular special place in the national history. It is about museums tightly linked to certain areas, marked by the existence of research on daily life in the past, rather than by the desire to show the greatest works of art. (My translation)]

The State government, though, as noted earlier, still held to the Revolutionary ideal of museums as instruments for general education, with the past as universally shared.

Politicians were also looking to the past for nationalistic purposes. The concept of 'nos ancêtres, les Gaulois' had been used to promote national unity in France, a country of many different ethnic groups, since the sixteenth century under the Valois kings (Viallaneix and Ehrard 1982). The republic of the mid-nineteenth century laid claim to Vercingetorix and made him into the symbol of independence, liberty, and national unity (Simon 1989). Napoleon III identified so strongly with the tragic, heroic leader of unified Gaul that he had excavations conducted from 1861 to 1865 at Alesia, the site of Vercingetorix's last stand, and had a colossal statue of Vercingetorix erected there, the face of which was modeled on his own face (Simon 1989; Le Gall 1985). Objects excavated made up a large part of the collection of the municipal museum of Alise-Sainte-Reine, also

created by Napoleon III, and later absorbed by the Musée Alésia.

A certain paradox exists in the idealization of national forebears, because, while singing the praises of the noble Vercingetorix, the artifacts to which the French point with the most pride are Roman in concept, if not in actual origin, and are the result of the successful Roman conquest of Gaul—the same conquest so violently opposed by Vercingetorix. As Simon notes, "tous rendent hommage à Vercingetorix mais proclament les bienfaits de la colonisation romaine" (Simon 1989:43) [Everyone gives homage to Vercingetorix but proclaims the benefits of Roman colonization (my translation)]. People do not seem to be greatly disturbed by this paradox and usually do not even notice it, probably because all artifacts dating from the period of Roman government in Gaul (ca. 50 B.C. until A.D. 482), are referred to as being "Gallo-Roman," the implication being that Gaul deigned to adopt elements of Roman culture and in the process made these elements their own. The appreciation of Gallo-Roman culture is fortunate for museums, as by far the greatest quantity of displayable archaeological objects are Gallo-Roman, probably because the Gauls made most objects from wood which has not survived, while the Romans favored stone, bone (or ivory), and metal.

Paradoxes aside, it would have been political suicide for Napoleon III to model himself after Caesar or anything pertaining to Rome. Throughout his reign, he and France

enjoyed relations with Rome that ranged from ambivalent to antagonistic. Also not to be forgotten were Napoleon I's similarities to Caesar, including his frequent depiction wearing a laurel wreath. Likening himself too much to his notorious namesake would have caused consternation both in France and abroad. A local hero was needed, and Vercingetorix was perfect. Vercingetorix had been chosen leader of all Gaul, just as Napoleon III had been elected leader of France—their mandates came from the people. The excavations at Alesia reinforced the connection between Napoleon III and Vercingetorix in the minds of the people. From the revolution on, French morale had been on a roller coaster ride of victories and defeats. The past was stable, and, by linking himself with it, Napoleon III gave the people a sense of stability and himself an aura of legitimacy.

The French national archaeological museum, the Musée des Antiquités nationales at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, was also founded by Napoleon III as the "Musée d'Antiquités celtiques et gallo-romaines" in 1862 (Conservation du Musée 1988:1), further strengthening his association with the glorious past. Besides containing many of the Iron Age and Gallo-Roman artifacts from the excavations of Alesia and other sites, the museum also housed a growing collection of Paleolithic and Neolithic artifacts, as well as Bronze Age and Merovingian artifacts.

With the founding of this national archaeological museum, as well as the smaller society museums, a practice

was begun which causes considerable problems for museums with archaeological collections today: archaeological artifacts do not exist past A.D. 751. Objects made from the Paleolithic through the Merovingian periods are archaeological artifacts, but with the Carolingian epoch, when the proscription of the inclusion of grave goods in burials began, objects become either "art" or, alternately, not really worthy of notice. This leaves many museums at a loss as to what to do with the material from medieval excavations (and the frequently accompanying modern material) that is entering their collections. The Direction des Musées de France (DMF) is no help, as it similarly is a product of the period when nothing past the Merovingian was considered of interest to archaeologists or archaeological collections of museums. One conservateur of archaeology in a museum in Burgundy who is also an underwater archaeologist and has been increasing the collection of his museum with objects from all periods, retrieved from the Saône River, was recently told by the DMF that he was not to display any objects from later than the Carolingian period because that was not his department!

This outdated concept—that for the post-Merovingian or Carolingian periods archaeology is superfluous—is perpetuated by the popular books of scholars like Georges Duby, who writes medieval history without ever referring to objects or archaeology. It is being questioned now in the museum and academic world, but any change will come slowly. In 1989 there were only about fifteen professors of medieval archae-

ology in the entire French university system, and there is thus a problem with leadership for interested students.<sup>4</sup> Most medieval archaeology is being conducted by groups within the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), an independent organization similar to the National Science Foundation, with some communication with universities and museums, but little, if any, with the DMF.

From the founding of the Musée d'Antiquités on, society museums, while maintaining their local focus, followed its lead in their display of objects. In 1897 Gabriel de Mortillet, trained in geology, paleontology, and prehistoric anthropology, and who had served as assistant curator at Saint-Germain-en-Laye for seventeen years, published his *Formation de la nation française*, which outlined his classificatory chronology of french archaeological epochs (Trigger 1989:97). Mortillet's outline followed Thomsen's Stone-Bronze-Iron Ages schema, and placed within those Ages certain Periods. The Stone Age contained the Eolithic, Paleolithic, and Neolithic Periods; the Bronze Age consisted of the Tsiganien Period; and the Iron Age was made up of the Galatien, Roman, and Merovingian periods (Mortillet 1897 in Trigger 1989:97). Over time, Eolithic was questioned and generally dropped, Tsiganien was replaced by the more descriptive Bronze Age, Galatien became the Iron Age, and Roman became Gallo-Roman. The changes are minor. For all

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<sup>4</sup>Professeur Alain Schnapp, Institut d'Art et d'Archéologie, conversation with author, Paris, France, 16 May 1989.

intents and purposes, Mortillet's chronology is the one that became the standard for museums at the turn of the century, was legitimized by his tenure at the National Museum, and continues to be used in museums to this day: archaeology exhibits at the Musée des Antiquités begin with the Paleolithic and end with the Merovingian, and the municipal museums follow suit.

#### THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The early twentieth century saw little change from the patterns established during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Society museums continued to be founded, and the larger state museums consolidated their positions. New museums also were established, and in 1935 the Museum of Ethnography (founded 1878) split in two to form the Museum of Mankind (anthropology/ethnography) and the Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions (folklore and rural art), whose first chief curator—or conservateur, to use the French term—was Georges Henri Rivière, who was to play an increasingly important role in museology in the 1960s and 1970s (Hudson 1987).

In 1959, with the founding of the Fifth (and current) Republic, Charles de Gaulle appointed André Malraux Minister of Cultural Affairs. Malraux was an extremely influential writer and visionary politician with a Leftist philosophy that art and culture should be the provenance of all the people, not just the bourgeoisie. He founded the Maisons de

la Culture as places for artistic endeavor in the provinces; however, as he also considered the experience of Art to be the means of achieving Enlightenment, the Maisons had to maintain substantially exclusivist standards that were their eventual undoing (Ardagh 1987).

Among his many other interests, Malraux was concerned with context in museums, or, more specifically, the lack of context in art museums. Malraux thought that art museums were made possible only by decontextualizing objects, which changed—metamorphosed—the objects into works of art. He stressed that the concept of Art has existed for only about two hundred years, and anything from before this time must be divested of its function in order to take its place in a museum (Malraux 1978).

Even earlier, Rivière also was concerned with context and the problems inherent in museums. Rivière was, as Hudson says, "One of the few undisputed museum geniuses of the twentieth century" (1987:132). During his tenure at the Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions he rejected chronology as a means of display and instead designed exhibits that were thematic or were reconstructions (Hudson 1987). More important, though, was his involvement in the creation of the "eco-museums" in the late 1960s and 1970s, when he was Secretary-General of ICOM.

Rivière and his successor and Secretary-General, Hugues de Varine-Bohan, conceived a museum that was not a collection of objects but rather a sort of ecosystem:

The ecomuseum is an institution which manages, studies and exploits—by scientific, educational and, generally speaking, cultural means—the entire heritage of a given community, including the whole natural environment and cultural milieu. . . . Essentially, the ecomuseum uses the language of the artifact, the reality of everyday life and concrete situations in order to achieve desired changes. [Varine 1978:28]

The community is the museum and comprises its collection. Within the community there will be buildings or sites set aside for exhibition, and there will be objects exhibited, but the objects are considered “simply as part of a whole, as part of a human, social, cultural or natural unit” (Varine-Bohan 1973:245). The collection is anything and everything within the community and involves “the idea of a kind of ‘cultural’ property right, which has nothing to do with legal ownership” (Varine-Bohan 1973:244).

Ecomuseums are not Williamsburg copies. One does not get the feeling, when visiting a town which is part of an ecomuseum, of being part of the exhibit. This is because the ecomuseum concept is one of empowerment, not entertainment. Ecomuseums are “based on the conviction that by understanding the past, one is likely to make a better job of the future” (Hudson 1987:163). They are quite literally museums of, for, and by the people they represent, and are agents for fostering community pride and self-determination.

The ecomuseum concept and the impetus behind it gave rise to the “New Museology” movement propounded by the Association «Muséologie Nouvelle et Expérimentation Sociale» (MNES) in the early 1980s. The New Museology was a liberal,

theoretical movement that decreed that, "le Musée n'est qu'un espace spécialisé dans un contexte social complexe" (Varine 1986:4) [A museum is nothing other than a specialized space in a complex social context (my translation)]. Its proponents considered museums to be instruments for societal evolution, and they called upon museum professionals to be agents of social change and museum visitors to be participants in the construction of the future (Varine 1986).

The New Museology can be seen as part of the recent international movement to re-examine and redefine the role—some say mission—of museums in society today. Like many such movements, it is long on theory but short on practice, according to some of the conservateurs I interviewed for this study. While they recognized the validity of many of the concerns of the New Museologists, they questioned whether it is possible or even desirable for archaeology museums to be as politically active as the ecomuseums might be. Whether or not the New Museology becomes the New Archaeology of museology remains to be seen, but at this point in time it seems unlikely, though any debate it has sparked can only be beneficial.

## ARCHAEOLOGY MUSEUMS IN BURGUNDY TODAY

Whatever interest the *sociétés savantes* fostered in archaeology and museum collections among the local public in the nineteenth century has greatly faded in most towns over the intervening years. It is a common refrain among conservateurs that it is very difficult to get the local townspeople to come to the museum at all and even more difficult to get them to come back, since they feel that once they have seen it there is no reason to see it again. Increasingly, the museums are being visited predominately by tourists, and especially by non-French tourists, since museums are listed as points of interest in all the guide books. Local people, who may lack the guidebooks for their own town or region, may not know even what is in the museums in their town.

Conservateurs are taking steps to combat the apparent apathy of local people to their museums, but it is an uphill battle, against the old ideas of museums being dusty and boring. Newspapers are a big help in spreading the word about museums (and local radio helps somewhat, but local television is essentially non-existent). In the department of Saône-et-Loire most men (but fewer women) daily read one of the two departmental newspapers, the *Courrier* or the *Progrès*. (The distinction between the two papers used to be

political but is now largely artificial, since both papers are owned by the same company and print the same stories.) The papers carry all of the local news thought to be of interest, ranging through a daily tally of car accidents, marriages, local sports, politics, and cultural events—including museum items. Exhibition openings are especially big news and receive a lot of copy (as well as the requisite photograph of the conservateur and the mayor). This ensures that people who read the newspaper are at least aware of the museums' activities.

Moving people from awareness to interest and action is the next step. To woo the local audience to the museums and keep them coming back, most conservateurs try to mount between one and three temporary exhibitions each year, on a variety of themes ranging from archaeology to contemporary art. In 1989, the French Bicentennial, nearly every town had an exhibition pertaining to the Revolution and the role played in it by the town (which was often so small the conservateur had difficulty making it interesting). And in 1990, the *Année de l'Archéologie*, nearly every town had an exhibition on local archaeology (not difficult at all for a region where Roman coins are unearthed regularly in flower beds).

Despite the apathetic attitude of local populaces as regards visiting their museums, they are very interested in the fact of the existence of a museum in their town. As long as they are not required to *do* anything (like visit it

or volunteer in it), having a museum is a matter of some civic pride, and the number of museums in small towns continues to grow. As more than one conservateur with not a little insight put it, whatever politics may or may not be expressed in the museum itself, the very decision to have a museum is political. And the politics is that of empowerment, as will be discussed later.

The conservateur of the Musée Archéologique in Dijon is concerned about the growing trend for towns to open their own archaeology museums, because formerly the finds from Côte-d'Or sites would have made their way to Dijon as departmental capital and not only would have enriched the collection of the Musée Archéologique but would have brought all the different sites together for a better overview as well. But no town wants to give up its *patrimoine*—its heritage.

In 1990 there were forty-four museums or museum-like institutions<sup>1</sup> with archaeological collections in Burgundy. These museums and their "vital statistics" are listed in Appendix 3. Table 3.1 gives the scope of the museums' collections, the archaeological material divided into the basic categories used by the museums. A CNRS publication, *Les collections archéologiques dans les Musées de France* (Lequeux, Mainjonet-Brun, and Roscian 1989), lists more

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<sup>1</sup>Dépôts des Fouilles, archaeological sites with exhibitions areas, and other public attractions with archaeological items on view; from this point forward, these institutions will be referred to as museums as well.

**TABLE 3.1 Burgundian Museums with Archaeological Collections—Scope of Collections**

Museum (by city)	Paleontology	Paleolithic <sup>a</sup>	Neolithic	Bronze Age	Iron Age	Gallo-Roman	Early <sup>b</sup> Medieval	Central <sup>c</sup> Medieval	Late <sup>d</sup> Medieval	Renaissance & Modern
Alise-Sainte-Reine					x	x	x			x
Arcy-sur-Cure	x	x	x			x	x			x
Autun					x	x	x	x	x	x
Auxerre		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Auxonne			x	x		x		x		x
Avallon	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x
Azé	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
Beaune						x			x	x
Beaune (vin)						x			x	x
Beaune-Tailly		x	x							
Bourbon-Lancy	x	x		x		x	x	x	x	x
Chalon-sur-Saône	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Chamoux	x	x								
Châtillon-sur-Seine					x	x	x	x	x	
Clamecy						x	x	x	x	x
Cluny						x		x	x	
Digoin	x	x				x				x
Dijon	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Escolives-Sainte-Camille			x	x	x	x	x			
Gueugnon						x		x		
Issy-l'Évêque					x	x				
La Charité-sur-Loire								x	x	x
La Machine	x	x								x
Le Creusot	x	x		x	x	x	x			x
Luzy		x								
Mâcon					x	x	x	x	x	x
Marcigny		x			x	x		x	x	x
Marzy		x	x			x				x
Matour				x	x					
Montbard	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
Mont-Saint-Vincent	x	x	x	x		x	x			
Nevers				x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Noyers-sur-Serein							x		x	x
Nuits-Saint-George					x	x	x			
Paray-le-Monial					x	x		x		

Reulle-Vergy	x	x				x		x		x
Romenay		x				x		x		x
Saint-Père-sous-Vézelay		x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
Saulieu		x	x			x		x	x	x
Semur-en-Auxois		x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
Sens		x	x	x	x	x			x	x
Solutré	x	x				x	x			x
Tournus	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Villeneuve-sur-Yonne		x	x	x	x	x		x		

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<sup>a</sup>Paleolithic includes Mesolithic; <sup>b</sup>Early Medieval includes Merovingian and Carolingian; <sup>c</sup>Central Medieval is mainly Romanesque; <sup>d</sup>Late Medieval is mainly Gothic.

archaeological collections, but by 1990 some had been moved, consolidated, or removed from view. (Collections that were solely lapidary were not included for the purposes of this study.) The locations of the towns in which these museums are located is indicated in Figure 3.1.

Of the forty-four available collections, I was able to visit all but two (Luzy and Matour),<sup>2</sup> and I interviewed sixteen conservateurs<sup>3</sup> or other people in charge of museums (responsible for eighteen museums). The list of questions posed to each conservateur and the responses are contained in Appendix 4.

After visiting the museums, I decided to exclude some from the study due to the paucity of archaeological material displayed; there are ten of these museums, marked by an asterisk in Appendix 2. I also, of course, excluded the two museums I was unable to visit. The museum in Cluny was also, unfortunately, excluded due to its being in the process of reinstallation during the time of the study, though the conservateur's interview responses will be included as necessary. (Any museums opening after 1990 have, of neces-

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<sup>2</sup>Luzy was not listed by Lequeux, Mainjonet-Brun, and Roscian and was closed for the season by the time I learned of its existence, and Matour did not open during its scheduled off-season hours.

<sup>3</sup>I will refer to the people in charge of the museums as *conservateurs*. Translated directly, this would be "curator" (not "conservator" in the American sense), but as their job combines the American museum positions of curator, director, educator, administrator, and more, I felt that retaining the French term was more appropriate. The feminine form, *conservatrice*, was never used.

**Figure 3.1**

**Map of Burgundy Showing Towns with Archaeological Collections**—Burgundy is an administrative Region containing the four administrative Departments: Côte-d'Or, Nièvre, Saône-et-Loire, and Yonne

sity, been excluded.) This leaves thirty-one museums with archaeological collections that will be discussed in the following pages. For the sake of brevity and clarity, the museums will generally be referred to by the name of the city or town in which they are located.

#### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MUSEUMS

Not all the museums with archaeological collections are specifically archaeology museums. This is common in France, especially in smaller towns where having two museums would be impractical, and the archaeology is incorporated into the general history of the area. Unlike the in United States, however, if a town is large enough to have a separate natural history museum, archaeological artifacts are invariably included in the museum concerning itself with fine arts and *not* in the natural history museum.

Museums that are strictly archaeological—or consider themselves to be so, at least in name<sup>4</sup>—are those in Alise-Sainte-Reine (Musée Alésia), Arcy-sur-Cure (Musée de l'Hôtel de Ville), Auxerre (Musée d'Art et d'Histoire—though eventually fine arts will be installed here as well), Châtillon-sur-Seine (Musée Archéologique du Châtillonnais, Dijon (Musée Archéologique), Escolives-Sainte-Camille (Exposition

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<sup>4</sup>Both the Musée Archéologique du Châtillonnais in Châtillon-sur-Seine and especially the Musée Archéologique in Dijon contain objects that can only be considered fine arts (such as sculpture by Claus Sluter in Dijon), but it does constitute only a small part of the collection.

Archéologique), Gueugnon (Dépôt de Fouilles), Issy-l'Évêque (Salle d'Exposition), Montbard (Musée Archéologique), Mont-Saint-Vincent (Musée Archéologique Jean Régnier), Nevers (Musée Archéologique de la Porte du Croux), Saint-Père-sous-Vézelay (Musée Archéologique), and Solutré (Musée départemental de la Préhistoire de Solutré). Also, the Archéodrome de Beaune-Tailly must fall into this category.

In many towns, the archaeological collections are included in a more comprehensive museum that usually deals with fine arts and/or history, but the archaeology occupies spaces devoted specifically to it. These museums include: Autun (Musée Rolin), Avallon (Musée de l'Avallonnais), Beaune (Musée des Beaux-Arts), Bourbon-Lancy (Musée Saint-Nazaire), Chalon-sur-Saône (Musée Denon), Clamecy (Musée d'Art et d'Histoire Romain Rolland), La Charité-sur-Loire (Musée municipal), Le Creusot (Ecomusée de la Communauté Le Creusot-Montceau-les-Mines), Mâcon (Musée des Ursulines), Nuits-Saint-Georges (Musée municipal), Saulieu (Musée François Pompon), Semur-en-Auxois (Musée Municipal), Sens (Musées de Sens), Tournus (Musée Greuze), and Villeneuve-sur-Yonne (Musée d'archéologie et d'histoire). The collections of the remaining two museums are specifically theme related—in Azé, the Musée des Grottes deals specifically with minerals, paleontology, and artifacts found in the Azé Caverns, and in Digoin, the Centre de Documentation de la Céramique traces the history of ceramics in the area from the Gallo-Roman period to the present.

All museums in France are classified generally as either public or private. Within the private category are museums the *musées privés*—general private museums—and the *musées d' Association*—museums run by associations, usually by *sociétés savantes*. In the public category are the museums watched over by the DMF, a federal agency, part of the Ministry of Culture. They fall into three general groups: the *musées nationaux* (national museums), the *musées classés* (classified museums), and the *musées contrôlés* (controlled museums). The national and classified museums are strictly limited in number, and their employees are considered federal employees (Frèches 1979; Ministère de la Culture. DMF 1986); the only comparable museums in the United States are those that make up the Smithsonian Institution, where the staff all hold government ratings, and funding and the creation of new museums must be approved by Congress.

The largest number of museums are the *musées contrôlés*, which are divided into two categories—*1<sup>ère</sup> categorie* and *2<sup>ème</sup> categorie*—based on the importance of their collections. Most fall into the second class and are simply referred to as being a *musée contrôlé*. Most of the controlled museums are municipal museums as well. Their staff are city employees and they are funded by the city council. The city is free to hire as conservateur whomever it chooses off of a list of DMF approved conservateurs. Recently departments and regions have founded museums; the conservateurs for these museums are departmental or regional employees, and

funding comes from the departmental or regional councils.

Occasionally, if an association museum possesses a particularly important collection, the DMF may insist on its being "controlled" as well. Similarly, if the museum is associated with an important architectural monument, the national historic monuments organization, *Monuments Historiques*, may lay claim to authorizing certain aspects of museum procedures. Still other museums, while not being national museums, may have parts of their collections deemed "collections of the State." Other museums may be deemed *dépôts de l'État*, or repositories for national art that cannot be stored or exhibited elsewhere (this is generally considered to be a mark of favor).

The exact categorization of the museums in the study can be found in Appendix 3. Summarized, there are no national or classified museums, two controlled municipal museums of the first category (Autun and Dijon), seventeen controlled municipal museums—of which one also has a collection of the State (Sens) and one is a State repository (Bourbon-Lancy), one controlled departmental museum (Solutré), nine association museums, of which three are controlled by the DMF and one is partially controlled by *Monuments Historiques* (Saint-Père-sous-Vézelay), one museum that is both a municipal and association museum (Digoin), and one the status of which is unknown (Escolives-Sainte-Camille) but is likely an association museum.

In point of fact, the process of the DMF's "control-

ling" a municipal or other museum usually falls to the conservateur, who must adhere to the DMF's regulations and see to it that standards are maintained. Because of this, the position of conservateur can be seen as critical to the proper administration of a museum, and by law all museums controlled by the DMF must have a conservateur. In practice, though, this does not always work, since the municipality must pay the salary of the conservateur, and if the town cannot afford it, the DMF cannot force them to hire one. During this study, three museums were currently without conservateurs, and two—Bourbon-Lancy and Montbard—had never (to anyone's knowledge) had one! Both of these museums were severely suffering the effects of not having someone to care for them, and the collections were definitely at risk.

The department of Yonne has solved the problem of lack of conservateurs by creating the position of "Conservateur départemental des Musées" who acts as conservateur for all the museums of Yonne that do not have their own conservateur (that is, all except for Auxerre, Avallon, and Sens). In 1990, other departments were considering the possibility of following suit, but had not yet committed resources. The vital roll of the conservateur in French museums cannot be over-stressed.

## THE CONSERVATEUR

### THE EDUCATION OF THE CONSERVATEUR

In order to understand the job of a conservateur, it is necessary to look at the education received by those persons who want to become conservateurs and at how they are ultimately chosen to fill that position at a particular museum. In examining this topic, only the regulations applying to conservateurs and museums that fall under the auspices of the *Direction des Musées de France* (DMF) will be considered; private museums and those belonging to various societies choose their staff independently of any national organization. As has been noted, museums that are regulated by the DMF are the *musées nationaux* ("national museums"), the *musées classés* (a limited number of museums whose conservateurs are federal employees), and the *musées contrôlés* (which are divided into two classes based on the importance of their collections). All the museums in this study are either *musées contrôlés* or society museums.

The DMF regulations for becoming a conservateur have changed numerous times over the past thirty years, but, as the museums in this study are the result of the actions of the past as well as present conservateurs, it is useful to look at past as well as present regulations. Prior to 1962

conservateurs were chosen from a list (ranked by aptitude) of candidates who had been certified by the École du Louvre, which operated much like an American university, accepting as students high school graduates who passed competitive examinations (Frèches 1979:53). The École du Louvre and its subsidiary the École du Patrimoine, which as of 1990 became the independent École nationale du patrimoine, fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture and continue to be in charge of the certification of conservateurs for all museums that fall under the jurisdiction of the DMF.

The system was changed in 1962 and revised again in 1970 and 1980, such that in order to be considered for the position of conservateur, one had to be less than thirty-five years old and have either a bachelor's degree (obtained in three or four years, depending on the major, in the French university system) or the appropriate degree from the École du Louvre (obtained after a minimum of five years of study) and pass a series of tests (Frèches 1979:53; Ministère de la Culture 1986). The tests were both written and oral and focused on history, history of art, language, and museology. The examinations were very selective, and only roughly one-tenth of the candidates made it onto the list from which conservateurs for the *musées nationaux* and the *musées classés* could be chosen (Frèches 1979:55).

For the less prestigious position of conservateur of a *musée contrôlé*, a different list existed, and inclusion on this list was not nearly so selective; it was not explicitly

stated, but very likely, that of the nine-tenths of the candidates who did not qualify for the list for the *musées nationaux* or *musées classés*, a large percentage ended up on the list for the *musées contrôlés*. Unlike conservateurs for *musées nationaux* or *musées classés* who are appointed by the DMF, when the post of conservateur in a *musée contrôlé* becomes vacant, conservateurs on the list for *musées contrôlés* desiring the post submit their names to the mayor of the town where the museum is located, who in turn proposes his choice of three of the candidates to the Minister of Culture and Communication, who makes the final decision (Frèches 1979:57). The conservateur of a *musée contrôlé* is a municipal (or departmental, if it is a departmental museum) employee, whereas the conservateur of a *musée national* or a *musée classé* is a federal employee (Ministère de la Culture 1986).

From the mid-1980s on, changes in regulations governing all conservateurs occurred almost yearly. While most things were becoming increasingly decentralized as the socialist government reasserted itself, care of cultural patrimony was coming more and more under the control of the École du Louvre. In 1985 legislation was passed such that even those people wishing to be conservateur of a *musée contrôlé* had to be certified by the École du Louvre after an eighteen-month training period (France. Ministère de la Culture 1985:13680). This training is carried out under the auspices of the École du Patrimoine, a subsidiary department of

the École du Louvre, charged specifically with professional education (Ministère de la Culture, de la Communication, des Grands Travaux et du Bicentenaire n.d.). After completing training, the candidate's name was entered on the aptitude list. Some current conservateurs feel that this new practice is unfair to those people who were on the list before 1986 who were not required to receive training from the École du Louvre, because by the new qualification procedure, these people will always now be seen as less qualified than someone who went through the training of the École du Patrimoine, and thus they will be less likely to be offered a position as a conservateur.

In 1990 the entire system was changed yet again, and the École du Patrimoine became a distinct entity, the École nationale du patrimoine, separate from the École du Louvre, dependent on the Ministry of Culture, with the regulations governing the selection of interns for *musées contrôlés* temporarily negotiated by the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>1</sup> Much confusion likely resulted from a reorganization in the French government that combined three ministries into one and added to that a fourth, forming the "Ministère de la Culture, de la Communication, des Grands Travaux et du Bicentenaire," charged with regulating the École du Louvre and the DMF. Especially with the arrival of the French bicentennial in 1989, it became a major governmental concern

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<sup>1</sup>Jean-Pierre Sainte-Marie, Responsable de la Formation Professionnelle, École du Louvre, École du Patrimoine, letter to author, 6 December 1990.

that those people responsible for the care of the national patrimony be well qualified. Deciding what constitutes qualification has resulted in almost continuous changes up to the formation of the *École nationale du patrimoine* under the again revamped *Ministère de la culture et de la francophonie*.

Currently, the *École nationale du patrimoine* trains people who wish to making a career working with some aspect of the national heritage. The school's catch phrase is "*une profession, six métiers*" (one profession, six specializations) (*École nationale du patrimoine* [1993?]). The profession is that of "heritage curator," and the specializations are archaeology, archives, heritage libraries, General Inventory,<sup>2</sup> museums, and historical monuments (*École nationale du patrimoine* [1992?]:2). The school trains new conservateurs but also offers training to already tenured conservateurs. To be admitted to the school to be a new conservateur, one must have a high school diploma plus at least three years in a university, the *École du Louvre*, one of the "Grandes Écoles" (higher professional training), or the *École nationale des Chartes* (archival studies), pass a competitive examination (written and oral), and be under thirty years old at the time of the exam (*École nationale du*

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<sup>2</sup>General Inventory refers to "the General Inventory of the artistic wealth of France created by André Malraux in 1964 [which] classifies property according to scientific methods, and examines and promotes the architectural and movable heritage of France (other than that kept in museums)" (*École nationale du patrimoine* [1992?]:2).

patrimoine [1992?]:11, 13).

The program of education at the École nationale du patrimoine lasts eighteen months and consists of both course work and internships. Some of the course work is the same, while other is specific to the specializations. The archaeology specialty trains one to carry out "technical and administrative missions in each region of France: safeguard, study, protection and interpretation of the French archaeological heritage" (École nationale du patrimoine [1992?]:2); it is site oriented and would relate only tangentially to museums. The museum specialty trains one to "étudier, enrichir, sauvegarde et fait connaître le patrimoine dont il a la charge" (study, enrich, safeguard, and make known the heritage he is in charge of [my translation]), and includes preparing one for the daunting responsibilities of a museum conservateur which include inventory, security, conservation, presentation, administration, finance, education, temporary exhibition creation, as well as conducting research (École nationale du patrimoine [1993?]:9).

#### THE WORK OF THE CONSERVATEUR

Besides all of the administrative duties impinging on their time, conservateurs in archaeology museums face a difficult task: from the bits and pieces recovered by archaeologists, the conservateur must, ideally, create an exhibit that interestingly and clearly presents some aspect of the culture of a past society. The difficulty arises

from the fact that generally, about ninety percent of the artifacts recovered from an occupation site consists of potsherds or stone tools and animal bones—not exactly objects that readily interest or “speak” to the general public.

In the early days of Curiosity Cabinet-type museums, such as the Musée Municipal of Semur-en-Auxois, animal bones, stone tools, potsherds, and architectural fragments were grouped by type and/or by site, and sometimes labeled. These museums were created by and for an elite group who knew (or thought they knew) what they were looking at without having to be told. The general public was left to marvel at the wonders of the past, or, alternately, to wonder about the odd things some people found interesting: one man's Acheulean hand-axe is another man's rock.

Today, while the museums continue to try to shake off the image of being repositories of dusty stones and bones, they must try to make those same items interesting and meaningful. While the years and continuing excavations may have added more artifacts to the museums' collections, they usually have not altered the types of artifacts. A conservateur may have a wonderful idea for an exhibit on daily life in a Gallo-Roman villa, but if all the museum's collection of Gallo-Roman artifacts consists of ten amphora, three funerary steles, five fibulae, and two coins, such an exhibit will be impossible. The conservateur cannot simply go purchase or commission the necessary objects for an idea

they have; they must formulate their ideas for exhibits around the objects in the museum's collection.

As the conservateurs are constrained in creating exhibits by the nature and number of artifacts available to them, their work can be seen as conforming to the Levi-Straussian concept of "bricolage." In a very real, concrete sense the conservateur acts as a "bricoleur" who "addresses himself to a collection of oddments left over from human endeavors, that is, only a subset of the culture" (Levi-Strauss 1966:19). The "oddments" are the bones, stones, and potsherds, and from them the conservateur must reconstruct the culture. He cannot reconstruct it any way that he sees fit, though, because the artifacts "are not raw materials but wrought products . . . [which are] therefore condensed expressions of necessary relations which impose constraints with various repercussions at each stage of their employment" (Levi-Strauss 1966:36).

Indeed, the conservateur cannot "reconstruct" the culture at all. In dealing with archaeological artifacts, it is well to remember Taylor's caution that as,

only the facts [or in this case artifacts] and not their original relationships and interactions are subject to verification, it certainly follows that the historical contexts themselves are not verifiable. If this is the case and it cannot be told for sure whether past actuality has, or has not, been recreated in detail or in essence, it cannot be claimed that these contexts are, or are not, resyntheses or reconstructions. These terms imply a re-building to exact former specifications which, from the above, are not verifiable and, hence, not knowable. . . . Therefore, the arguments both for and against historical reconstruction in anthropology or in any other particular

discipline are irrelevant, and it becomes apparent that the work of all historical disciplines really leads to construction and synthesis, not reconstruction and resynthesis. [Taylor 1983:35]

All reconstructions in museums, then, are as much constructs as the dioramas crafted to display a scene from daily life in the past. They are unverifiable, educated guesses about what it might have been like in the past. (In another chapter will be discussed how some scholars believe that these constructs shed more light on modern life and social conditions than they do on those of the past.)

While the constructs the conservateur creates are unverifiable, they are possible and not without value because, as both Levi-Strauss and Taylor noted, the artifacts did not stand alone but were part of various physical and social relationships. Curators of anthropological collections today also realize that, "An object is the embodiment of social meanings that represent relations between people" (Thompson 1991:40). A conservateur may construct a culture in a variety of ways, arranging and rearranging the available artifacts, but because of the relations embodied in the objects, the number of possible arrangements is finite. The more information the conservateur has about the various relations, the more limited become the possible constructs. From those limited possibilities the conservateur must choose the most likely (which may change, depending on information derived from future discoveries), and then create an exhibit to depict this culture construct. Like the bricoleur, "he 'speaks' not only *with* things, . . . but

also through the medium of things: giving an account of his personality and life by the choice he makes between the limited possibilities" (Levi-Strauss 1966:21).

The exhibits constructed by conservateurs in France do, indeed, reflect their personality in a way that is not generally appreciated by American and British museum professionals, where exhibit design and labels pass through so many hands and changes on the way to the final exhibition-form that authorship is often a moot point. In France, on the other hand, it is the rule rather than the exception that the conservateur is the sole voice in an exhibit.

As was noted earlier, the training that a conservateur receives includes all aspects of administration, collection management, education, and scholarship. This is not just an academic exercise; conservateurs are responsible for all of these things and more in their museums. Unlike American museums which may have staffs of over a hundred for even a mid-size institution and multiple curators for the various parts of the collection, the staff of an average French provincial archaeology museum consists of the conservateur, a secretary, and one full-time security guard, supplemented by high school students in the summer. Maintenance for the museums that are municipal museums is supplied by the city, and it is these same maintenance people that provide construction for exhibitions. The largest staff for a museum in the study is twenty-three, for both Auxerre and Dijon. Table 4.1 gives a breakdown of staff by position for some

**TABLE 4.1 Full-time Museum Staff**

Museum (by city)	Conser- vateur	Assis- tants	Secre- tary	Profession- al Staff <sup>a</sup>	Guards <sup>b</sup>	Recep- tion <sup>c</sup>	Concierge	Other <sup>d</sup>
Arcy-sur-Cure <sup>e</sup>								
Autun	1	1	1	3	4		3	2
Auxerre	1	1	2	3	3	8		5
Avallon	1		1					
Bourbon-Lancy	0							
Chalon-sur-Saône	2	1	2	2	?			1
Châtillon-sur-Seine	1		1		?	3		2
Clamecy	1				1			
Digoin	0							
Dijon	1	1		4	6	1	1	9
Gueugnon	0							
Issy-l'Évêque	0							
La Charité-sur-Loire	1				3			
Le Creusot	1	1	1	2	?			
Mâcon	2		2	1	4	1		1
Montbard	0				1			
Saint-Père-sous-Vézelay	1	1			1			
Saulieu	1						1 <sup>f</sup>	
Semur-en-Auxois	1			1			1	
Sens	1		1		4		1 <sup>g</sup>	
Solutré	1	1			1			
Villeneuve-sur-Yonne <sup>e</sup>								

<sup>a</sup>Includes: photographer, documentalist, archaeologist, librarian, conservator, designer/drafter, educator, science technician. <sup>b</sup>Usually supplemented during the summer; frequently work reception. <sup>c</sup>Often staffed by volunteers or guards. <sup>d</sup>Includes: interns, technicians, and maintenance (technicians and maintenance otherwise are provided by the municipality). <sup>e</sup>Position of conservateur filled by Departmental Conservateur. <sup>f</sup>Also serves as reception and guard. <sup>g</sup>Also serves as guard.

of the museums in the study (for the other museums this information could not be obtained).

Another problem for the conservateurs in constructing archaeology exhibits is that while the conservateurs of archaeology museums usually are archaeologists or have a background in archaeology, the conservateurs of the smaller museums that combine archaeology and history or fine arts may have little or no training in archaeology. For example, the conservateur of the museum in Clamecy was in the process of reinstalling the entire archaeology section of the museum, but her professional training was in modern art and literature; therefore, many of the decisions about what to display and how to display it was being made by the archaeologists of the sites—who had no training in modern museology. With the conservateur and the archaeologist working together, there is the possibility for cooperating on a very good exhibit that addresses both archaeological and museological concerns, but there is also the possibility for immense amounts of frustration when the archaeologist wants to display everything from a site because it is all important, while the conservateur thinks (taking an example from Clamecy) that displaying an entire case of lance points is not going to mean anything to the average visitor and that there is not enough space to do so anyway.

To some extent, though, bringing the perspective of a non-specialist to a group of objects destined for display can be beneficial. Most of the conservateurs in the study

accepted the current museological tenet that less is more when it comes to objects displayed, that is, one should display only a few examples of each type of object from a site, rather than overloading the cases with everything found. As with the case of the aforementioned lance points, the archaeologist was too close to his subject to see the merits of showing only a few—they all meant something different to him. It needed the conservateur's more objective perspective to find a way to make the objects meaningful to the non-specialist. If the past one constructs is so opaque that only the specialist can understand it, then the conservateur and the museum have failed in their mission.

## APPENDIX 1

### *SOCIÉTÉS SAVANTES OF BURGUNDY*

- Autun: La Société éduenne, 1808
- Auxerre: La Société des sciences historiques et naturelles de l'Yonne, 1847
- Avallon: La Société d'études d'Avallon, 1859
- Beaune: La Société d'histoire, d'archéologie et de littérature de l'arrondissement de Beaune, 1851; c. 1910, changed to La Société d'archéologie de Beaune
- Chalon-sur-Saône: La Société d'histoire et d'archéologie, 1884
- Châtillon-sur-Seine: La Société archéologique du Châtillonnais, 1880
- Clamecy: La Société scientifique et artistique de Clamecy, 1876
- Dijon: La Commission des antiquités du département de la Côte-d'Or, 1831;  
Comité d'histoire et archéologie religieuse du diocèse de Dijon, 1882;  
(a musée de Dijon existed by 1885)
- [Gueugnon: L'Association Les Amis du Dardon, 1965]
- [Issy-l'Évêque: L'Association La Mémoire d'Issy, 1986;  
(formerly part of l'Association les Amis du Dardon)]
- Mâcon: L'Académie de Mâcon: Société des arts, sciences, belles-lettres et d'agriculture, 1805;  
(later shortened to L'Académie de Mâcon)
- Marcigny: originally La Société d'études du Brionnais;  
La Société Les amis des arts de Marcigny, 1913
- Montbard: La Société archéologique et biographique du canton de Montbard, 1910 (founded to create and maintain a museum)
- Nevers: La Société nivernais des lettres, sciences et arts,

1851

Saint-Père-sous-Vézelay: La Société des fouilles archéologiques et des monuments historiques de l'Yonne, 1935

Sens: La Société archéologique de Sens, 1844

Tournus: La Société des amis des arts et des sciences, 1877

[The Associations of Gueugnon and Issy-l'Évêque are not officially *sociétés savantes*, but they function in the same capacity.]

## APPENDIX 2

### DATES OF FOUNDING OF MUSEUMS

Chalon-sur-Saône	1819 (archaeology added, 1866)
Auxerre	1830 (transferred, 1868; reorganized 1988-91)
Dijon	1831 (given to city, 1955)
Autun	1839 (combined with Musée de l'Hôtel-de-Ville and Musée de la Société Éduenne, 1955)
Sens	1845 (transferred, 1986)
Nevers	1850
Beaune (Beaux-arts)	1850 (reorganized, 1946)
Avallon	1862 (transferred, 1971)
*Auxonne	1863
Semur-en-Auxois	1865 (reorganized, 1989)
Cluny	1866 (reorganized, 1964, 1990)
Mâcon	1873 (transferred, 1968)
*Noyers-sur-Serein	1873 (reorganized, 1972)
Clamecy	1876 (archaeology added, 1977)
Châtillon-sur-Seine	1882 (transferred, 1950)
*Paray-le-Monial	1890
Matour	1895
Bourbon-Lancy	1897
Tournus	1897 (reorganized, 1958, 1968)
Arcy-sur-Cure	1902
Alise-Sainte-Reine	1910 (combined with Musée municipal, founded c. 1860-70)
*Marcigny	1912 (enlarged, 1964)
Saulieu	1930 (archaeology added, 1965; reorganized, 1967)
Montbard	1935
*Beaune (Vin)	1937 (transferred, 1946)
*Romenay	1937 (reorganized, 1970)
*Marzy	1938
Nuits-Saint-Georges	before 1940 (closed 1940; reorganized and reopened, 1975)
Saint-Père-sous-Vézelay	1943
Azé	1948 (transferred, 1963)
La Charité-sur-Loire	1951 (Musée archéologique, 1975; combined, 1988)
Gueugnon	1967
Digoin	1970
Issy-l'Évêque	1972
Le Creusot	1974
*Reulle-Vergy	1974
Beaune-Tailly	1977 (Archéodrome)

Villeneuve-sur-Yonne	1979
Mont-Saint-Vincent	before 1980
Escolives-Sainte-Camille	before 1980
*La Machine	1981/3
*Chamoux	1984
Luzy	before 1987
Solutré	1987

\* = very small amount of archaeological material

### APPENDIX 3

#### ARCHAEOLOGY MUSEUMS IN BURGUNDY

- 1) Alise-Sainte-Reine (21)  
Musée Alésia  

Rue de l'Hôpital  
Alise-Sainte-Reine  
21150 LES LAUMES  
80.96.10.95, 80.30.54.60

Musée d'Association (Société des Sciences  
Historiques et Naturelles de Semur-en-Auxois)  
contrôlé DMF  
Created: 1910  
Assoc. with archaeological site: Fouilles d'Alésia  
Conservateur: Mlle. Elisabeth RABEISEN
  
- 2) Arcy-sur-Cure (89)  
Musée de l'Hôtel de Ville  

Mairie  
89650 ARCY-SUR-CURE  
86.40.91.69 (mairie)

Musée municipal contrôlé DMF  
Created: 1902  
Conservateur: M. Claude RENOUARD
  
- 3) Autun (71)  
Musée Rolin  

5, rue des Bancs  
71400 AUTUN  
85.52.09.76

Musée municipal contrôlé DMF, 1<sup>ère</sup> catégorie  
Created: 1839 (Fusion in 1955 of Musée de l'Hôtel-  
de-Ville and Musée de la Société Éduenne des  
lettres, sciences et arts)  
Conservateur: Mlle. Brigitte MAURICE
  
- 4) Auxerre (89)  
Musée d'Art et d'Histoire  

Abbaye Saint-Germain  
89000 AUXERRE  
86.51.09.74

Musée municipal contrôlé DMF  
Created: 1830/1847 (closed 1970, reopened 1988)  
Conservateur: Mme. Micheline DURAND

- 5) Auxonne (21)  
Musée Bonaparte
- Château Prost  
Rue Lafayette  
21130 AUXONNE  
80.31.10.65 (mairie)
- Musée municipal contrôlé DMF  
Created: 1862  
Conservateur: Mlle. Marie-Madelaine MOREAU
- 6) Avallon (89)  
Musée de l'Avallonnais
- Place de la Collégiale  
89200 AVALLON  
86.34.03.19
- Musée municipal contrôlé DMF  
Created: 1862 (transferred 1971)  
Conservateur: Mme. Catherine BURET
- 7) Azé (71)  
Musée des Grottes
- Azé  
71260 LUGNY  
85.33.32.23, 85.50.04.07
- Musée d'Association contrôlé DMF  
Created: 1948  
Assoc. with archaeological site: Grottes d'Azé  
Conservateur: none currently
- 8) Beaune (21)  
Musée des Beaux-Arts
- Hôtel de Ville  
Rue de l'Hôtel de Ville  
21200 BEAUNE  
80.22.20.80
- Musée municipal contrôlé DMF  
Created 1850 (reorganized 1946)  
Conservateur: Mlle. Marion LEBAT
- 9) Beaune (21)  
Musée du Vin de Bourgogne
- Ancien Hôtel des Ducs de  
Bourgogne  
Rue d'Enfer  
21200 BEAUNE  
80.22.20.80
- Musée municipal contrôlé DMF  
Created: 1937 (transferred 1946)  
Conservateur; Mme. Marie-Pierre ROMAND

- 10) Beaune-Tailly (21)  
 Archéodrome de Beaune-Tailly  
 Autoroute A6  
 Aire de Beaune-Tailly  
 21190 MERSAULT  
 Musée d' Association  
 Created: 1977  
 Conservateur: Mme. Micheline ROUVIER-JEANLIN
- 11) Bourbon-Lancy (71)  
 Musée Saint-Nazaire  
 Place Saint-Nazaire  
 71140 BOURBON-LANCY  
 85.89.23.23 (mairie)  
 Musée municipal contrôlé DMF  
 Created: 1897  
 Conservateur: none
- 12) Chalon-sur-Saône (71)  
 Musée Denon  
 Place de l' Hôtel de Ville  
 71100 CHALON-SUR-SAÔNE  
 85.48.01.70 (mairie)  
 Musée municipal contrôlé DMF  
 Created: 1819 (archaeology added 1866)  
 Conservateur, archaeology section: M. Louis BONNAMOUR
- 13) Chamoux (89)  
 Cardo-Land: Parc Préhistorique Imaginaire  
 89660 CHAMOUX  
 86.33.28.33  
 Musée privé; Ecomusée no. 8907I00 C  
 Created: 1984  
 Conservateur: none
- 14) Châtillon-sur-Seine (21)  
 Musée Archéologique du Châtillonnais  
 7, rue du Bourg  
 21400 CHÂTILLON-SUR-SEINE  
 80.91.24.67  
 Musée municipal contrôlé DMF  
 Created: 1882 (transferred 1950)  
 Conservateur: Mme. Nadine BERTHELIER-AJOT
- 15) Clamecy (58)  
 Musée d' Art et d' Histoire Romain-Rolland  
 Hôtel de Bellegarde  
 Rue Romain-Rolland  
 58500 CLAMECY  
 86.27.17.99  
 Musée municipal contrôlé DMF  
 Created: 1876 (archaeology added 1977)  
 Conservateur: Mme. Marie-Claude FONTAINE

- 16) Cluny (71)  
Musée Ochier
- Palais Jean-de-Bourbon  
71250 CLUNY  
85.59.05.87 (mairie)
- Musée municipal contrôlé DMF, 1<sup>ère</sup> catégorie  
Created: 1866 (reorganized 1964 and 1989-91)  
Conservateur: Mlle. Dominique VINGTAIN
- 17) Digoin (71)  
Centre de Documentation de la Céramique
- 6, rue Guillemillot  
71160 DIGOIN  
85.53.00.81
- Musée municipal et d'Association (Association des Amis de Dardon)  
Created: 1970  
Acting conservateur: M. Antoine KOLAR
- 18) Dijon (21)  
Musée Archéologique
- 5, rue du Docteur-Maret  
21000 DIJON  
80.30.88.54
- Musée municipal contrôlé DMF, 1<sup>ère</sup> catégorie  
Created: 1831 (given to city 1955)  
Conservateur: Mme. Monique JANNET
- 19) Escolives-Sainte-Camille (89)  
Exposition Archéologique
- Escolives-Ste-Camille  
89290 CHAMPS-SUR-YONNE
- Musée associated with archeological site  
Created: ?  
Conservateur: none
- 20) Gueugnon (71)  
Dépôt des Fouilles
- 28, rue du Vieux Fresne  
71130 GUEUGNON  
85.85.13.45
- Musée d'Association (Association des Amis du Dardon)  
Created: 1972  
Conservateur: none; M. Paul DAMIRON Président d'Association

- 21) Issy-l'Évêque (71)  
Salle d'Exposition
- Tour de Luzy  
71760 ISSY-L'ÉVÊQUE  
85.89.85.21
- Musée d'Association (Association de la Mémoire  
d'Issy-l'Évêque)  
Created: 1972  
Conservateur: none; M. Jean LAUDET Président  
d'Association
- 22) La Charité-sur-Loire (58)  
Musée municipal
- Hôtel Adam  
33, rue des Chapelains  
58400 LA CHARITÉ-S/-LOIRE  
86.70.34.83
- Musée municipal contrôlé DMF  
Created: 1951 (archaeology 1979)  
Conservateur: Mme. Marie-José GARNICHE-MÉRIT
- 23) La Machine (58)  
Musée de la Mine
- 1, ave. de la République  
58260 LA MACHINE  
86.50.91.08
- Musée municipal  
Created: 1981/3  
Conservateur: M. Serge RENIMEL
- 24) Le Creusot (71)  
Ecomusée de la Communauté Le Creusot-Montceau-les-Mines
- Château de la Verrerie  
71200 LE CREUSOT  
85.55.01.11
- Musée d'Association (Association Tourism  
Industriel)  
Created: 1974  
Conservateur: M. P. NOTTEGHEM
- 25) Luzy (58)  
Musée du donjon des barons de Luzy
- Le donjon des barons  
58170 LUZY  
86.30.02.34 (mairie)
- Musée municipal  
Created: ?  
Conservateur: ?

- 26) Mâcon (71)  
Musée des Ursulines  
5, rue des Ursulines  
71000 MÂCON  
85.38.18.84  
Musée municipal contrôlé DMF  
Created: 1873 (reorganized 1968)  
Conservateur: M. Jean-François GARMIER
- 27) Marcigny (71)  
Musée de la Tour du Moulin  
7, rue de la Tour du  
Moulin  
71110 MARCIGNY  
85.25.21.87  
Musée municipal contrôlé DMF  
Created: 1912 (enlarged 1964)  
Conservateur: M. Henri ROBILLARD
- 28) Marzy (58)  
Musée municipal Gautron du Coudray  
Place de l'Église  
Marzy  
58000 NEVERS  
86.57.14.69  
Musée municipal contrôlé DMF  
Created: 1938  
Conservateur: M. BARDIN
- 29) Matour (71)  
Musée municipal  
71520 MATOUR  
85.59.70.20 (mairie)  
Musée d'Association  
Created: 1895  
Conservateur: M. Raymond BARAULT
- 30) Montbard (21)  
Musée Archéologique  
Château  
Parc Buffon  
21500 MONTBARD  
80.92.01.34  
Musée municipal contrôlé DMF  
Created: 1935  
Conservateur: none

- 31) Mont-Saint-Vincent (71)  
 Musée Archéologique Jean Régnier  
 Grenier à Sel  
 71690 MONT-SAINT-VINCENT  
 85.57.38.51 (Office du  
 Tourisme)  
 Musée d' Association  
 Created: ?  
 Conservateur: none
- 32) Nevers (58)  
 Musée Archéologique de la Porte du Croux  
 Porte du Croux  
 58000 NEVERS  
 86.59.17.85  
 Musée d' Association contrôlé DMF (Association  
 nivernaise des Lettres, Sciences et Arts)  
 Created: 1850  
 Conservateur: Mme. MAQUART-MOULINS
- 33) Noyers-sur-Serein (89)  
 Musée municipal  
 Rue du Musée  
 89310 NOYERS-SUR-SEREIN  
 86.55.83.72 (mairie)  
 Musée municipal contrôlé DMF  
 Created: 1873 (reorganized 1972)  
 Conservateur: ?
- 34) Nuits-Saint-Georges (21)  
 Musée municipal  
 11, rue Camille-Rodier  
 21700 NUITS-SAINT-GEORGES  
 80.61.12.54 (mairie)  
 Musée municipal contrôlé DMF  
 Created: ?, closed 1940, archaeology opened 1975  
 Associated with archaeological site: Les Bolards  
 Conservateur: none (at present)
- 35) Paray-le-Monial (71)  
 Musée Eucharistique du Hiéron  
 Rue Pasteur  
 71600 PARAY-LE-MONIAL  
 85.88.85.80  
 Musée privé contrôlé DMF  
 Created: 1890  
 Conservateur: Abbé Jean-Claude DEBROSSE

- 36) Reulle-Vergy (21)  
 Musée des Arts et Traditions des Hautes-Côtes  
 Reulle-Vergy  
 21220 GEVREY-CHAMBERTIN  
 80.61.40.95  
 Musée d'Association contrôlé DMF (Les Amis de  
 Vergy)  
 Created: 1974  
 Conservateur: ?
- 37) Romenay (71)  
 Musée du Terroir  
 71470 ROMENAY  
 85.40.35.70  
 85.40.30.90 (mairie)  
 Musée municipal contrôlé DMF (affiliated with the  
 Association des Amis du Vieux Romenay)  
 Created: 1937 (reorganized 1970)  
 Conservateur: M. Jean-François BAZIN
- 38) Saint-Père-sous-Vézelay (89)  
 Musée Archéologique  
 Saint-Père-sous-Vézelay  
 89450 VÉZELAY  
 86.33.23.14  
 Musée d'Association (Société des fouilles  
 archéologiques de l'Yonne) et Musée Monuments  
 Historiques  
 Created: 1943  
 Associated with archaeological site: les  
 Fontaines Salées  
 Conservateur: ?  
 Assistant & acting conservateur: M. Pierre TOLLARD
- 39) Saulieu (21)  
 Musée François Pompon  
 Place du Docteur-Roclore  
 21210 SAULIEU  
 80.64.09.22 (mairie)  
 Musée municipal contrôlé DMF  
 Created: 1930 (archaeology added 1965)  
 Conservateur: Mme. Monique JANNET
- 40) Semur-en-Auxois (21)  
 Musée Municipal  
 Rue Jean-Jacques Collenot  
 21140 SEMUR-EN-AUXOIS  
 80.97.24.25  
 Musée municipal contrôlé DMF  
 Created: 1865  
 Conservateur: M. Matthieu PINETTE

- 41) Sens (89)  
Musées de Sens
- Place de la Cathédrale  
89100 SENS  
86.64.15.27, 86.64.46.22
- Musée municipal contrôlé DMF et Collections d'État  
Created: 1845 (transferred 1986)  
Conservateur: Mme. Lydwine SAULNIER-PERNUIT
- 42) Solutré (71)  
Musée départemental de la Préhistoire de Solutré
- 71960 SOLUTRÉ-POUILLY  
85.35.83.23, 85.35.85.24
- Musée départemental contrôlé DMF  
Affiliated with the Académie de Mâcon  
Created: 1987  
Associated with archaeological site: Solutré  
Conservateur: Mme. Marie-Geneviève LAGARDERE
- 43) Tournus (71)  
Musée Greuze
- 3, rue du Collège  
71700 TOURNUS  
85.51.30.74
- Musée municipal contrôlé DMF  
Created: 1897 (reorganized 1958 and 1968)  
Conservateur: Mme. Marie LAPALU
- 44) Villeneuve-sur-Yonne (89)  
Musée d'archéologie et d'histoire
- Porte de Joigny  
89500 VILLENEUVE-S/-YONNE  
86.87.07.45 (mairie)
- Musée municipal contrôlé DMF  
Created: 1979  
Conservateur: M. Claude RENOUARD

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Numbers in parentheses after cities indicate French administrative department:

- 21 = Côte-d'Or  
58 = Nièvre  
71 = Saône-et-Loire  
89 = Yonne

## APPENDIX 4

### INTERVIEWS WITH CONSERVATEURS

These entries are compiled from interviews with conservateurs of some of the museums in the study and from notes taken during visits to the museums. Each conservateur was asked the following questions:

#### Museum information:

- 1) How many people work at the museum? In what positions?
- 2) From where does the money (budget) for the museum come? (The municipality, the region, the State?)
- 3) What percentage of the collection is normally on view?
- 4) How many times a year do you mount temporary exhibitions?

#### Information about the permanent installation:

- 5) How do you characterize the manner in which the objects are displayed? (Thematically, chronologically, contextually?) Why did you choose this manner?
- 6) How do you choose which objects to display? (For their scientific or aesthetic interest?) Do you display many of the same type of object or just a few examples?
- 7) Do you interpret the exhibits for the public? Is there a lot of text accompanying each case?
- 8) What do you want the public to learn from the exhibits?
- 9) Do you try to create exhibits that have meaning in

the daily life of the public?

- 10) Do you see any political message in the exhibits? Does politics influence the museum in any way?
- 11) When a museum is installed in a historic, often formerly religious, building, do you think that the original function of the building imparts something to the objects? (Perhaps a sense of the sacred?)
- 12) If you could change one thing in or about the museum, what would it be?
- 13) In general, are you satisfied with the museum?

General questions:

- 14) In your opinion, what is the place of museums in the life of people? What do they, or should they, do?
- 15) (For 1990) What do you think of the "*Année de l'Archéologie*"?

Each entry begins with a brief history of the museum in question.

AUTUN

MUSÉE ROLIN  
5, rue des Bancs  
71400 Autun  
85.52.09.76

Musée municipal contrôlé, 1<sup>ère</sup> catégorie—visited 4-13-89  
Conservateur: M. Matthieu PINETTE (until 7-89)—interview  
4-27-89; Mlle. Brigitte MAURICE

The Musée Rolin was created in 1955 as a result of the combination of the Musée de l'Hôtel-de-Ville, a municipal museum founded in 1839, and the Musée de la Société Éduenne des lettres, sciences et arts, founded in 1836 by the Société éduenne, the local *société savante* (founded 1808). In 1878 the society acquired the fifteenth-century Hôtel Rolin to house its collection of archaeological artifacts and materials pertaining to local history, and it is this building and an adjacent one that serve as the museum today. In 1989 the museum had just finished a long period of gradual reinstallation of the archaeology section, completed by conservateur Monsieur Pinette before his departure to become conservateur of the museum in Besançon, after ten years in Autun. (In the future, after the completion of the archaeological investigations of the former cathedral of Saint-Nazaire and its cloister, a new archaeology museum and research center is to be installed in some of the buildings surrounding the cloister, on the Place du Terreau, near the Musée Rolin.)

Twelve people work at the museum: one conservateur, one assistant to the conservateur, one documentalist, the munic-

ipal archaeologist, one secretary, the chief security guard, three guards, two technicians, and one part-time photographer; in addition there are three concierges, who provide night-time security and do custodial work.

The museum is a municipal museum and receives most money for operating expenses from the city. The State pays for temporary exhibitions and for restoration, acquisitions, and the like.

Serving as the local *dépôt de fouilles* (repository of excavated material), the museum has an enormous archaeological collection to draw on, Autun having an especially rich Gallo-Roman and medieval heritage. Of the Gallo-Roman and medieval material, ten to twenty percent is generally on display, but that accounts for seventy to eighty percent of the most interesting and important part of the collection (as most of the material consists of potsherds, mosaic fragments, and so forth). The museum also has a collection of historical materials and fine arts.

The museum puts on temporary exhibitions on an average of three times a year, some with archaeological themes and others focusing more on historical materials or contemporary art.

The archaeology exhibits are designed thematically within a chronological framework. Objects are grouped not by provenance but by themes: daily life, funeral rites, religion, and artistic concerns. The conservateur also feels that one achieves better understanding through the use

of many objects, as the objects will make each other clear—as in an ensemble of god figures or a group of items from daily life. The conservateur, in some situations, likes to imply a context—placing ceramics on a copy of a Roman shelf unit, setting religious statues in wall niches to resemble Gallo-Roman household altars, placing objects on a restored mosaic floor as they would have been placed in a house—to suggest what or how objects might have been seen at the time of their use. He feels that these ways of presenting objects are what works best considering the building and the collection of the Musée Rolin, but at other places other ways might be better; he believes there is not one best museographic technique.

The conservateur chooses objects for display primarily for their scientific or pedagogic interest. Conservation of objects is important, as it is easier to show objects that are in a good state of preservation. Historic interest and aesthetics are also important, but he feels it is better to show a less beautiful object that teaches something than just a pretty object—one should not show only beautiful things; for scientific and pedagogic purposes, showing incomplete or broken objects is fine. He likes to show lots of the same kind of object where it is appropriate. For example, he would display many of the same sort of small pitcher on a shelf because a household would have more than one of this kind of object. In another type of museum display, though, he sees that only showing one example of

each type of object might be appropriate; but he prefers to try to suggest context with objects—to show it like it was.

He thinks that each object should have a label that gives basic information: date, material, object type, provenance (both archaeological and how it arrived in the collection), and the inventory number. Besides that, each group of objects should have a text, but not too long (or people will not read it), and each room should have a substantial text. He would rather suggest function by context than by labels.

He does not see a direct relevance of the exhibits to the lives of the visitors, but he believes it does have a more spiritual or intellectual value. Objects are evocative, and people are always interested in the concept that something was made by a person at another time for a reason.

He thinks that it is possible to have a political discourse in a museum and realizes that it is impossible for a museum to be without politics. But he believes that museums should be without a politician's idea of politics, where objects may be manipulated to support different political stances. He realizes that objects do have a political element that is often lost when the conservateur must define an object briefly to suggest what it might have meant at the time it was used. For example, one talks about what mosaics were, but one does not get into the fact that poor people did not have them.

He thinks that a historic building housing a museum can

be a good thing. Visitors may be interested in the building as well as in the exhibits, and it can add something to the general museum experience. But he believes that a new building can be good, too. He thinks that showing Gallo-Roman objects in a medieval room leads to no better understanding of the objects, but showing medieval objects in a medieval room can aid understanding. He feels that historic, especially religious buildings do not give a religious sense to the objects, but they may impart a sense of mystery, a sense of the sacred as opposed to the profane.

If he could change something about the museum, if he had enough money, he would radically redesign the archaeology rooms. He thinks the archaeology section is too compressed and narrow. he would like to use his same methodology of presentation, but have them be more extensive, for example, include urbanism. A second thing he would change would be to have a fuller and more prolonged contact and association with the visitors and the public in general.

In general, he is satisfied with the museum, though there is still lots of work to be done.

He believes that the role of museums is to stimulate intellectual and spiritual interest, whatever it may be for each different visitor.

The new archaeology museum that is being planned in the Place du Terreau, Monsieur Pinette sees opening in five years at best, ten years at worst. It will follow the same sort of presentation as is currently at the Musée Rolin,

only it will be expanded and will include prehistory, objects from Bibracte, and the results of the archaeological investigations of the Saint-Nazaire cathedral complex.

According to Monsieur Pinette, the "new museology" is a politically leftist concept that was "*très à la mode*" (very "in") in the mid 1980s. He thinks that the proponents are somewhat demagogic and that their theories are not really practicable. The "new museology" is possibly museology's equivalent of post-processual archaeology.

AUXERRE

MUSÉE D'ART ET D'HISTOIRE  
Abbaye Saint-Germain  
89000 Auxerre  
86.51.09.74

Musée municipal contrôlé DMF—visited 5-23-89 and 10-3-90  
Conservateur: Mme. Micheline DURAND—interview 5-23-89 and  
10-3-90

In 1830, the first public collections of the museum, a small group of diverse objects that had been assembled in the years following the Revolution by Father Laire (1739-1805), librarian of the archbishop of Sens, was installed in the disaffected church of Notre-Dame-la-d'Hors (no longer existing). In 1847, the newly established Société des sciences historiques et naturelles de l'Yonne took over the care, study, and maintenance of the collections; they obtained an operating budget from the town and embarked on a modest acquisition campaign. In 1868, the museum and library were transferred to the former court house and a conservateur was appointed, who in 1870 published the first catalogue of the collections. (Durand 1988:3-4)

In 1970, the museum's building was appropriated by the city hall for more office space, and the museum was deinstalled amid promises to reinstall it in the former abbey church of Saint-Germain (a location proposed first in 1855 and then in 1919), which finally happened in the 1980s (Durand 1988:4). A museographic program was designed to encompass the ninth-century abbey, with the different clois-

tral buildings housing an archaeology museum, a fine arts museum, and areas for activities, receptions, and the like. The still-existing church and its crypt with important frescoes would contribute to the museum experience, as would the on-going archaeological investigations of the nave and narthex area of the church which had been previously demolished. In 1988, the gallery devoted to the Gallo-Roman period opened in the former monks' dormitory, and, in 1991, the gallery of prehistory and "protohistory" was scheduled to open on an upper floor; the medieval collections would be installed after 1992 in some of the lower rooms, and the fine arts museum subsequently, in another wing of the abbey (Durand 1988). [When this study was done, only the Gallo-Roman gallery was open to the public, and the prehistory and protohistory gallery was under construction.]

Twenty-three people work at the museum: one conservateur, one scientific assistant, two secretaries, one registrar, one documentalist, one assistant documentalist, three guards, one transportation/temporary exhibition technician, two maintenance/custodial workers, two interns, and eight front-desk receptionists working in rotations. Additionally, part-time "temps" fill in when needed.

The museum is a municipal museum and receives its daily operating budget from the city. The State, the regional government, and the departmental government also give money for large projects (the State generally gives fifty percent and the region and department make up the other fifty per-

cent). Due to decentralization, the region now subsidizes some things formerly subsidized by the State. The region gives thirty percent of the money for writing catalogues and mounting temporary exhibitions, and seventy percent of the money for buying works of art. In 1989, the State gave only one third to one half of the amount of money that was expected to the Burgundy region because of what it saw as diminished enthusiasm within the regional museum community.

When the museum is finished, ten percent of the archaeology collection will be on display. For paintings, a larger percentage is expected to be displayed.

When the museum is finished, the conservateur expects to have two to four temporary exhibitions each year, focusing on different areas of the museum's two major themes—archaeology and fine arts—to show people what there is in the collections. At first, before the museum was really open, she tried to put on more temporary exhibitions to try to habituate people to coming to the museum again (since it previously had been closed for a number of years as noted above).

Objects in the museum are displayed chronologically by floors, with the top floor housing prehistory and proto-history, the middle floor housing Gallo-Roman material, and the lower floor housing (in the future) medieval material. Within the Gallo-Roman section, objects are displayed thematically (establishing chronology within the Gallo-Roman material is difficult) because the conservateur feels that

an archaeology museum cannot be an encyclopedia but should provide a focus for the visitor. The themes are also placed within the larger context of the Auxerrois region.

The four themes within the Gallo-Roman section are: 1) Introduction to the period by way of panels moving from generalities to particulars, establishing historic context, the Gallic War, the Romans, and the people of the region, using only a few big objects that are symbolic (a horse statue = the army and a stele showing a soldier with features and characteristics of both Gauls and Romans, showing that one could be both at the same time); 2) the Development of Urbanism (focusing on a model of the city), the growth of the city, and the beginnings of the history of the region (with an audiovisual component); 3) Daily Life, centered on a reconstituted kitchen with objects contextualized, and around the room the same objects in cases with labels, showing the objects for themselves, out of context; and 4) Funerary Rites and Religious Beliefs, using steles (each chosen to show something different and statues.

The reason for this thematic display is that the museum is for the general public, not only for specialists, and the conservateur believes that this is the easiest method of presentation to understand. From the thematic displays, the visitors can draw direct parallels with their own lives, as in the kitchen display, which even a child can recognize as a kitchen. The prehistory and protohistory section, scheduled to open in 1991, would operate along the same princi-

ples, but with more reconstructed sites. After the Introduction, a section will be devoted to the techniques of archaeology, followed by a didactic circuit through the paleolithic, the neolithic, the Bronze Age, and the Iron Age, followed by a second circuit on a raised mezzanine that will touch on more difficult themes (such as human evolution or methods of acquiring iron) and present study collections; a brief discussion of the historic nature of the building housing the museum will also be included.

The conservateur chooses the objects for display in a variety of ways. For example, Mother-goddesses and Venus figurines are found in large quantities everywhere, so the conservateur has placed one in the "manufacturing" vitrine and another in the "furniture" vitrine, where it is turned to show the chair style rather than focusing on the religious nature of the object. She believes that there should be reference objects, reflecting certain techniques or rites, and also exceptional objects. In the prehistory section, she wants to display only one or two examples of certain types of objects, so that it will not overwhelm the visitor. In the reconstruction of the Gallo-Roman kitchen, there are lots of objects, and one of each sort is also in the vitrines around the room as a reference; she would like to do something similar for prehistory.

She does interpret the exhibits because she feels that the public, at least her public, needs to be guided somewhat. Large panels give general information—on religion,

architecture, etc.—while inside the vitrines there are only small labels with the objects “vital statistics” (what it is, time period, material, provenance, etc.). There are numbers beside each object, and the labels are grouped together in the back, so as not to present a “*forêt d’étiquettes*” [forest of labels]. There are also reference panels explaining funeral rites and how to distinguish between them.

The fine arts installation interpretation will be different because everyone knows some paintings and artists and what a painting is. But for the non-specialist, interpretation will be provided to give a context for the paintings, so that it will be easier to understand what the paintings mean. One needs some basic understanding of art history to be able to understand the importance or meaning of a work. The conservateur also thinks that many ways of approaching various problems of interpretation need to be tried—traditional techniques, audiovisual aids, etc.

She believes that museum should be mainly for pleasure, and she does not see active teaching as necessarily desirable—“*le musée n’est pas l’école*” [the museum is not school]. She feels that one’s time in a museum should be a moment of discovery; everyone can find something they like. All the objects can be appropriated by them to some extent into their collective memory (not in the Jungian sense but rather as knowledge that such objects exist). Going to a museum should let the visitors come away feeling a little

richer.

She believes a museum should be a place that is a little extraordinary. She cited an example where two objects from the museum were placed in vitrines in stores in town; only people who already knew what the objects were stopped to look at them. People hurry about in stores, and grocery stores should contain groceries, not museum objects. She feels that to reduce a museum to "the everyday" would make it lose something.

She does try to make exhibits that have some rapport with the life of the public but feels that one must not stop there. There must be a thread of linkage with the visitor's life in order for him or her to understand an exhibit (like the kitchen), but one must take it further so that it also tells them something they do not already know.

She believes that museum are not politically neutral. it is a political choice to make a museum be for the general public or only for the elite. A museum is a political act--one does not need a museum. The museum in Auxerre was a choice of the mayor and the city council and was totally political to the point that it was a part of the campaign and elections (having a museum--and funding it--had to be seen as useful for the commune). The museological plan had to be accepted by the city council also, but her actions within the museum are free of political pressure.

She believes that installing a museum in a historic building is a little constraining, but that the good out-

weighs the bad of the constraints. Putting in a museum gives a sense of dynamism to an old building and often causes it to be restored and lets the restored building live. As far as objects are concerned, the building they are in is always a factor. In the exhibits, the building is always there with its own history and evolution, and it must be considered in the museographic presentation--no Louis XV windows in the Gallo-Roman section. She feels one must "*garder lisible l'histoire du bâtiment*" [keep the history of the building legible]. One is always at least vaguely conscious of the building and should learn its history. This is why she wants to include a section on the building in the prehistory section.

A sense of the sacred is part of the possible emotions that could be provoked in relation to the building. But one must take each case separately and not over-generalize. The dormitory (housing the Gallo-Roman and prehistory galleries) will not provoke the sense of the sacred like the Chapter Room (which may house the medieval section in the future) or the church itself. One has to consider the relation of the exhibits to the church. She does not want to trivialize the church.

Since the museum is not finished, there is nothing she really wants to *change*. However, she would like to enlarge the museum and have more space. Some rooms were changed from possible gallery space into workshops, and she would really like them back. There is a serious problem with

space. She also needs to work on the elected officials who work on the short term (of six years in office) and not on the long term as she must. She is obliged to work with "political logic."

As for the function of museum in the world, she believes they should exist primarily to provide pleasure for the visitors.

The conservateur, Mme. Durand, feels that each museum is, and should be, unique. The museum building is very important, and one must work *with* the existing architecture and the entire general placement of the museum. She feels it is necessary to make visible the history of the building as well as make it into a museum. To this end, she unblocked a window going from the church onto the smaller staircase that goes down from the prehistory galleries to the Gallo-Roman galleries. She has also left the eighteenth-century iron pillars in the Gallo-Roman galleries, even though they were originally (earlier) wooden, because the eighteenth century is also a part of the history of the building. More practically, the Gallo-Roman collection is housed where it is so that the vaults of the rooms below will support the heavy stone sculpture.

The museum cases, vitrines, bases, etc., she decided to make completely modern to try to avoid problems with clashing architectural styles. She wanted to preserve the vision of open space and the beauty of the room, so she had

specially designed cases fabricated, made entirely of glass with metal supports. Everything is interchangeable and can be moved or removed if desired in the future. They also provide the ability to create different subdivisions within the larger gallery space to contain the different themes. Unfortunately, so much money was spent on the special cases that there was too little left to do the didactic panels adequately, and they will eventually have to be redone.

The circuit through the museum will start at the top with prehistory and work its way down through the building and through time. To serve the needs of the visitors, there will be places to sit and a guard in each room. The visit to the church, its historically important crypt, and the archaeological site adjacent will eventually form part of the museum visit experience.

AVALLON

MUSÉE DE L'AVALLONNAIS  
Place de la Collégiale  
89200 Avallon  
86.34.03.19

Musée municipal contrôlé DMF—visited 6-22-89 and 9-3-90  
Conservateur: Mme. Catherine BURET—interview 6-22-89

The Musée de l'Avallonnais was founded in 1862 (on 9 May) by the Société d'Études d'Avallon. The collections of the society (founded in 1859) which had been kept in the town clock tower were then moved and put on display in the Hôtel de Gouvenain. In 1971 the collections were transferred to their present location in the former seventeenth-century school. The museum is open only during the summer and during school holidays. As of the interview in 1989, the Madame Buret had been conservateur for two years. The museum is comprehensive, containing natural history collections and fine art as well as archaeological collections.

Only two people work full-time at the museum: the conservateur and a secretary. (In previous years, the conservateur had also served as the town librarian.) There is temporary help with surveillance—one person on each floor, totalling three—who are usually students who work two weeks at a time. Technical help and maintenance is provided by city hall.

The museum is a municipal museum but unlike most of the museums in this study, it does not have its own budget. The museum salaries are paid by the city, and all expenditures must be cleared through city hall, which is a very time-

consuming process. The conservateur is trying to get a separate budget for 1990 because as it is now, it is very difficult to keep up the museum and make any renovations. The museum is very large and has no problem with space but severe problems with money.

The conservateur estimates that more than fifty percent of the museum's collection is on display. She mounts temporary exhibitions once a year when things go well, but in 1989 there was no temporary exhibition. (This is a major difference from other museums, almost all of which mounted some kind of exhibition, however small, relating to the town's role--however minor--in the Revolution for the bicentennial.) For 1990, there was the exhibition "*L'Yonne et son passé, 30 ans d'archéologie*" for the *Année de l'Archéologie*. When objects had been removed from their permanent locations for the exhibition, they were replaced by 4" x 6" color photos.

The objects are displayed chronologically, and within the chronology typologically, by site, as well as chronologically within certain sites. All of the large lapidary material, though, is grouped together on the ground floor due to its weight. While the archaeological material follows the chronological display technique, other objects in the museum are grouped and displayed thematically.

The objects on view were chosen for display by the conservateur's predecessor, who chose to display the archaeological material by site groupings and other material as

individual objects. Depending on the period and other considerations, sometimes one or many examples of a type of object is displayed. Series of flint tools are displayed, as are caches of similar objects found in archaeological sites.

For now, there is not much text or interpretation of the material for the public. There are labels giving general epochs, but few precise dates. In some cases where objects have been grouped by type, the group has a label text. For the partially reconstructed Roman Temple of Montmartre, the story of its removal by Monuments Historiques is told interestingly through a series of labels with photos. The conservateur is working on organizing the museum.

She would like to give the public a clear idea of the different civilizations that lived in the region. She would like to show the life styles and belief systems of these groups. She would also like to show the objects for themselves—their form and aesthetics—as well as for their function. In the future she would like to arrange the museum to give a sort of tour of the region from prehistoric times to the present.

She is not yet able to make the exhibits relevant to the public. She wants, though, to present a section devoted to regional ethnography, the objects for which she has in storage. The museum has lots of traditional objects of material culture and are doing research on "*la vie agricole et artisanale*" (agricultural and artisan life). She also

wants to respond to what the people who visit the museum are looking for. Archaeology discovers distant roots, but it is very difficult to show this. She would like to reconstruct for an exhibit the Magdalenian life because she thinks such an exhibit would really communicate something to people.

She does not see a political message in the exhibits, and if there is one it is unintentional. The method of showing prehistory and daily life may have a sort of political message, though, depending on *whose* daily life is shown. She also notes, as other conservateurs pointed out as well, that the idea of *having* a museum is political, from the point of view of the town politicians and some others.

When the museum is installed in a historic building, as here, the conservateur feels that it can have an effect or influence on the objects. The former college is fairly austere, and she must work with the positive and negative effects this creates. She must display objects in a particular way that is different than what it might have been in another building.

If she could change one thing about the museum, it would be the way it functions. She wants more personnel, financial and physical aid, autonomy, and especially her own budget.

She is very happy with the collections of the museum; it is very rich and corresponds with her interest in prehistory. But she wants to be able to do more with it. She wants to try to get the people of Avallon—the Avallonnais—

more interested in their museum, and she wants to connect the museum with the town's tourist industry and with research. She would like to collaborate more with other researchers in the area.

She believes that in big cities museums are integrated into the cultural politics of the city, but in small towns like Avallon their role is to attract people like students and tourists. But since public interest in museums in Avallon is not developed, she must have attractions to bring people in and get their attention. She has done this by having concerts in the museum in association with the local music school and in 1988 by having a contest, "*La Ruée vers l'Art*" (the "Rush to Art"), along with other museums in the department, to get people into the museum and looking at objects by offering prizes for answering questions about museum objects.

CHALON-SUR-SAÔNE

MUSÉE DENON

Place de l'Hôtel de Ville  
71100 Chalon-sur-Saône  
85.48.01.70 (mairie)

Musée municipal contrôlé DMF—visited 5-30-89, 10-10-90, and  
10-24-90  
Conservateur of archaeology: M. Louis BONNAMOUR—interview  
5-30-90

The Musée Denon was established in 1819, making it the oldest museum in the study; it was founded as a museum and art school by Jacques-Étienne Caumartin, a master blacksmith born in Chalon-sur-Saône. In 1866 the museum and art school were separated, and archaeological collections were added to the fine arts. In 1895, it was named the musée Denon, after Baron Dominique Vivant Denon, Director General of the Louvre under Napoleon and founder of many provincial museums, who had been born in Chalon. The museum is housed in an eighteenth-century convent, much altered early on. Reflecting its early history, the fine arts section and the archaeology section are separate entities, each with its own conservateur and staff. The archaeology section occupies the bottom floor of the museum, and Monsieur Louis Bonnamour is the conservateur of the archaeological collections.

Four people work in the archaeology section of the museum: the conservateur, a restorer (conservator, mainly for the metal found in the underwater archaeology project in Chalon in the Saône River), a drafter, and a general assistant who does everything from working in the library to making posters to cooking for the archaeology crew.

The museum is a municipal museum, and the operating budget comes from the town. The budget for the Saône River archaeology project and associated research comes from the Ministry of Culture.

It is hard to say how much of the collection is on display, because practically no material from recent archaeological digs is shown, only a few isolated objects. Primarily old things from the collection are displayed, not the most interesting things. There is no room—or money—to display properly recent material in the museum building, and the storage area for the archaeology section is in an eighteenth-century farm across the river that the conservateur would like to turn into an archaeology museum devoted to the Saône River digs, but the city keeps dragging its feet. The museum regularly sends material from its collection to other places for display in expositions, but it has no place to show the material itself. In an upcoming exhibition in Paris on thirty years of French archaeology, Chalon-sur-Saône is the best represented city in France, but the material cannot be displayed currently in the museum.

Because of the lack of space and the city's attitude towards a new archaeology museum, the conservateur prefers to stick to research. The mount very few temporary exhibitions, primarily because there is no temporary exhibition gallery in the museum, but also because it takes about two years of work for one good exhibition. Also, Monsieur Bonnamour is occupied for six months of the year with the

Saône dig (actually in progress mid-June to mid-August). He is trying to turn a very small room currently holding Merovingian sarcophagi into a temporary exhibition space, but it is very small. A temporary exhibition on arms (weapons) found in the Saône over the past four thousand years is in the works for late 1990, for an exposition hall elsewhere in town.

According to the conservateur, the presentation style of the permanent exhibits is "*très mauvaise*" (very bad). It is in the "*style ancienne*" (old style) and not at all satisfying. It was set up that way years ago, chronologically and typologically. He would very much like to change it to show more ensembles with context. He is more an archaeologist than a conservateur. He would like to change the room currently housing the Merovingian sarcophagi, as was noted above, into a room for showing the research in progress in the Saône excavations, to change yearly following the dig. [In all fairness, it appears that he *has* updated exhibits with material from the Saône project, but obviously not to his own satisfaction; he would like to show archaeological ensembles rather than isolated objects.]

The choice of objects to display was imposed upon him by the existing collection—old finds and isolated objects. He would like to present (but currently cannot) ensembles, thematic presentations, and site presentations. A new archaeology museum would let him create the kind of exhibits he wants, but he has been having lots of trouble with the

local politicians who say his ideas sound good and then do not carry through on their part, so the proposed new museum currently exists only on paper. He has done the work for it—a thirty page report detailing the proposed Musée de la Saône (Bonnamour and Hardy 1981)—and now is going to leave it in the hands of the politicians; they can call him if they want him, while he concentrates on his research interests (he is fairly bitter about the whole matter).

There is little interpretation of the exhibits, although the Gallo-Roman gallery was recently redone thematically. He realizes that the exhibits are somewhat lacking in explanations, but since he feels that people do not read texts in museums, he would like to present ensembles—groups of objects that are related—that would explain each other. He thinks it is more important to present ensembles than isolated objects, even if the objects are beautiful.

He is not really interested that the visitors learn anything specific from the exhibits because he believes that one finds in a museum what one is looking for. The visitors have different interests and are looking for different things. They often do not see many things in the vitrines, but instead focus on their own interests and may learn things about those specific interests.

He is interested in creating exhibits relevant to the life of the public since he is interested in the history of the Saône River, which by its mere presence takes on relevance to the lives of the people in Chalon. He feels that

the Saône itself is a theme that is real and alive and interests people. He is interested in the life of the river and the life along and on the river and is involved in creating an exhibition taking in both archaeology and ethnology, focusing on sailors and boats. He has found there to be great interest among the local people when he has the annual open house at the archaeology base, and he likes the way people bring things to the study of the Saône and take away other ideas.

He sees the decision to create a museum to be a political decision, but then within the museum the conservateur does what he wants. In the lending of objects to other exhibitions, the mayor decides whether or not to lend an object, but the conservateur first gives his opinion, and it is usually accepted by the mayor. He does not see any political message within the exhibits.

Monsieur Bonnamour feels that historic buildings present constraints and that it is easier to do exhibits in a new building. But he does see using historic buildings for museums as a way of saving old buildings—like the farm he wants to create an archaeology museum in. He feels that the current museum building, part of an old convent, is too dark and stark, so he has brought in plants to brighten up the galleries in the archaeology section. He thinks that any sense of sacredness depends on the interaction of the architecture and the presentation of the objects; in the case of the archaeology section, the presentation does not lend

itself to being thought of as sacred.

If he could change two things about the museum, he would first move the archaeology section across the river to the old farm, and second he would have a temporary exhibition gallery in the museum. He is not satisfied with the museum as is, though visitors are often content with the presentation. But he is not very motivated to improve things, since he is restricted to making very small changes when large ones are necessary.

He feels that, unfortunately, museums occupy a place similar to churches in the life of people [something they want to have but do not want to deal with because, while it is good for you, it is not fun], and they will not come to it if you call it a museum. Half of the local inhabitants never come to the museum. More foreigners come than locals. He sees it all depending on the themes of the museum and feels more locals would come if the theme was more relevant to them.

Monsieur Bonnamour explains that the reason archaeology museums only go through the Merovingian period rests in a nineteenth-century concept that is still held in spirit by the French administration. The DMF recently forbade him to concern himself with or display in the museum post-Merovingian objects found in the Seine digs.

CHÂTILLON-SUR-SEINE

MUSÉE ARCHÉOLOGIQUE DU CHÂTILLONNAIS  
7, rue du Bourg  
21400 Châtillon-sur-Seine  
80.91.24.67

Musée municipal contrôlé DMF—visited 5-25-89 and 9-21-90  
Conservateur: Mme. Nadine BERTHELIER-AJOT—interview 5-25-89

The Musée archéologique du Châtillonnais was created by the city in 1882 at the request of the local archaeological society, the Société archéologique du Châtillonnais, in order to house the artifacts found during the course of the society's excavations, as well as earlier chance finds, which previously had been housed next to the public library (Joffroy 1986). In 1950 the museum was transferred to its current location in the "Philandrier House," a late sixteenth-century merchant's house.

According to the current conservateur, Mme. Berthelier-Ajot, who took office in 1988, the current set-up of the museum dates to the time of the transfer. The collections of the museum come primarily from the Gallo-Roman *vicus* of Vertillum, near the town of Vertault, excavated by the local archaeological society from 1882 on, and from the excavations at Mont Lassois in the commune of Vix, begun in 1929 and culminating in 1953 with the discovery of the famous Greek or Etruscan crater (the "Vix Crater"). Additionally, the museum has some medieval sculpture and Merovingian artifacts. An inventory of the collection is currently in progress, and the conservateur thinks that about ten to twenty percent of the collection is on display.

The museum is a municipal museum, and all funding comes from the town. Due either to the short time the conservateur has been at the museum or to some mix-up with the previous conservateur, no money had been requested (as of May 1989) from the region or department, not even for proposed major renovation, as is usually the case. Seven people work at the museum: the conservateur, a secretary, three guides or "hostesses," and two part-time community service workers. As she is devoting all her time to a proposed complete renovation of the museum, the conservateur has not had time to mount any temporary exhibitions, but in the future she would like to do one per year.

The current manner of exhibition of the objects from Vertillum (the *vicus*) is thematic (wood-working tools, common ceramics, keys, urbanism, etc.), while the objects from Vix are presented in a 1960's beaux-arts format—display of the objects for themselves as "Art," with very little context: the crater is standing on a dias in the center of the room, surrounded by red carpet. When she redoes the museum, the conservateur expects to leave the presentation of Vertillum thematic, but, as the site is still being studied, another presentation eventually may be considered to be more appropriate. For the Vix objects, she would like to reconstruct the entire tomb ensemble, as a contextual exhibit.

In the past, she thinks that objects were chosen for exhibition on the basis of aesthetic considerations for Vix,

and on the basis of conditions of preservation (those objects that were the "*moins abymés*") for Vertillum, and thus were not always the most interesting objects but those in the best or most presentable condition. She has not yet made any firm decisions as to how she will choose objects for the renovated exhibits, but she believes that in some cases it is useful to use many of the same sort of objects in order to show different styles, while at other times it is not so useful.

There was, in 1989, little interpretational information on the exhibits except in a guidebook written by the former conservateur in 1986, translated into English and German (Joffroy 1986). While informative and well done, due to the inclination of museum visitors to buy such books as souvenirs after their visit, the book is no substitute for informative labels and texts within the exhibition space. The current conservateur would like to utilize text next to the cases as well as in a guidebook to interpret the exhibits for the public. By September of 1990, the case names and labels on the Vertillum cases had been redone (though the labels were still non-descriptive, indicating only the object's name), and a short, photocopy of a typewritten page on the site and explaining the thematic presentation of the room was available for in-house use (only in French). For Vix, there were also typewritten texts as room descriptions on the walls, but the quality of the type made them difficult to read, and they did not lend themselves to quick

perusal.

The conservateur would like the public to learn primarily about the two large sites of Vix and Vertillum. She would like them to learn that the crater of Vix is not just an impressive object but part of the larger ensemble of the burial. For Vertillum, she would like the public to understand that the artifacts are not just a series of objects but part of and integral to a Gallo-Roman town. The current presentation of the objects from both sites, however, does not lend itself to these educational objectives.

The conservateur does not see politics as being a factor in an archaeological museum, nor does she see any political message in the exhibits. She feels free to do whatever she wants in the museum, and she does not feel influenced even by local politics.

She does not think that housing the museum in a historical building imparts anything to the objects but that it often takes something away from them. She is not yet satisfied with the museum and plans to change all the exhibits. If she could change one practical thing in the museum, it would be the stone spiral staircase, which is very narrow and causes all variety of problems.

She believes that museums should be like "*la boîte à souvenir*," a sort of box in which to keep memories, and that they should be like visual history books—" *de plus en plus les livres d'histoire*." She thinks that they should not be boring but agreeable places to visit.

CLAMECY

MUSÉE D'ART ET D'HISTOIRE ROMAIN-ROLLAND  
Hôtel de Bellegarde  
Rue Romain-Rolland  
58500 Clamecy  
86.27.17.99

Musée municipal contrôlé DMF—visited 12-4-90  
Conservateur: Mme. Marie-Claude FONTAINE—interview 12-4-90

Founded in 1876 along with the Société scientifique et artistique de Clamecy, the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire Romain-Rolland is named after Romain Rolland, a famous writer from Clamecy. The museum houses fine arts on the main floor, while the second floor is dedicated to ethnology, relating to the timber industry of Clamecy, and to modern art. Archaeology was added in 1977 and is housed on the lower level, along with the temporary exhibition galleries.

The conservateur studied modern art and literature and worked for five years at the Pompidou Center in Paris before becoming tired of Paris and Beaubourg. Clamecy is a much smaller town (six thousand inhabitants), and the museum has a good modern art collection. In 1990, she had been conservateur in Clamecy for eleven years.

Only two people work at the museum: the conservateur and one guard. Technical support ("*services techniques*") is provided by the town, but the conservateur frequently finds herself changing light bulbs and other such tasks (one day a school child filling out a paper on the museum for a class answered the question, "What does a conservateur do?" with the response, "She is an electrician").

The museum is a municipal museum and gets most of its money from the town, but it also gets subventions from the DMF. Monuments Historiques also pays for work on the building, since it is classified as a historic building.

The museum does not "own" its archaeological collections, rather it acts as a *Dépôt des Fouilles de l'État* (a State depository for material from archaeological excavations). The length of time they have the objects is indeterminate but is based largely on how well they are cared for and displayed. The archaeology section of the museum was being reinstalled in 1990, but when it is finished, about eighty percent of the collection that is in displayable condition will be on view. The collections come from digs at Compièrre/Champallement (a Gallo-Roman town), Corvol-l'Orgueilleux (consisting of four Merovingian sarcophagi), and Brèves (a Merovingian necropolis).

The conservateur normally puts on one temporary exhibition of contemporary art each year in the summer. During the rest of the year, she tried to put on one or two smaller temporary exhibitions on modern art and the history of the region.

The archaeologists in charge of the sites decided on the manner in which the objects are (or are to be) displayed, and the conservateur makes suggestions. The current presentation of the material from Compièrre is semi-thematic, by the material of which the objects are made—metal, wood, bone, glass, ceramic—but the archaeologists have

decided to change that, though they have not yet decided how. Often, the quantity of objects available determines the choice, for example, there are *lots* of ceramics.

As for which objects to display, the archaeologists decide but ask the conservateur's opinion. She subscribes to the newer belief that one should display fewer objects that say more, to explain better the culture and make it more alive to the audience [less is more]. She thinks that one should show many similar objects when it helps to shed light on a particular culture, for example, show lots of jewelry for Merovingians because they have a lot and display was important to them, but otherwise, one should show less. She thinks that older archaeologists want everything displayed because it is all important, and she is having trouble with the archaeologist from the Brèves site who wants to display all of the arms (weapons) found there, even though there is not enough space and many are duplicates. She also sees this tendency in younger archaeologists for whom each object says something important about the culture. She believes that one really needs to be both an archaeologist and a conservateur to understand how to make good exhibits.

As with the number of objects, current thinking is that less text can say more. She would like to have small general texts, for example, on fibulae. More detailed explanations can be given out in pamphlets or audiovisual programs (which people will watch, though they will not read long labels). In an audiovisual, one can show the entire process

from excavation to exhibition and focus on what is important. She also would like to show visitors an idea of the life of the people in the earlier culture by use of small recreated scenes (she refers to a canoe display in the museum at Lons-le-Saunier in the Jura department).

From the archaeology exhibits, she wants the public to learn about the local excavations and to get a vision of the history of their department. She would like them to get an overall, general view of their ancestors and wants to show them their country ("*pays*") in a way that will interest them more. She would like to make them want to read more—to motivate them to continue to learn outside the museum about things that they saw in the museum. She does not want to make things too scientific, because one must gear exhibits to whom one wants to reach, and in Clamecy it is the "*grand public*" (the general public).

She does try to tie the exhibits into the lives of the public by trying to show the history of the city and the region, as well as the ethnology and archaeology. (An exhibit on the "*flottage*"—the floating of cut timber down the river, an important aspect of the area's past—is an example of this attempt to bring the past closer to the present.)

As for a political message in the presentations, she tries to be objective, but she is aware that all exhibits are interpretations that are influenced by various biases (she spent five years at Beaubourg being constantly reminded

of this!). So, while realizing that it is impossible to be totally objective, she tries to be as objective as possible.

As for the pros and cons of historic buildings, she realizes that the public is attracted by romantic ideas of old stones, but she feels it is not a plus at this museum. She must adapt objects and exhibits to existing architecture which she finds very constraining. She feels it would be perfectly possible to create a good ambience in a modern building, because everything is in the presentation. She points to the new museum near Argenton-sur-Creuse as her ideal. [I was not able to visit this museum.]

If she could change one thing in the museum it would be the architecture of the building, especially the interior. She thinks one should build a museum for the objects, not force the objects to conform to the building.

In general, she is satisfied with the museum. Clamecy is a small town that makes a big effort for its museum. She is not really *completely* satisfied, but is more or less so.

She thinks that museums do not really have much of a place in the lives of people in small towns. People do not think of the museum as being educative or for leisure activities. In large towns, this is beginning to change, and people are beginning to go more to museums like Beaubourg and La Villette (both in Paris) where exhibitions present certain themes, and people learn without trying. This is not as true for fine arts museums, which are more like a nice walk where one learns nothing because they are

too elitist (she has very definite problems with the Musée d'Orsay).

She thinks that the *Année de l'Archéologie* was a good idea. It allowed for more sensitivity than usual to archaeology in museums, and it brought in some money (here, to rework some of the cases in the forthcoming archaeology section). But she was disappointed that no museum in Nièvre mounted an exhibition that received the *Année de l'Archéologie* official stamp (and it is President Mitterrand's department). The only organization that did something special on archaeology was the departments traveling "*Muséobus*," controlled by the Conservateur départemental des Musées de la Nièvre (who also acts as coordinator for museums without conservateurs and for the museum in Château-Chinon).

They are currently in the process of buying the building next door, which will be devoted to twentieth-century art.

Mme. Fontaine would like to be able to create for her museum a book like that created by the Musée d'archéologie de Lons-le-Saunier which takes objects in the museum's collection and works them into a story set in the past, in this case the story of the life of Saint Colomban and the founding of the abbey of Luxeuil (Aubert and Dubois 1990).

CLUNY

MUSÉE OCHIER  
Palais Jean-de-Bourbon  
71250 Cluny  
85.59.05.87 (mairie)

Musée municipal contrôlé DMF, 1<sup>ère</sup> catégorie—visited 9-13-90  
(reception and floor tile exhibits only)  
Conservateur: Mlle. Brigitte MAURICE (until 12-89)—interview  
7-10-89; Mlle. Dominique VINGTAIN

The Musée Ochier is installed in the former abbatial palace of Jean de Bourbon (built in 1460). It is named after a local collector whose widow bequeathed both the original collection and the building to the city, which opened it to the public in 1866. It underwent a major reorganization in 1964 and again closed for renovations in November of 1988. It reopened partially in 1990 (the reception area with a model of the city during the time of Cluny III [ built eleventh to twelfth century, demolished early nineteenth century] and an adjoining room with an exhibit of decorated floor tiles) and was expected to reopen completely in 1991. Part of the renovations included the installation of a heating system in the previously unheated building. During the renovations the collections were boxed and in storage.

The staff of the museum in 1989 consisted of the conservateur, Mlle. Brigitte Maurice, and one assistant who deals with the archives and acts as secretary. When the renovations were to be completed, other people would be hired as guards, and in the summers, college students would work as guards and guides and in the reception area.

The museum is a municipal museum and receives most of its money from the town. But it is also a *musée contrôlé*, and thus it falls under the surveillance of the Ministry of Culture, the DMF, and the Direction Régional des Affaires Culturelles de Bourgogne (DRAC); through DRAC they receive money from the DMF. They also receive some money from the regional council.

The museum is one of the most important lapidary museums/repositories in Europe. Its collections contain ten thousand sculptural fragments—mostly from the abbey church but also from the Romanesque houses in town. In addition, it will receive more than seven thousand sculptural fragments from the archaeological excavations still going on in the town. When the museum reopens, the conservateur expects that about two hundred fragments will be on display.

The conservateur presents two temporary exhibitions each year in the summer (since there is no heat and few visitors in the winter) that run from June through September. One of the exhibitions is housed in the museum and the other in the former stable of the abbey, now a temporary exhibition gallery.

The objects are displayed thematically and chronologically. The ground floor houses religious sculpture from the abbey from the Romanesque through later periods. The basement houses civil sculpture—as from houses—from the twelfth century and will also house gallo-Roman material, also displayed thematically. She feels that thematic presenta-

tions are more easily understandable than other methods.

She chooses objects to display based on their importance for the history of art. She chooses the most beautiful pieces for each theme. She illustrates each part of the abbey church by certain fragments by choosing the most beautiful examples in each category. She wants to display all the iconographic richness of Cluny.

To interpret the exhibits for the visitors, she uses some text and drawings to situate people as to the relationship of the objects to the abbey. Then she just displays the objects for themselves; more specific information can be found in catalogs.

She wants the visitors to retain their impression of the most beautiful, interesting, and characteristic of the objects. For the civil (non-abbey) objects, she wants to display ensembles of objects from the different houses from which they originally came to give people a view of the houses of the period.

In the exhibits, she tries to present the history of the abbey and the history of the collections (which includes the archaeological investigations).

She sees no political message in the exhibits and believes them to be independent of politics.

The museum is installed in the abbatial palace of Jean de Bourbon which is a building registered by Monuments Historiques, bought by Ochier in the nineteenth century. It is a building very characteristic of the period, and the

conservateur tries to show the links between the building and the objects. One room still has its fifteenth-century floor, and now that room is reserved for the collections from the fifteenth century. She believes that the building and the museum form a good unit.

If she could change one thing, it would be to make the museum larger. She would like to have the ensemble of buildings that belonged to Jean Bourbon, especially the Oratory that now belongs to a school. She would like to incorporate it into the museum in order to be able to display more objects.

When the renovations are completed, she expects to be satisfied with the museum, but up until now there has been no heat, no security/alarm system, no insulation/climate control, and no elevator.

She believes that the role of museums should be more than just to be like illustrations in history books; it should be to help one see history. One finds *pieces of history* in museums. She would like to see a stronger connection between area schools and the museum. Teachers need to learn how to make use of the museum for teaching history. Now, in junior-high school text books, the history of Cluny takes up two lines.

DIJON

MUSÉE ARCHÉOLOGIQUE  
5, rue du Docteur-Maret  
21000 Dijon  
80.30.88.54

Musée municipal contrôlé DMF, 1<sup>ère</sup> catégorie—visited 5-27-90  
and 7-11-90  
Conservateur: Mme. Monique JANNET—interview 7-11-90

The museum is housed in a wing of the former Benedictine abbey of Saint-Bénigne, founded in 871. The collections of the museum come entirely from the department of Côte-d'Or. The original collections were in the care of the Commission des Antiquités de la Côte-d'Or, a *société savante* founded in 1831, and were given to the city in 1955 and housed in the abbey. On the upper level of the building are displayed objects from the Paleolithic through the Merovingian periods. Below, on the center level, the thirteenth-century dormitory, are medieval and Renaissance sculpture, and below that, in the eleventh-century cellar/crypt is Gallo-Roman sculpture and material from the excavations of the *Sources* of the Seine.

The Musée Archéologique in Dijon is the largest and best equipped archaeology museum in Burgundy. The present conservateur has been there for three years and is a trained archaeologist. She also recently took over the care of the Musée François Pompon in Saulieu.

A total of twenty-three people work at the museum: the conservateur, three people in administration (a cashier, an editor, an assistant), six guards, two contract scientific

personnel, one workman, the concierge, the cleaning lady, and eight others.

It is a municipal museum and receives most of its money from the city, but it also receives a subsidy from the State and occasionally may get money from the region and the department.

From the excavations of the *Sources* of the Seine River, twenty to thirty percent of the collection is on view; for the rest, about forty percent is displayed. Since the 1960s, fewer and fewer new objects have been entering the collection of the museum. The reasons for this are partly that the archaeologists are keeping the objects for study and partly because smaller museums are opening in areas that otherwise would have sent their local finds to Dijon.

The conservateur tries to have one temporary exhibition each trimester of the year, and she would like to build an annex for them so that they would not cover up the permanent installations as they often do now (for example, in 1990 the medieval and Renaissance sculpture in the "Gothic" gallery was almost completely covered-up during the summer exhibition *Il était une fois la Côte-d'Or*).

The majority of the exhibits in the museum were not designed by the present conservateur but were inherited as such from her predecessors (she has been conservateur for three years, the previous conservateur was there for ten years, and the one before him also for about ten years). She feels that the presentations reflect the personality of

the conservateur. She does not like the prehistory displays. For the Sources of the Seine installation (installed 1965-70), at first there were no labels, not even a site plan, and no ties to the site—which she would like. She would like to have the sound of water in the room for ambience. The Merovingian objects (installed in 1977) did not present ensembles from tombs, but only showed pretty things (they do both now).

She is concerned about the aesthetic interest of the "Serpentine Lady" installation (and stresses that the objects constitute a *dépôt*, a cache—not a treasure), and a lot of thought went into how to present the model. She feels vitrines should be made for the objects—the objects should not be forced to fit existing vitrines. She also believes that the conservateur and the archaeologist should construct the exhibits, not someone else. One should make exhibits that do not grow too old too fast and become outdated. How objects are presented—chronologically, thematically, or otherwise—should depend on the type of object.

She chooses the objects to display for their scientific, historic, and aesthetic interests, but *how* they are displayed depends on the type of object. She picks only a few examples for scientific and aesthetic interest, but if there were a large amount of a type of object, she shows a lot of them to get that idea across—again, it depends on the type of object. She feels that if one is not an archaeologist, one cannot create a good archaeological exhibit—they

become too fine-arty.

She is ambivalent about using texts to interpret the exhibits for the public. She feels that people are unfamiliar with the objects, so they need a text, but they do not read it unless they are trying to find out something specific. She thinks that guided visits like those given to school children are better, but there are so many different audiences that she does not think that there is really any solution.

On the labels, she indicates the object's function—what it is—definition, the material of which it is made, the epoch from which it is, and the site where it was found, and possibly some subsidiary information. [Object name, material, provenance.]

She would like the visitors to learn two things from the museum exhibits: 1) an idea of tolerance—an appreciation of the objects of other cultures [which may lead to an appreciation of those cultures]—and that one is not the center of the world—if they see that “nothing new has been invented,” they may realize that past cultures had similar concerns as their own; and 2) to protect the patrimony—she would like people to alert museums and scholars if they find or possess historically important objects, even if they choose not to give them to the museum (frequently, people only want to donate objects if they will be displayed—they do not want them to become lost in storage). She especially wants people to realize that the objects displayed belong to

them—that they represent *their* patrimony.

She thinks that it is difficult but important to try to make the exhibits relevant to the public, to show ties between their lives and the objects. She thinks that dioramas (*maquettes*) are useful because they show objects being used in daily life, and she also thinks reconstructions—like putting a spindle whorl on a spindle with yarn—are good. She thinks it is important to place objects in "situations."

She does not see a political message in the museum exhibits and does not think about politics when she is constructing an exhibit. But she realizes that the people who give money do think about politics (but that generally just affects how much money they give and when they give it—support of the arts and patrimony).

She thinks that historic buildings are as important as the objects and would like to make the entire site into a museum, including the cathedral and crypt as well as the dormitory. She also wants to acquire other buildings around the museum, to enlarge the reception area, and so forth. She would like the museum to show the history of Dijon and of the abbey (there is nothing in town that does this) and also to exhibit collections from outside Dijon, from elsewhere in the department. She would like to do what Auxerre and Autun are doing—creating a museum around the existing buildings, archaeological site, and objects.

If she could change one thing with the museum, she would have a scientific team right there. She wants there

to be more continuity between the actual archaeology and the museum—to show the whole process from discovery to exhibition.

In general she is satisfied with the museum (especially when she sees the conditions under which other conservateurs must work). There is enough money to do things that she wants to do.

She thinks that museums should have a place in people's lives, which is why she has temporary exhibitions every three to four months—to get people to come back. She would like people to think of the museum as promemade.

She thinks that the *Année de l'Archéologie* was a good idea because it allowed a lot of money for temporary exhibitions, which allowed them to do more important ones. While the journalists did not really understand it and did not give it much publicity, it did allow the conservateurs to present themselves with a more important bearing in conversations with elected officials and others in power.

GUEUGNON

DÉPÔT DES FOUILLES  
28, rue du Vieux Fresne  
71130 Gueugnon  
85.85.13.45

Maintained by the Association Les Amis du Dardon—visited 11-26-90  
Under the care of the Association's president, M. Paul DAMIRON—interview 11-26-90

A repository for local archaeological excavations, the Dépôt des Fouilles is maintained by the local *société savante*, the Association Les Amis du Dardon, founded in 1965. It is open once a month during the evening meeting of the association and by appointment. The president of the association is in charge of the dépôt, and while it has several display cases, he stresses that it is not a museum [though for all intents and purposes it is one].

The money to maintain the dépôt comes from the Association. Each year the Conseil Général de Saône-et-Loire gives money to the archaeological societies in the department, amounting to about three to four thousand Francs.

Nearly all of the collection that is displayable is on view, either in the dépôt or in the Centre de Documentation sur la Ceramique in Digoin. However, since Gueugnon was a ceramic manufacturing center, most of the artifacts come from near the Gallo-Roman kilns and represent flawed ceramics that were smashed and used as fill. Therefore, few whole pots or reconstructible ones are found, and most of the collection consists of thousands of potsherds. These are stored in the garage of a member of the association

(Monsieur Lucien Dauvergne, mayor of the town of Vendennes-sur-Arroux). The best pieces are kept at the dépôt.

The dépôt is used for archaeological finds from Gueugnon (mainly Gallo-Roman), Marly-sur-Arroux (a twelfth- to thirteenth-century château), Vendennes-sur-Arroux (Gallo-Roman), and a medieval log canoe (actually housed in a nearby municipal building due to conservation requirements). After the archaeologist finish with the artifacts, they come to the dépôt, where they are numbered, photographed, and an information card is made up for it, kept in a file on the site. The objects are then either stored or displayed.

The dépôt consists of a display room, where currently objects from Marly-sur-Arroux and from a cache of objects next to a wall are displayed, as well as some terracotta statuettes and a pottery kiln. The other room is the association's library and meeting room.

The presentations were done by a past president of the association.

The dépôt is associated with the "Archéosite"—an *in situ* display of a Gallo-Roman ceramics manufacturing center, with explanatory panels. This Archéosite was created by the town following the advice of the association. The excavations were done by the association members and the Groupe Archéologique de Montceau-les-Mines and were directed by a local high school teacher and his students.

The money for the Archéosite came: fifty percent from

the Direction Régionale des Antiquités Historiques de Bourgogne, twenty-five percent from the Conseil Régional de Bourgogne, and twenty-five percent from the town.

From the displays in the ceramics center in Digoin, Monsieur Damiron would like the public to learn about the techniques of making ceramics. From the displays in the dépôt, he would like to teach local students that their town has a past—a memory.

He thinks that the place of museums in the lives of people is to provide cultural enrichment. He thinks they should serve two purposes: 1) to give a more global, general view to the casual visitor, and 2) to give a more particular view to the specialist or amateur enthusiast looking for certain special details. He thinks that the museum in Digoin does this.

He would like the city to install road signs for the Archéosite but has met with inaction on the part of the mayor.

He would also like to see the dépôt enlarged, and he has long-term hopes to turn a barn across the street from the dépôt, that already belongs to the city, into a real museum, where coins (currently in a safe-deposit box in a bank) and the log canoe, among other things, could be displayed. It is also a nice example of a local style of barn that would be nice to save and use.

ISSY-L' ÉVÊQUE

SALLE D' EXPOSITION  
Tour de Luzy  
71760 Issy-l' Évêque  
85.89.85.21

Musée d' association: Association La Mémoire d' Issy—visited  
11-29-90  
President of the association: M. Jean LAUDET—interview  
11-29-90

The small museum in the Tour de Luzy (one of the last vestiges of the old town walls [tenth-century?]) was founded by a group of the Association Les Amis du Dardon, which in 1986 broke away to form its own association, La Mémoire d' Issy. The association prepares a quarterly bulletin with a subscribership of two hundred. The municipality gives the association an annual subvention of one thousand Francs.

The entire collection is exposed in the tower, but it is in a very poor state due partly to age but mostly to the conditions of the building which is not heated, is very humid, has a poor ceiling, and has mice. The association president is very embarrassed and ashamed at the state of things; consequently the museum is never officially open, and there are no directions on the door of where to apply for admission, but he will admit people whenever requested—he just does not go looking for people. The museum is open "*jamais, mais tout le temps*" (never, but always).

The objects in the museum come from the early archaeological investigations at the Iron Age site of Mont Dardon, in Issy-l' Évêque, and at the Gallo-Roman villa of Bois-du-Buis in the hamlet of Beauzot.

Monsieur Laudet would like to reinstall the museum in a better building (he thinks the tower is quaint but not suitable for a museum). He has a building in mind, owned by the town, and would like a sort of hall and cultural center on the ground floor, with the museum on the floor above—reinstalled with the advice of archaeologists—and to have it open with a guardian from Easter to 1 November. He has been unable, however, to secure the cooperation of the mayor.

In a better presented museum, he would like the public to learn about the "historic evolution" of Issy-l'Évêque. He thinks people in the town feel somewhat disinherited (Issy is declining steadily in population). Using panels, he would like to help people retrace the evolution of the town through the centuries by using the vestiges that remain. He wants to foster a knowledge of history—also the object of the Association—but to ask *today's* questions of history. He feels that what people are today is explained by the past, and that the past is more than just folklore.

He thinks that museums need to make a context for objects to help people understand and relate to them. He thinks they should present history to explain things for today, for example, to show that the idea of a French "race" is absurd, which could help undermine the influence of the extreme right (Le Pen).

He wants to change everything about the museum. He first wants to find a new locale and then find a volunteer group to accompany visitors from Easter through the end of

October. After that, he will publicize the museum. He also wants to include some local historic ethnology because he thinks people will understand former local professions better than archaeology and can thereby pass from the known to the unknown (also, the Association and he are more concerned with history than with archaeology).

He really thinks that as they exist now, museums have no real place in small towns. A good museum needs to have a teaching function and to pose questions that will make people think.

LA CHARITÉ-SUR-LOIRE

MUSÉE MUNICIPAL

Hôtel Adam

33, rue des Chapelains

58400 La Charité-sur-Loire

86.70.34.83

Musée municipal contrôlé DMF--visited 7-9-90

Conservateur: Mme. Marie-José GARNICHE-MERIT--interview

6-26-90

The current municipal museum of La Charité-sur-Loire combines the original municipal museum, founded in 1951, with an affiliated archaeological museum founded in 1979 by the local archaeological society. Until 1988, the archaeological society owned and curated most of the objects from the excavations of Seyr, the town where the famous Cluniac monastery of La Charité was built, as well as artifacts from the medieval priory itself, and was responsible for their exhibition in the museum. In 1988, the archaeological society dissolved and gave all of the objects to the municipal museum. The combined museum is housed in the Hôtel Adam, an eighteenth-century residence above the Loire River, and contains, besides the archaeological collections, a collection of traditional folk and industrial tools related to stone cutting (files, etc.), the manufacture of which was an important industry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as a collection of ceramic and glass "*Objets d' Art*" from 1880-1930, and a series of sculptures by Pina, an Italian expatriate and student of Rodin. The museum is also affiliated with the archaeological site of the priory of La Charité.

Despite the importance of the archaeological collection, only one person works at the museum, the conservateur, Mme. Garniche-Merit, and she only works there part-time and is not an archaeologist. In the summer three guards also work at the museum, and technical services are provided by the city. As the museum is a municipal museum, the city provides the major funding, about 70 percent of the total budget, while another 30 percent comes from the regional council through a federal subvention. Additionally, as the priory was declared a protected historic site in 1989, Monuments Historiques has been underwriting the organizing and development of the site. Due to space limitations, temporary exhibitions are housed not in the museum proper but in a room in the nearby presbyter of the former monastery. The conservateur tries to mount two to three temporary exhibitions each year: one devoted to archaeology (in 1990 on the decorated floor-tiles from the site), one on contemporary art, and possibly another on a more general topic.

Due to the fragmentary nature of archaeological artifacts, it is rare for more than five percent of the objects recovered from a site to be displayable. La Charité is no different, and the conservateur estimates that only between one and five percent of the museum's archaeological collection is on view. Most of the objects are in storage, and the conservateur is not even sure what is there, not being an archaeologist, and since the archaeological society has

dissolved, she must redo the entire inventory. Additionally, in 1986 a severe storm inundated the archaeology section of the museum and the storage area and severely damaged all of the metal artifacts. They are now undergoing restoration at a laboratory and are not available for display.

The current manner in which the archaeological objects are displayed in the museum is not the choice of the conservateur. During the 1986 storm, as well as many of the artifacts' being damaged, all of the photographs and text panels were destroyed. The archaeological society still retains all of the excavation photographs, and the conservateur does not have ready access to them. She would like to redo the exhibits to make them more coherent. Eventually, and even currently to an extent, the objects will be displayed thematically, presenting the history of La Charité. There will be two main themes: 1) Architecture—dealing with the construction and general architecture of the church and monastic buildings and with the painting workshop (mural atelier) that was there, and 2) Daily Life in the Monastery—including sections on the leather and wood workshops as well as alimentation. Also, in the future, the archaeological site will be developed and organized (following more excavations from 1990 through 1992) with the help of Monuments Historiques.

For the next few years, the museum will remain where it is, which is unfortunate for the archaeological collection. The crypt-like basement tunnel which currently houses the

archaeology exhibits is very evocative (if somewhat claustrophobic), but it has a tendency to flood and has horrendous conservation conditions (even with dehumidifiers running, the humidity in some of the chambers is often 80 percent), and it also is not large enough. In four to five years, hopefully, the museum will be moved nearer to the site and the church, possibly into the former monks' dormitory. There will be a main museum building with various satellite exhibits—one in the church, another at the archaeological site, and another in the "Tour de Cuffy," part of the old city ramparts. The moving of the museum is part of the city's plans for touristic development, as it plans for the future and tries to recognize its potential.

Though all of the most important objects are being restored (due to water damage), the conservateur chooses which objects to display based on their function and for comprehension—how well they illustrate what she wants to show. She does not want things to be too reconstructed (she does not want it to be like Disneyland). She thinks the exhibits should be accompanied by photographs but not by a lot of text, as people get tired of reading technical descriptions. There will be a fair-sized text on the history of La Charité from the tenth through the seventeenth centuries and on the excavations, but the rest will be small texts on the two themes (Architecture and Daily Life). On the object labels she wants to put the name of the object, the material, and the date (e.g., "*marmite, ceramique noire,*

6<sup>e</sup> siècle"); she thinks that people do not generally read longer labels. She would also like an audio-visual presentation to show the ensemble—the site connected with the objects and the excavation; one existed but was destroyed in the storm.

The main thing she would like the public to learn from the archaeological exhibit is a better understanding of the history of the city—how an urban center developed around a monastery—and how one lived in a monastery. She thinks it would be a good idea to try to show some sort of relationship between the exhibits and the life of the visitors, but is not sure how it could be done, except possibly by showing the differences in lifestyles then and now. She has briefly considered creating a temporary exhibition that would place a medieval washtub beside a twentieth-century plastic basin, and other similar juxtapositions.

She does not see any political message in the exhibits—the life-style shown is very specific: monastic. She thinks that the socialist movement, even in museology, was essentially over by the mid-seventies.

She thinks that when a museum is put in a historic building it is necessary to make the building "speak." One needs to work with the individual rooms, fitting the exhibits to the rooms. You cannot put anything just anywhere. [She would not appreciate the museum at Saulieu where funeral steles are placed in a fireplace.] She says that frequently the existing rooms were not considered when install-

ing a museum in an extant building—that the French discovered interior architecture rather late!

For different reasons, though, if she could change one thing about the museum, it would be the building. The building is not adapted to exhibits. As previously mentioned, the humidity may approach 80 percent—with dehumidifiers running—in the archaeology area, which is cramped for space anyway. The rooms are too small, and the site of the museum needs to be more central in the town. She would also like to give more importance to archaeology, to give an identity and history to the city. She is not satisfied with the museum as it stands. She has not been able to do things as she wants—finances are very reduced—and she does not like the presentations. She also does not like the cases and thinks there is not enough light (there is no natural light in the archaeology section). Due to financial constraints, she has been able to redo only one room at a time, and therefore there is no coherence between the rooms.

She thinks that while the public generally realizes now that museums are not old, dusty places, they still think they are boring and find them inaccessible. People would rather visit "*la Patrimoine*"—the city as a whole—or a "*son et lumière*." She thinks work still needs to be done to make museums accessible to the public, and notes that people have a tendency to go once to the museum in their town and not return.

She thinks that the *Année de l'Archéologie* is a very

good idea since it has gotten people interested in archaeology and the past—especially the politicians. But all the money goes to big places. She thinks it mainly served to enhance Jack Lang's prestige—now he can say he has done something to promote archaeology. But she does not think it will have any long-term effect—next year will just be the *Année* of something else.

LE CREUSOT

ECOMUSÉE DE LA COMMUNAUTÉ URBAINE LE CREUSOT-MONTCEAU-LES-MINES  
MUSÉE DE L'HOMME ET DE L'INDUSTRIE  
Château de la Verrerie  
71200 Le Creusot  
85.55.01.11

Musée d'Association (Association Tourism Industriel)—visited  
6-1-89 and 10-14-90  
Conservateur: M. P. NOTTEGHEM—interview 6-1-89

The museum was established in 1973 in the Château de la Verrerie, formerly a glass-works (1787-1832), as one of the first ecomuseums. The towns of Le Creusot and Montceau-les-Mines were the center of a major iron and steel industry that had been suffering from economic depression for a number of years, and the function of the ecomuseum within the community was to foster pride in the history and traditions of the area, as well as to promote tourism and draw other industries to the region. The conservateur officially took office the same day as the interview, though he had been at the museum for about a month and had worked here for some time previously. In the early and mid-1980s there had been a crisis of sorts within the museum [likely regarding the role of the museum in the community], and a lot of people had left. Now the conservateur hopes things will get back to normal.

Five people work at the museum in official staff positions: the conservateur/director, an assistant director, two assistants who do a lot of photography and design work, and one document specialist/archivist and secretary. There are

also many other people involved with the museum on a volunteer basis, and an external agency handles the budget and accounting.

The museum is an association museum—the Association Tourism Industriel of Le Creusot/Montceau-les-Mines. For the operating budget of the museum, the association gives fifty percent of the money, and the other fifty percent comes from local sources, the city of Le Creusot, the urban council, and the department of Saône-et-Loire. The State (Ministry of Culture) also gives some money, but the region (Burgundy) does not. For temporary exhibitions, the conservateur looks to particular agencies for funding.

About fifty percent of the collection is normally displayed, and there are not extensive reserve collections.

The conservateur normally mounts temporary exhibitions twice each year, but in 1989 there were four. Normally, there is one large temporary exhibition and one to three smaller ones. In 1989 for the bicentennial, there was an exhibition "*Bastille 1889*" (on the centennial celebration since Le Creusot was at its height and a very important industrial center in 1889 [and the conservateur was sick of all the bicentennial exhibitions]), and in 1990 there was an exhibition on the *Train à Grande Vitesse* (TGV)—the express train system, for which there is a stop at Le Creusot. Smaller exhibitions were, in 1989, "*Le Château de la Verrerie: deux siècles d'histoire*," and in 1990, an exhibition on Baccarat glass.

The objects are displayed chronologically, with a number of themes for each chronologic period, as in the main exhibit, "*L' Espace de la Communauté Urbaine à Travers les Ages.*" Other exhibits, such as the one on Cristallerie (the crystal (glass) manufacturing factory) are more thematic, developing themes of the château as a factory and as a residence. For the factory theme the entire reserve of glass is used, while for the residence theme they are creating a period room from old photographs of the residence.

In special projects and exhibitions the conservateur wants to be more thematic—themes of the countryside, the countryside as a cultural product, the connection between real-space and space. [This is part of the ecomuseum mission.] In the future, he is going to make some major changes (one of the reasons he was hired) and will create a "*Construction Mécanique*" (mechanical construction) exhibit that will be more than just local things in an attempt to appeal to a wider audience.

The way he chooses objects to display depends on the themes of the exhibits. For example, the Crystallerie exhibit is a classic theme that focuses on techniques and aesthetics and showing elite wares, but now he is buying varieties of colored glass that used to be made there, since the museum's collection currently has only the clear glass. The aesthetic dimension counts, but not exclusively; in a travelling exhibition of miners' lamps showing the evolution of forms and scientific techniques, aesthetics was consid-

ered, but if a lamp was ugly but important, it was displayed anyway.

Less and less text accompanies each vitrine. Current museology calls for a reduction of text, since in the past too much usually had been written. Now it is thought that text should be more in catalogues, but it is difficult to finance catalogues, so he is trying to find other ways to get the information across. Video is also too expensive, but he is thinking of some slide presentations. but does not want to have too many images.

When the ecomuseum was first created, it mainly wanted the people of Le Creusot and the surrounding area to look at their own history and to correct misunderstandings of technical and social changes. Now, the museum wants to assist in enlivening the curiosity of the people, possibly through a confrontation of periods. They want people to learn to be more critical. They also want it to be fun to learn—not too hard or repetitive. The conservateur would like to make games to teach children, but he cannot make the exhibits too specialized or geared to specific groups.

The conservateur tries to create exhibits relating to the lives of the people (especially since this is one of the central tenets of ecomuseums). The museum has had exhibitions on gardens through the ages and commerce—ancient and current. The conservateur would like to do one on "*Qu'avez-vous dans les poches?*" (What do you have in your pockets?) and show what different types of people—grandmothers, facto-

ry workers, etc.-keep in their pockets by having mannequins with cleat clothing. This would require a sort of ethnographic study which could be conducted by offering free admission to the museum if one showed what was in one's pockets!

Politics has always played a major role in the ecomuseum. In the beginning, there was a lot of talk about social history, and the exhibits showed the conflict between the paternalism of the factory owner (the Schneider family) and the workers movements, which did not please everyone, and acquired for the museum a leftist reputation. People initially were upset also with a painting depicting a strike and protest in Le Creusot. Things have changed since the Schneiders finally left, though, and now one can finally talk about them. The conservateur feels that the ecomuseum should show the evolution of the society-to show the workers and the story of the Schneiders and the Right-Left conflict that is also part of the story. But he feels that the ecomuseum itself should remain outside of the argument. He does not want to provoke people or take a militant position; he just wants to try to open people's minds and expand their horizons. On a larger scale, he thinks that the important social issues relate to world ecology.

There are also political conflicts that affect funding and other things because Le Creusot is leftist, while Montceau-les-Mines is rightist, and the mayor of Autun, who is in charge of the departmental council is also rightist.

In cases like the ecomuseum, which was a crystal factory and the residence of the Schneiders, he feels that the historic building is important and imparts something to the objects—it reinforces the historical authenticity of the crystal objects since the factory they were made in is right there. In other cases, he does not think that the historic building gives anything to the objects, but the buildings can reinforce themes if one looks at the relationship between the buildings/sites and the themes—as is the case with the ecomuseum satellites.

Since he had been in charge for such a short period, he could not yet decide what he would change if he could change only one thing.

In general, so far, he is satisfied with the museum. He thinks that it is a very interesting set-up. He wants to keep his independence but also wants to get the elected officials more involved in the museum, and they seem to be open to this. There is a lot of general maintenance and fix-up work to do, and it will take a couple of years to get the museum looking like he wants it to look.

The conservateur believes, that since the public is composed of different sorts of people, the museum should not have just one function. The ecomuseum's public consists of: 1) the local museum "faithful" who come regularly to see new exhibits and exhibitions, but in three to four months they have all come; and 2) tourists, students, and the like who are more seasonal and come from May to October. The aged

tour groups (senior citizens) are looking for distraction;  
the students are looking for information and also distraction.  
The local public is looking for local information.  
The museum should serve them all.

MÂCON

MUSÉE DES URSULINES  
5, rue des Ursulines  
71000 Mâcon  
85.38.18.84

Musée municipal contrôlé DMF—visited 6-20-89 and  
10-5-90  
Conservateur: M. Jean-François GARMIER—interview 6-20-89

The municipal museum of Mâcon, established in 1825 as the Musée de Mâcon, was renamed the Musée des Ursulines when it was moved in 1968 to the seventeenth-century convent of the Ursulines. The museum was renovated between 1987 and 1990. When the study was conducted the prehistory section of the museum was inaccessible, and the rest of the archaeology section had not yet been renovated (the entire archaeology section was inaccessible during the 1990 visit); hence any specific references to exhibits may no longer be applicable. Besides regional archaeology, which includes the artifacts from the early excavations at Solutré, the museum houses regional ethnology and fine arts from the sixteenth through twentieth centuries.

Though the museum contains only local material, Mâcon is the administrative center of the department of Saône-et-Loire, and hence the museum has a relatively large staff of eleven people: two conservateurs (one of whom, M. Garmier, is also President of the Association of Curators of the Museums of Burgundy); two secretaries, who deal with mail, inventories, typing, documentation, and the like; one "animator" who works with children and school groups at the

museum; four guards; one receptionist; and one technician, who does installation, carpentry, etc. and is considered very important.

The museum is a municipal museum and receives most of its operating budget from the city. Actually, there are two budgets: a Functioning budget (*Fonctionnement*), and an Investment budget (*Investissement*). The functioning budget covers daily operating expenses and in 1989 was 200,000 Francs (between thirty and forty thousand dollars), which was used for everything from conservation of objects, renting exhibitions, insurance, transport, and printing, to buying stamps, soap, and first-aid equipment. At the end of the year, the remaining portion of the functioning budget must be returned to the city. The investment budget amounts to 150,000 Francs a year and is used for equipping the museum with more costly or long-term things: cases, desks, restoration, and buying new pieces. While the conservateur considers this budget to be generally less important than the functioning budget, it does carry over from year to year (so that the museum can save to buy expensive objects or paintings) and at the time of the study was at 206,000 Francs. For investment, the museum can also get State subventions, but since decentralization, the awarding of subventions has been taken over by the region and departments, which are less inclined to give out money than the federal government was, so now (except to buy major works of art) the subvention generally amounts to no more than three

to four percent of the investment budget (in 1989, though, they received 28,000 Francs from the region). Thus, while the total museum budget is about 350,000 Francs, it costs the city 1.5 million Francs to run the museum, the remainder comprising staff salaries, heating, telephones, etc.

The museum has about 25,000 objects in its collection, but less than ten percent of them are on display. There are more flint tools than anything else (one thousand pieces had been displayed before the prehistory section was closed for renovation), which make up part of the prehistory collection, twenty-five percent of which is usually displayed. In the rest of the archaeology section, seventy-five percent of the collection is displayed, and fifty percent of the lapidary collection. In each of the regional ethnology and fine arts sections, fifteen to twenty percent of the collection is displayed.

The conservateur tries to mount three or four temporary exhibitions each year: one in the summer for two months (during the tourist season), and the others in the winter for one to four months. The winter exhibitions are sometimes coordinated with the local school system.

Monsieur Garmier arrived as conservateur at the museum in 1976 and soon began progressively changing the exhibits. He is especially critical of the archaeology exhibits because they, as is all too often the case, are arranged such that they "*parle à la spécialiste*" (speak to the specialist) but are difficult for the public to understand. He would

like to exhibit the archaeology so that one could understand it by means of context, without having to read a lot of text. For example, he would like the museum visitors to see that the flint tools really do cut, because that would change the way they perceive stone tools. He would like to exhibit things to "wake up" the visitors.

For the image of the museum, he likes to display the most beautiful and rarest objects in the collection, but for public comprehension he likes to display the objects that "speak" the most. He feels that it is sometimes necessary to display a lot of the same sort of objects in order to give an impression of the real numbers of objects. For example, in the ethnology section, pottery will be everywhere because the potter had to produce vast quantities in order to make a living; but for the goldsmith it was different. He wants to use the objects to "*restituer la verité historique*" (to restore historical veracity). He feels that one cannot explain all the details in an exhibit because the public will not get all of it and will get annoyed. The exhibit rather should evoke understanding by presenting a wine-tasting cup next to a wine barrel to show its use. He likes to use one object as a symbol, but it must relate in some way to life in order to be understood.

Ideally, M. Garmier would like there to be no text in the museum. He would like to explain things by use of audio-visual or slide presentations, because these methods amuse people, and so they watch them, and it is easier to

get information across visually. But even these presentations should not be too long, and they should contain things to surprise the visitors, because the stronger an impression something makes, the longer they will remember it. He believes that museums can and should be places to both teach and "*passer un bon moment*"; they should be nice places where people would like to be.

Monsieur Garmier has an interesting idea about what he would like visitors to get from the exhibits. He would like them to get what they want from the exhibits, but he thinks he knows how to get them to want certain things by letting them find out things for themselves. He wants them to learn things pleurably, but he does not want to flatter the visitors—he would like a public of quality, not quantity.

He would like to have exhibits that are relevant to the lives of the visitors as often as possible. He is very interested in ethnology and wants the museum to come closer to the experiences of people ("*rapprocher de l'expérience des gens*"), such as by having exhibits on vineyards and tools, which are very important to nearly all the people of the Mâconnais.

He sees no political message in the museum's exhibits. He knows that it is possible to introduce politics into a museum, but he does not do so. He thinks that in a museum there should be no religion and no politics (imposed from without), but he realizes there are political cycles even in scientific domains, such as marxist interpretations of

history. In the ethnology section, he believes that he has a serious responsibility to tell the public that the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were not the "good old days"—there was high mortality, etc.—but he does not think that this should be seen as a political agenda.

As far as museum buildings are concerned, he thinks that the ideal situation would be to construct the building around the objects, but this is rarely practical. The museum building in Mâcon was originally a seventeenth-century convent, and he likes it because its smaller rooms give a more personal feeling than long, continuous galleries would. Also, most visitors like the old architecture—the oldness of it captivates them.

If he could change one thing about the museum, it would be to have more exhibition space. There is 2000 square meters of space now, and he would like to double that, but it is impossible to do so. Very few of the paintings in the museum's collection can be displayed due to space restrictions, and some of the paintings are so large that they cannot be moved to make way for other paintings. He would also like to display fewer objects in an area so that it will not appear too "busy," but there is not enough space to make that feasible. However, as the museum stands, one circuit through it is one kilometer of walking, and asking a visitor to walk more than that is not practical.

Monsieur Garmier thinks he will never really be satisfied with the museum. He wants to change little things all

the time. For example, he is not happy with the small object labels that currently exist because they are hard to read and do not say enough, but large labels are too intrusive and not good either. He also thinks the museum atmosphere is rather sterile and would benefit from some flowers, but there is a lighting problem there, so he has to make do with a few plants.

He thinks that museums have two roles: an instructive role that the public perceives, and a social role that is not so readily realized. He thinks that the public generally sees museums as places to go to see unfamiliar things and learn something or to look at paintings for aesthetic pleasure. But the public does not realize the role of museums in preserving the traces of things that happened in the past and that happen today. In this role of preserving the artifacts of society, he thinks that museums act like a kind of archive. He says that the public does not understand how a museum really works and wants things to change all the time, which is at variance with the preserving role of the museum.

In archaeological exhibits, he is against artificial and arbitrary time period separations—things that imply there was a clear dividing line between, for example, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age. He would like to create an exhibit showing changing burial style from the Bronze Age through the fourteenth century, or an exhibit showing that tools really have not changed much over time. But exhibits like these are for future renovations.

SAINT-PÈRE-SOUS-VÉZELAY

MUSÉE ARCHÉOLOGIQUE  
Saint-Père-sous-Vézelay  
89450 Vézelay  
86.33.23.14

Musée d'Association (Société des fouilles archéologiques de l'Yonne) et Musée Monuments Historiques—visited 5-6-89 and 9-3-90  
Assistant and Acting Conservateur: M. Pierre TOLLARD—interview 6-8-89

The museum, founded in 1943 by the Société des fouilles archéologiques et des monuments historiques de l'Yonne (itself founded in 1935), is housed in the former Presbytery, next door to the town church. It is also associated with and administers the site of Les Fontaines Salées, a couple of kilometers away.

The full-time staff of the museum consists of the conservateur (who is old and ill), his assistant, Monsieur Tollard, who essentially is the acting conservateur, and one guard.

The museum is a *musée d'Association*, under the 1901 law regulating non-profit organizations. It receives all of its operating money from entry fees. The museum is also the excavation repository (*dépôt des fouilles*) for the Fontaines Salées, which falls under the auspices of Monuments Historiques, and the museum's relationship with the archaeological site draws many visitors [being located so near Vézelay does not hurt either].

About eighty percent of the collection is normally on display.

The acting conservateur puts on one temporary exhibition each year, in the summer, from June through August, in a temporary exhibition gallery in the basement.

The objects in the museum are displayed in a thematic manner, since they are mostly Gallo-Roman artifacts from the Fontaines Salées. The Fontaines Salées, literally "Salty Fountains," is a site of a number of mineral springs, around which a Gallo-Roman bath complex was constructed, but the site was well-known before the baths and was in use dating back to at least Neolithic times.

Monsieur Tollard would like to modify the exhibits (which were set up by someone else before his arrival at the museum) and make them more up-to-date museographically, but space and money are a problem. While the collection belongs to the Association and some of it to the State (Monuments Historiques), the building belongs to the town and is rented to the Association, so he can make no modifications to the building (such as tearing out the walls as he would like). He also would like to replace the display cases with newer ones, both for reason of presentation aesthetics and for security, but he cannot afford to.

He chooses objects for display that are the most representative of each period and the best preserved. Since the excavations at the Fontaines Salées are presently halted, he can modify the presentations, but he can add no new objects. It is possible that the dig will continue in the future.

He tries to interpret the exhibits for the public

systematically and to label and describe [almost] all the objects.

He wants to make the objects understandable for the visitors, so that they can discover new things and understand what they are seeing.

He would like to make the presentations relevant to the lives of the visitors and thinks it is possible, but it is easier to do so with a guided visit, such as for school children. The museum has no audio-visual equipment to fulfill this function. The objects he tries hardest to explain are those that change over time in some ways, but retain the same function.

He does not see a political message in the exhibits, but he does see that the presentation of the artifacts of a society that dominated another—here, the Romans over the Gauls—can be seen as a political message. By presenting it one might be seen as condoning the actions of a police state.

He feels that the museum building is always very important in presenting objects. He feels there are two ways of approaching the building problem: 1) build an entirely new building, in a new style and designed to be a museum, or 2) use an old and "noble" structure. Either way can work, but one should never put a museum, especially an archaeological collection, in a "banal" building. It is also desirable that the objects have a link with the place/building where they are presented, so he is a little embarrassed to be

presenting Gallo-Roman, pagan objects in a Christian building.

He would like to completely redo the museum, but if he could change only one thing, he would get new vitrines and modify the presentations. Modern vitrines are better both for display and for security.

In general, he is satisfied with the museum.

He feels that museums have two main functions: 1) to increase people's knowledge and to enrich them by exposing them to art, and 2) for research and discovery. There is also a didactic side to museums—they should give people the desire to look farther for themselves [-to "read more about it"]. Museums should not spoon-feed information. He also feels that museums should be arousing (exciting) and that they should trigger one's emotions and be evocative.

Monsieur Tollard feels that museums must establish a certain rapport with the population of a city. Saint-Père is a small village, and people are astonished to find interesting things in its museum. By showing them this, he feels that he has accomplished at least part of his mission to "discover things to people."

SAULIEU

MUSÉE FRANÇOIS POMPON  
Place du Docteur-Roclore  
21210 Saulieu  
80.64.09.22 (mairie)

Musée municipal contrôlé DMF—visited 5-31-90  
Conservateur: Mme. Monique JANNET—interview 7-11-90

The museum, devoted to local ethnology, was founded in 1930. In 1938, after the death in 1933 of native sculptor François Pompon, the museum acquired many of his works. Archaeology was added in 1965. Known until recently as the Musée régional de Saulieu, the museum was completely reorganized in 1967, with partial reorganizations since then. The museum specializes in local history and crafts of the Morvan region. It is housed in a seventeenth-century mansion adjoining the Romanesque basilica.

The conservateur, Mme. Jannet (also conservateur of the Musée Archéologique in Dijon), accepted the post April 1990, when requested to do so by the former conservateur who was retiring. Looking back on it three months later, she thinks that it may not have been such a good idea—she is already very busy.

There is only one guardian working at the museum, constituting the entire staff. Mme. Jannet has only been to the museum three times since becoming conservateur.

It is a municipal museum. receiving its budget from the town. So far, the conservateur has not requested any extra money from the region or the department. She has only requested money for the up-keep of the building.

The entire collection is on display because there is no storage area.

She has not yet done any temporary exhibitions, but the city would like her to.

For Mme. Jannet's philosophy of museums and museology, see the entry for Dijon.

She does not want to change much in the museum. She likes it as it is. She wants to put it in order but keep its simplicity. She would like to change the entrance and move some of the rooms around (especially the rooms devoted to Pompon) and generally organize things.

SENS

MUSÉES DE SENS

Place de la Cathédrale  
89100 Sens  
86.64.15.27, 86.64.46.22

Musée municipal contrôlé DMF et Collections d'État—visited  
4-19-89 and 9-28-90  
Conservateur: Mme. Lydwine SAULNIER-PERNUIT—interview  
4-19-89

The archaeological museum of Sens was originally founded in 1845, the year after the founding of the Société archéologique des Sens. In 1986 the society's collections were combined with the collections of the State, city, and cathedral to form the Musées de Sens in the former archbishop's residence and synodal palace connected to the cathedral. The museum consists of the museum proper (mainly archaeological material as well as some eighteenth- and nineteenth-century works), the thirteenth-century Synodal Palace (for its architecture), and the cathedral treasury (including some important tapestries, liturgical vessels, and the vestments of various saints, including Thomas Beckett). Additionally, a large subterranean room was dug under the cathedral courtyard to house the extensive Gallo-Roman collection (open to the public in 1990), and in the construction process, a Gallo-Roman bath was discovered and left *in situ* to form part of the museum.

Seven people work at the museum: the conservateur, a secretary, and five guards, one of whom is the head guard and one of whom also acts as concierge.

The museum receives most of its operating budget from

the city, since it is a municipal museum. However, the State gives forty percent and the region ten percent for any major work that needs to be done.

When the installation is completed, the conservateur estimates that about one third of the collection will be on view, and of that, about half will be Gallo-Roman and half medieval.

Due to the continuing reinstallation project, the conservateur is not mounting many temporary exhibitions. During the summer—the tourist season—she tries to mount one or two, and she also mounts them for historical events pertaining to the city. In the summer of 1989, like so many conservateurs, she feels compelled to have a temporary exhibition on the role of Sens in the Revolution for the bicentennial, due to public demand (but as that role was not very great, there are only a few documents to show). Eventually, she would like to mount three to five temporary exhibition each year.

In general, the presentation of the permanent exhibits is chronological, and thematic within rooms and display cases. Much of the collection is stone—not datable except by style—and much, if not most, of the material lacks provenance and context.

The conservateur chooses the objects to display based on their pedagogic and didactic potential as well as on their aesthetic qualities. She chooses to show only a few examples of each type of object, as her philosophy is, "ex-

*poser moins, mais expliquer plus*" (show less, but explain more). For the archaeological exhibits, what is displayed rests largely with the archaeologists. The archaeologist can say he is in the process of studying an object, which prevents it from being displayed, and he can say this forever--there is no time limit placed on the studying. Therefore, what gets displayed is not always the most interesting material, but the material belonging to the archaeologists who are the most cooperative.

The conservateur believes in interpreting the exhibits for the public. There are simple, short texts with photos and diagrams explaining the use of objects and how they were made.

She wants the public to learn about the history of civilization and of the region. She also wants them to learn the history of humans, and to learn about their roots.

She tries a little to make the exhibits relevant to the lives of the visitors. She believes that the exhibits help people "*retracent la vie actuelle*" (retrace real life). A particular example she cites is that for school children who are the children of farmers, the exhibits pertaining to the Neolithic and the "Agricultural Revolution" help them see how farming started, why it is important, and how it has changed. [The Musées de Sens is one of a very few Burgundian museums that has a part-time education specialist.]

She does not see a political message in the exhibits,

with the exception of the temporary exhibition for the Revolution, which cannot show anything about the Reign of Terror (in which Sens did play a role), since it must confine itself to the first two years of the Revolution. Otherwise, national politics do not play a role. Local politics are important, but it is more a question of working with various individual personalities in the town.

She finds working with historic buildings to be somewhat constraining (and sometimes has trouble working with the architect), but she also finds it to be a very rich experience. There is a problem with the building decor taking away from the exposition, and she could not start the prehistory exhibits until the third room in the museum, because the decor of the first two rooms (restored to their sixteenth/seventeenth-century condition by Viollet-le-Duc in the mid-nineteenth century) was totally inappropriate. She also tries to fit things into the existing building lay-out, such as having the Gallo-Roman funeral steles lining the aisle in the new subterranean room, much as the steles would have lined a Roman road (they are also grouped in rooms by themes—families, professions, and the like). She does not see any of the buildings there or elsewhere which had a previous religious function as imparting any sense of the sacred to the objects.

The things she would most like to change are the Treasury and the installation of the facade of the Gallo-Roman baths. She would very much like to change the presentation

of the objects in the Treasury because it is out-dated and has no explanations. She is in charge of preserving the objects in the Treasury, but she has no control over how it is displayed, since the Treasury is the provenance of Monuments Historiques. Therefore, she must watch the textiles being destroyed by over-exposure to light, and other such problems, and, in order to do anything with the objects, she must go through the monumental bureaucracy of Monuments Historiques. The second thing she would like to change is the installation of the *Façade des Thermes* in the Henri II wing. It was installed before the architect had fully exposed the area around the windows, which on the side the Façade is on is very beautiful and interesting and is now blocked by the Façade. The Façade also now impedes the view from the exterior courtyard. The windows on the other side of the room from the Façade are not as beautiful, and it would have been just as easy to install it there, if they had realized in time. But now, with the Façade literally set in concrete, it is too expensive to change.

She is satisfied with the museum as a whole. Of course, the tiles are not right in all the rooms—in the Façade room they look like bathroom floor tiles—but this is a small detail. She is especially pleased that once the museum is completed, on one's tour through it, one will not be obliged to retrace one's steps; the visitor's circuit is easy to follow and comprehensive.

She believes that the role of museums is to preserve

the memory of the people of the area. She sees the museum as teaching the history of the region and maintaining the memory of the region. By using material evidence, museums help people learn more deeply about history and tradition.

## SOLUTRÉ

MUSÉE DÉPARTEMENTAL DE LA PRÉHISTOIRE DE SOLUTRÉ  
71960 Solutré-Pouilly  
85.35.83.23 (offices at Grange du Bois), 85.35.85.24

Musée départemental contrôlé DMF—visited 6-2-89 and 6-28-90  
Affiliated with the Académie de Mâcon; associated with the  
archaeological site of Solutré  
Conservateur: Mme. Marie-Geneviève LAGARDÈRE—interview  
6-2-89

The museum at Solutré opened to the public 1 June 1987. In order not to disrupt the landscape, the museum was built underground, with only three openings to the outside: the door, a window view down towards the archaeological site, and a high window offering a view of "the Rock" of Solutré. Due to the expense and complexity of building underground, the museum is only five hundred square meters, with no office space in the museum building (currently offices are in the Grange du Bois, about two kilometers from the museum, in a building that also serves as the Dépôt des Fouilles for the site); however, plans are being made to construct office, research, and storage space below the museum, as well as to organize the archaeological site.

The museum was likely conceived of by the department due to the publicity generated by President Mitterrand's annual Pentecostal ascents of the mountain ("the Rock") of Solutré, above the archaeological site. However, the museum was inaugurated during the political "Cohabitation" when Jacques Chirac was prime minister and when the department of Saône-et-Loire was also under control of the conservative Right, and Mitterrand was not invited to the opening.

Hence, he has refused to visit the museum since.

The first conservateur of the museum, during its construction and first year of operation, was deemed incompetent by the department and was fired. Mme. Lagardère was then hired as conservateur.

Three people work at the museum: the conservateur, one assistant/secretary, and one guard. During the summer months, a few students from the area usually work part-time, helping the guard and giving tours.

The museum is a departmental museum, the only one in all of Burgundy, and all of its operating budget comes from the department. The "*investissement*" (investment/capital) budget, for more occasional expenses comes from the department with aid from the State, or sometimes from the region, usually amounting the thirty to forty percent. For temporary exhibitions, the State pays thirty to forty percent, and the department pays the balance. For the construction of the museum (which cost 10,932,000 French Francs), the State, in the guise of the DMF, paid 37.2 percent, the region of Burgundy paid 10.9 percent, and the department paid 51.9 percent. Departmental museums are a fairly recent phenomenon, appearing only after the 1981 decentralization, and they fall under the administrative auspices of the departmental Conseil Général. So far, the museum is amply funded.

The entire collection of the museum (one hundred percent) is currently on display. Most of the material from

the old archaeological investigations went to the Musée des Ursulines in Mâcon, and the material from the more recent excavations is still in the course of being studied, but it will come progressively into the museum as the studies are completed.

The conservateur tries to mount at least one temporary exhibition each year—in the summer, from June through September—and she would like to have smaller ones other times (though there is always a problem with the shortage of space). In the summer of 1989 the temporary exhibition *1866, l'invention de Solutré: Adrien Arcelin, Henry de Ferry* ran from 19 June through 17 September. The museum is closed during January and February.

The objects in the museum are displayed contextually by themes, under an overarching chronology. It is a site museum, and the site is a "*site de chasse*" (a hunting site) with many tools, and context is very important. Chronology is also important, since four different "civilizations"—Solutrean, Gravettian, Aurignacian, and Magdalenian—were present at the site. Some displays are reserved for themes such as fauna and tools or a reconstruction of the context. The conservateur would also like to show short demonstration films, such as on flint knapping or weapon propulsion in hunting. This is the only museum devoted to the Solutrean period (which is localized in France and Spain).

The choice of what objects to display and how to display them was made by the first conservateur, and the cur-

rent conservateur would like to change the displays. She would like to choose more typical objects and not show too many of them (as is done at Saint-Germain-en-Laye). She would like to reconstruct a horse-kill site—show what was found, what parts were used for food, what parts were left in place—and to reconstruct the skeleton of one of the horses and show photographs of similar animals (the currently existing "proto-horses"), but studies are still being done, and some information is not yet available. Even as it is now, she is most pleased with the horse exhibit, and she would like the rest of the museum to be more like it.

She does not want a lot of text to accompany each display, because the public does not read it. Instead, there are twenty-five minute "audio visits" in French, German, and English [which needs to be redone by someone livelier—not in a monotone!]. She would also like to put out a small gallery guide for more specifics. In the exhibits themselves, though, she would like to use images rather than text for explaining; for example, show photos of objects being used rather than words describing how they were used. For the special case of school visits, it is necessary to explain more things, and documentation is given to the teachers.

From the exhibits, she wants people to learn about the prehistoric way of life and environment. She is not concerned that visitors learn the details of flint knapping and other things; she wants them to learn and understand the

larger themes of hunters, tool-makers, sculptors, and so forth. [It is also important to tell how the horses were really killed, which has been known since the more recent digs began in the 1960s, but the other story has persisted.]

She does not try to make the exhibits relevant to the lives of the visitors since they concern prehistory [and I suppose it would be difficult, as there are no more subsistence hunters or wild horses in the area].

She sees no real political message in the exhibits and is free to design them as she sees fit [and she will begin to redesign them in the fall of 1989]. However, there is a sort of politics of different schools of prehistory. There are two "*grands écoles*" (major schools) in prehistory in France: an anthropologically oriented one, concerned with social context, such as espoused by André Leroi-Gourhan, and a hard-science oriented one, concerned with geology and natural science, classification, and stratigraphy. The conservateur (and the museum) follow the anthropological orientation.

She thinks that new buildings for museums are generally more functional but that old buildings can also be made to work. But it is more difficult to use an old building to exhibit prehistory and have it impart anything to the objects; it is easier for fine arts.

If she could change one thing with the museum, she would enlarge it, to have more space and a room for temporary exhibitions, but she realizes size will always be a

problem for an underground museum.

In general, she is satisfied with the museum; it is new, and it is possible to do a lot of things with it. There is currently no problem with money. She wants it not to be a static museum.

She sees the role of the museum to be multiple. It should show the links between researchers and museography. It also has a pedagogic role. But tourist concerns are also important, because they constitute an important part of the different types of public that the museum serves. She thinks it is important that there be a rapport between the museum and the site (both archaeologically and in general)- that there be a link between the interest with prehistory and the countryside. People do not come to Solutr e only to visit the museum but also to do other things, like climb the Rock (and sample the wine), and there is a need to serve their interests as well.

The museum receives about 40,000 people each year and takes in revenues (from entry fees and sales of postcards and books) averaging 38,000 French Francs.

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Susan Wallace  
FROM: Bob Daniels

DATE: April 23, 1995

I have now read (and enjoyed) Chapters I through IV and the Appendices.

I have marked several typos, minor format problems, and a few places where I think you need to add a sentence or two of clarification or expansion. All these can be dealt with while cleaning up the final file copies.

Additionally, there are four points which I think you might want to deal with a bit more directly (i.e. write a bit more about):

1. The regionalism vs centralization issue. What you have to say in the opening section is quite good, and apt. Still, I think you need to say more about the positive value being given to local community pride (as opposed to a program to build national identity and national pride), and the local meaning given to the phrase "self-determination".
2. The bicentennial celebration. I remember hearing a little about the controversies, which I take it were quite heated in some circles. You mentioned, but did not explain, the ban on bringing up the Reign of Terror. No doubt there were regional, class, left/right issues involved that seem quite relevant to your project. I think the American reader would appreciate a section summarizing what was being said about history, etc. in this case.
3. Similarly, I would really like to see a discussion of the *l'Année de l'Archéologie*: whose brain child it was, how it was publicized, what was expected of (or supplied to) local museums, public reception, etc. You give us some tantalizing fragments.
4. You mention *son et lumière* but do not tell us much about it. Ok, so maybe everyone knows what the term means (but I doubt it). I think it would be useful, and directly relevant to your survey of local museums, to give a brief history of how this style of touristic history got started, its significance (I believe it has a vastly larger audience than local museums, *n'est-ce pas?*), etc.

Hope these ideas help. I'm looking forward to reading the remaining chapters.



4-15-95  
2:00 am

Dear Conde,

Again, do not get too excited, because this is not it, it is where I am now. The theory chapter - "Approaches to the Study..." - was so incredibly painful to write I would stay late at work to avoid coming home to it. I am not satisfied with it (I loath it with all my heart) - do you think I can get it past my committee? Chapter 6, on the other hand, is coming along nicely now that I can devote my attentions to it without worrying about chapter 5.

Exactly when do I have to have it all to everyone in order to defend - and what constitutes a defensible draft?

I have heard nothing from anyone about chapters 1-4 and the appendices. Either: (A) they haven't read it; (B) they like it so much they have nothing to add; or (C) they hate it so much they don't know how to tell me.

I hope your month in France went well and that you weren't too cold. If I ever get this thing finished I'm going to run away somewhere warm and sunny and NOT visit the museums there!

Hoping I sound more intelligent than  
I feel right now,

*Susan*

P.S. This is the only copy I'm sending right now. If you think it's ok can you get it to the others at UNC & let me know so I can Express 2 copies to Bill?

## APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF OBJECTS IN MUSEUMS

Recent scholarship in museum and material culture studies has focused on two main approaches for analysis: semiotics and marxism. In this chapter will be discussed the usefulness and shortcomings of these approaches. The question of historical veracity and authenticity will also be explored.

### SEMIOTICS

Semiotics and discourse theory have become popular approaches for analyzing how objects are used in museum exhibits (Pearce 1990b; Taborsky 1990). Semiotics is "the science of communication studied through the interpretation of signs and symbols as they operate in various fields" (*OED*). Material culture analysts interested in how objects are used to communicate in museums are looking increasingly to the seminal works of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure—the "father of modern linguistics"—and Roland Barthes, French literary critic and structuralist. Though linguistics is considered by some to be a sub-field of semiotics, any useful discussion of semiotics must begin there, since much of the terminology and basic theory of semiotics was modeled on the linguistic theory of Saussure.

Saussure's most basic tenet is that language is a sys-

tem of signs. A sign is an arbitrary entity and "is the union of a form which signifies, which Saussure calls the *signifiant* (signifier), and an idea signified, the *signifié* (signified)" (Culler 1980:9). For example (and much simplified), the word "rose" is a sign which is the union of the sound form "rōz"—the signifier—and the idea of an odoriferous, red-petaled flower—the signified. The sign is arbitrary because there is no necessary connection between the signifier and the signified—as Juliette said, "That which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet" (*Romeo and Juliette* 2.2.43-44).

The arbitrary character of the sign is important because it underlines how all meaning is defined: not by any essential quality of the signified, but by how it differs from other signs. If there were no darkness, light would have no meaning. While meaning has this arbitrary quality, in order to be able to communicate, a society assigns certain meanings to certain things, socially controlling the arbitrariness. This social construction of meaning, and through meaning of reality, recalls Berger and Luckmann's (1966) work on the sociology of knowledge. Though while Berger and Luckmann took as one of their guiding tenets Durkheim's rule to "*Consider social facts as things*" (Durkheim 1950:14 in Berger and Luckmann 1966:18), semiotics would argue that things might be considered as social facts as well.

While linguistics is often considered to be a historic

or diachronic discipline, studying the changes in words and language over time, for Saussure linguistics had to be approached synchronically. Language is constantly changing, so "one must focus on the relations which exist in a particular synchronic state if one is to define its elements" (Culler 1980:30). Saussure stressed that one could not know the meaning of a word (or sign) by knowing its history. Knowing that the word "museum" once meant "a seat of the Muses" does nothing to explain what a museum is today. Since signs only have meaning in a system of differences, and since those relational differences change, the meaning of a sign can only be understood at a precise moment—synchronically. This idea is important for material culture studies, as it shows that the meaning of an object at any particular time is not wholly contingent on the meaning or function the object originally had.

Two other Saussurian linguistic concepts essential to semiotics now need to be introduced: *langue* and *parole*. *La langue* is the system of language—the social forms, rules, and grammar that form the underpinnings of any particular language (Culler 1980). *Parole* is the manifestation of the system—the actual speech. By analyzing *parole* we can come to understand the (more important) *langue*—more important because it is the rules and relations of *la langue* that enables words, actions, and objects (signs) to have meaning (Culler 1980:112). Meaning is not found in the spoken words or actions or objects as such, but in how they are put to-

gether and articulated (in all senses of the word).

Saussurian linguistics laid the foundation for semiotics, but semiotics only really came into its own in the 1960s with Roland Barthes and others. For Barthes, semiotics, or semiology, was "based on the premise that insofar as human actions and objectives have meaning, there must be a system of distinctions and conventions, conscious or unconscious, that generates meaning" (Culler 1983:72). If this sounds like structuralism, it essentially is, for Barthes was as much a structuralist as he was a semiologist or literary critic; and, in 1967, he "defined structuralism as a way of analyzing cultural artefacts that originates in the methods of linguistics" (Culler 1983:78). Culler goes on to explain Barthes' view of the relationship between linguistics (and by extension semiotics) and structuralism as follows:

Treating phenomena as the products of underlying systems of rules and distinctions, structuralism takes from linguistics two cardinal principles: that signifying entities do not have essences but are defined by networks of relations, both internal and external, and that to account for signifying phenomena is to describe the system of norms that makes them possible. Structural explanation does not seek historical antecedents or causes but discusses the structure and significance of particular objects or actions by relating them to the systems within which they function. [Culler 1983:78-79]

Objects, then, like any other signs, cannot have meaning outside of the network of relations in which they function, but it is important to note that those relations are not static but may change over time.

An extension of Barthes' concept of the "Death of the Author" (1977), which he used for understanding literature, is also useful in understanding how objects function in museums. For objects, one might alter the concept to be the 'Death of the Maker and Original Owner.' The essence of this concept is that the meaning of the object to the person who made and/or used it may have little or no relationship with the meaning(s) of the object in the museum. Objects which were originally purely functional, such as a paleolithic burin, in a museum may become symbolic pieces evoking a sense of connectedness to paleolithic humans, or, alternately, a distancing. Similarly, objects which may have had a special, personal meaning for their owners, for example, a Gallo-Roman fibula given to a man by his wife on a special occasion and which thereby embodied a host of feelings and memories, in a museum may become depersonalized and important only as examples of style. The network of relations surrounding the object has changed, and, therefore, its meaning has changed. Each relationship, even the relationship between museum object and different visitors, remakes the object and its meaning anew.

In material culture studies, semiotics has been adapted to include "the concept of 'signification,' which can be described as an object having a meaning which is not inherent in that object, but which is socially assigned to it" (Taborsky 1990:51). The sign here has become concretized—the object is the sign is the object. According to

Taborsky, "an object on its own has no meaning, objects exist only as signs. Our discursive interaction with that object moves (is) into a meaningful state, a sign" (1990:74-75). This is akin to the concept of a tree falling in the woods making no sound if there is no one there to hear it. An object may exist, but without someone interpreting it—establishing discourse with it—for himself or someone else, it is meaningless.

Even in establishing the socially constructed meaning of the object, it is necessary to realize that we are dealing with more than one society. We have already mentioned the original creator and/or owner of the object as members of society distinct from the museum society. But even within the museum there are two or more societies: that of the curators/staff and that of the visitors. Object labels may guide the visitors towards the curators' meaning, but only if the visitor is willing and operating within the same social parameters as the curators. The fact is, museums cannot control how visitors will interpret the exhibits and objects. The meanings created may be as numerous as the visitors.

It is important to note that to this point, semiotics has proved a useful theoretical tool for considering how objects take on meanings in museums. But at this point, all too often, deconstruction takes over, and we are presented with the quandary that if every curator and visitor interprets (and) object in a unique way, given their specific

background and biases, then no one interpretation and meaning is more valid than any other. Here, the semiotic theoreticians take over and run wild. Umberto Eco has even managed to reduce semiotics to a mathematical formula (Eco 1990). At this point, semiotics ceases to be of any practical use in the study of objects. As is the case with so many analytic tools, semiotics, like a rubber band, has been extended past the boundary of usefulness, where it must break and fall apart into chaos. Like many theories, it works well up to a point, but it should not be overextended.

#### MARXIST ANALYSIS AND CRITIQUES

Marxism is another theoretical tool that can prove useful in the study of museums and objects, provided it is not taken too far. Marxist critiques of museums usually paint them as being hegemonic institutions that force the values of the elite on the masses under the pretext of educating them and present versions of reality that uphold the social order of the dominant group (Horne 1984:1).

It is true that in their early history, especially in the United States, museums did operate as agents of hegemony. The early museums were generally grand edifices, filled with beautiful objects—temples of and to the arts (Hudson 1987). Although curation of these objects was important to the museum founders, "America's early nonprofit museums were one part of a widespread impulse toward social reform and model-making in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries" (Ettema 1987:64). The elite upper class founders believed that they were the keepers of high civilization and that it was their duty to elevate (and control) the masses. Beautiful objects were believed to embody virtue and other abstract moral values, and simply by displaying these objects to the public, the public, it was believed, would learn (and adopt) the values of the upper class, and humanity would continue to progress (Ettema 1987).

With their idea of "elevating" the masses and contributing to "progress," though, it can be argued that the elite intended their museums to be not instruments of hegemony but of socialization (though the difference is denied by marxists). Their motives were fairly pure, and their intentions good, whatever the results. They were not necessarily trying to convince the lower classes to accept their lot in life or trying to control by oppression. Cultural education through museums was hoped to raise everyone to the same level, ideologically if not economically. Though some scholars see this as an attempt to transform "the population into a useful resource for the state" (Hooper-Greenhill 1992:182), this would seem to require an active attempt be made to get the general public into the museums, which did not occur. The museums were made accessible, not mandatory.

Similarly, we have seen that the French Revolutionary government considered the art collection in the Louvre to belong to the people and believed that the educational function of the Louvre promoted the concept of *égalité*.

Museums were to benefit the people. Cultural ideals of beauty and aesthetics cross class boundaries, too, and as well as educating, public access to museums allowed people to enjoy (visually) paintings and art objects which formerly only the nobility had been able to enjoy. (Marxists frequently seem to forget that it is possible to enjoy something without owning it.)

The charge most often leveled at museums by marxists is that by enshrining artifacts and by portraying the past by using these objects, they commodify both the past and the artifacts (Shanks and Tilley 1987). The past becomes something that one can pay an entry fee to visit, and a price tag can be put on the objects. Like other commodities today, the law of supply and demand holds true—a three thousand-year-old terra-cotta lamp, turned out by the thousands is worth a few dollars, while a one-of-a-kind marble Hellenistic statue can go for millions. The more million-dollar items a museum has, the greater its claim to fame and the <sup>greater the number of</sup> ~~more~~ people, <sup>who</sup> will visit it, bringing in more money. Even though museums are generally not-for-profit institutions, the money generated can be used to acquire more rare objects or hire eminent authorities, increasing the prestige of the museum, which has a value in itself.

Archaeology museums like those in Burgundy, though, do not fall into this commodification cycle in the same way. They are generally small museums, whose collections come not from purchase but from archaeological discovery or donation.

Dollar (or Franc) amounts can, of course, be put on the artifacts, but their main value lies in the information they can provide about the past, which Shanks and Tilley still see as commodification, since a value not inherent in the objects themselves has been placed on them.

As information carriers, the artifacts have a value placed upon them by the archaeologists and curators, thus they are commoditized today. But in the past, during the period of their use, they were true commodities—made for sale, bought, and sold. The only time, then, that they were not commodities was when they lay buried—off any market. (Though even there, one could see the archaeological sites of the world as natural resources waiting to be exploited.) Continuing in this vein, if the objects themselves are inherently value-laden, both in the past and in the present, it follows that our exhibition of them can never be truly objective, since we are always working to maximize their value.

It is interesting that most of the conservateurs of the museums in this study acknowledged the ideological bases of their exhibitions only peripherally, if at all. When questioned specifically, they either claimed to be completely objective, or they acknowledged that all representations of the past carry a bias but did not seem to consider this important. Much of this difficulty in seeing the ideological content of their exhibitions lies in the conservateurs views of themselves as being archaeologists/scientists or

art historians/academics: two fields that stress objectivity as a prerequisite of the job

Conservateurs who are art historians specializing in contemporary art and are thus generally more familiar or comfortable with the acknowledged political content of modern art were frequently better than the archaeologists at accepting the unavoidable political nature of the artifacts. These conservateurs, like the conservateur at Clamecy, were also more likely to see that the exhibits themselves also reflected the unconscious biases of their creators. It is a frequent marxist criticism of representations of the past that they tell more about the society and culture of the people making the representations than they do about that of the people being studied. It is important to be aware of such biases, but as it is impossible to avoid them, <sup>and</sup> obsessing about them accomplishes little that is useful.

As has been previously noted, a key marxist tenet is that the past is used to legitimize the present. This has been seen in our earlier discussions of the history of museums—as with Louis Napoleon's modeling himself after Vercingetorix—and need not be discussed at length here, except to reinforce that with these small museums, the issue is not generally the legitimization of the state but of the locality, and thus is more an issue of empowerment rather than subjugation.

As has been seen, it is easy to use marxist analysis to study museums, but it is frequently used to criticize them,

and that is not always appropriate. Acknowledgement of biases, of commodification, and of other issues inherent in the presentation of the past is important as it helps to keep us honest, so to speak. Attacking museums for being hegemonic institutions, especially the small archaeological museums of Burgundy, though, is inappropriate.

Seeing museums as evil instruments of the ruling class for controlling the masses assumes too many things. It either assumes that the curators are stupid (which they are not) and do not see how they themselves are being manipulated, or it assumes that they are taking an active role in oppressing the lower classes (which again they are not)— *in short,* either they are ignorant or they are of evil intent. They are generally neither. Most curators/conservateurs are concerned with the needs of their constituency and try to create exhibits that will respond to the various needs of their public, to the extent that they can.

Perhaps the most obvious flaw in the marxist hegemony argument, though, is exactly who it is the museums are subverting. Try as they will, the conservateurs have a hard time getting the true "general public" to visit the museum. The Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore recently conducted a visitor survey and found that, not counting school groups, the majority of people who visit the museum have a graduate degree: they are the professional "ruling" elite. A similar study was conducted in France at the Pompidou Center, and it was found that forty percent of the visitors were students

(most high school or above) and another thirty percent were executives and professionals (Heinich 1988). The main people who could be subverted by museums are already in the dominant class! With the current attacks in the United States on the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) by Congress and the Senate, it seems that even the right-wing ruling body sees little hegemonic value in museums.

#### HISTORICAL VERACITY AND AUTHENTICITY

✓ Much debate currently focuses on historical veracity and ability of the museum to present—and that the public will accept nothing less than—"the real thing."<sup>1</sup> Post-processualist philosophers may argue that reality is a conditional concept and that no exhibit can be "authentic," and the debates rage on.

All of these debates ignore that the public seems largely unconcerned by the metaphysical aspects of reality. If in a museum display an object is labeled as a Merovingian fibula (brooch) made of gold-covered bronze, inlaid with garnets, found at such-and-such a place, and dating to the sixth century, as far as the public is concerned, it—the fibula—is real. There is an assumption that the museum curator is not lying and that the object is not a fake.

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<sup>1</sup>Interestingly, working in a museum, I have found that some visitors assume that we show *only* reproductions, since the "real thing" would be too valuable for public display.

Archaeologists may visit the museum and contend that the fibula really dates to the seventh century, but this does not question the reality of the object. You can see it; you can touch it (with the right connections); it is real.

When a curator takes two (real) objects and displays them together, though, reality takes on a different hue. The objects have not changed in and of themselves, but by associating them, the curator has created a relationship between them. Often, the relationship is ethnic or temporal and is more or less neutral: these objects were made and used by the Merovingian Franks. But there is also a tendency to create a contextual relationship between objects that may never have existed in reality in order to make the objects more comprehensible to the public. The motivation may be pure and noble—to educate without the burden of long labels and supplementary texts—but the message may be garbled and misinterpreted by the public, and the objects may be thought to have *really* had the same relationship in the past. For example, a composite drawing of a Merovingian burial, showing how various displayed objects might have been found in burials, may create, in the mind of a museum visitor, the idea that the objects did indeed all come from this same burial and that the drawing is not a composite but an actual archaeological illustration. Is this misrepresentation? From the curator's perspective, the drawing is a didactic device, and she is not trying to fool anyone. If the museum visitor is "fooled," is it the curator's fault

for having displayed a "false" drawing in a museum—where one expects to find only reality—or is it the visitor's fault for not having read the labels (which indicated where the individual items were found)?

An especially perplexing case of this sort of "contextual reality" is found at the Musée d'art et d'histoire in Auxerre. In the section of the museum devoted to daily life in the Gallo-Roman period, individual objects are identified in cases along the perimeter of the room. In the center of the room, similar objects have been brought together in a reconstruction of a Gallo-Roman kitchen. The contextualization allows the objects to "speak" for themselves, and there are no labels repeating the information from the perimeter cases. From a didactic perspective, the exhibit works—it shows how objects would have functioned and been found in a Gallo-Roman kitchen. But in reality, these objects were never together but came from a variety of different sites. More worrisome is the entire design of the "kitchen"—it looks suspiciously like a modern French kitchen "done in Gallo-Roman." Is this exhibit archaeologically accurate; is it authentic? Does it matter?

The question "does it matter?" is the crux of the issue. If we do not know what a Gallo-Roman kitchen looked like (and realize that all kitchens were probably different, and a wealthy person's kitchen might have borne little resemblance to a poor person's), does it matter if we create a setting that helps explain the objects by placing them in a

frame of reference that the public understands? If we are using genuine artifacts, does an artificial context that enables understanding of the artifacts detract from the educational mission of the museum?

The answer of museum staff to this question, judging by the number of "reconstructions"—whether elaborate recreations of a site or minimalist schematic representations—is a resounding "No." Part of the museums' mission is to interpret the artifacts for educational purposes, and contextualization is a standard interpretive technique, liked especially because ideas are communicated visually, keeping written texts to a minimum.

But what if we were to take this premise one step further and used recreated objects in our reconstructions? The same didactic information would be conveyed, but you would be hard pressed to get any museum staff member to say that this is acceptable practice. Part of the objection lies in the fact that the mission of the museum—to collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret—does not extend to modern fakes. The larger reason for the objection, though, lies in the idea that real artifacts and genuine objects have a sort of spiritual aspect that fakes can never have. They are important because they are real.

The importance of the historical reality of artifacts is readily accepted on an intuitive level, but analyzing it is more difficult. Why is it important that our Merovingian fibula have been made by a Merovingian Frank? With today's

technology, an exact replica could be made for a few hundred dollars at the most. Museum gift shops often sell reproductions of objects in their collections. What makes the object in the shop display case worth twenty dollars, while the original in a display case in another room is worth twenty-thousand dollars or more? Archaeologists understand the feeling as they get excited over the discovery of various pieces of old broken pots. Clearly, the value of the objects does not lie in their material nature; it seems to lie in their age.

Perhaps at a visceral level, the importance of archaeological artifacts lies in their ability to connect us to the past: we are holding something once held by a Viking! Of course, most archaeologists play down this thrill—we are supposed to be objective, scientific, detached, but we are also human. It seems to be part of human nature to be touched emotionally by relics of the past, <sup>hence the</sup> ~~or else why would~~ *Success of* archaeological museums ~~be successful.~~ An artifact represents the endurance of human endeavor. We may die, but what we make may live on. It probably takes a philosopher or psychologist to understand why we value the "real thing," because contrary to what marxists believe it is not for its monetary value. Semiologists are probably closer with their concept of socially assigned meaning/value.

At this point, we will leave abstract theory behind and look at the actual Burgundian museums to see what they make

of themselves with their objects and how they do it, realizing that conservateurs do not generally have the luxury of dwelling on the metaphysical aspects of reality. Their job is to present the past to the public in an engaging and responsible manner.

## ANALYSIS OF THE MUSEUMS

As is the nature of museums with their varying collections of unique objects and their various techniques of presenting them, all museums are different, and what constitutes a good museum versus a bad one is often a matter of personal taste regarding the collections they house and how one approaches them. Someone with no interest in archaeology may find the collections of stone tools or potsherds of one museum incredibly boring, while a budding archaeologist might find them fascinating. Some people like long, descriptive object labels, while others ignore them completely. What makes a museum good is highly subjective.

In this study then, while my personal feelings about certain museums will undoubtedly manifest themselves in various ways, I will try to avoid comparing museums to say that one is better than another. Rather, I will look at how well the museum carries out its mission as put forward by the previously noted ICOM definition of a museum as a "non-profit making, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment" (ICOM 1990:3).

I am not especially concerned with the history of the

particular museums except insofar as that history may have influenced the current state of the museum. That up until 1988 the archaeology museum in Sens was a stereotypical old-fashioned museum complete with table cases with sloping glass tops has little relevance for the modern museum that has replaced it. The main influence of the history of the old archaeological museum of Sens on the new Musées de Sens is the desire to depart from it, at least in presentation style.

On the other hand, some archaeology museums are looking at their past and taking a different approach with respect to it, as with the recently renovated museum in Semur-en-Auxois. At the Musée Municipal de Semur-en-Auxois, the conservateur made the conscious decision to maintain the nineteenth-century style of the museum, so that it would be, in effect, a museum of a museum. In this case, the history of the museum does have a direct bearing on the current museum.

There is yet a third type of museum in Burgundy—and doubtless throughout France and Europe—where the history of the museum is of vital importance to our understanding of it. These museums have not rejected their pasts, as at Sens, nor embraced them, as at Semur-en-Auxois. These museums are their pasts. They were created decades ago and have not changed since. They have been neither renovated nor repackaged; they have simply endured. One is at first tempted to pass them by as not worthy of inclusion in a

study of contemporary museums, but they are contemporary—they exist today, side by side with their renovated or new counterparts.

#### ARCY-SUR-CURE

The premier (figuratively speaking) of these museums existing in their original, decades-old state is the Musée de l'Hôtel-de-Ville in Arcy-sur-Cure. Arcy-sur-Cure is a very small town (527 inhabitants in 1989 [Michelin 1989:96]) in the Yonne department, between Auxerre and Avallon. Arcy's only claim to fame is being located one kilometer from the famous Grottes d'Arcy (not to be confused with the lesser-known but more interesting Grottes d'Azé in Saône-et-Loire), a limestone cave system with prehistoric faunal remains and rock formations, open to the public, complete with the standard-issue Monuments Historiques guide. For anthropologists, Arcy-sur-Cure is known as an important Middle to Upper Paleolithic transition site, studied by Leroi-Gourhan and others. The museum is little known outside the town and is not listed in any of the major tourist publications: the *Guide de Tourisme Michelin: Bourgogne, Morvan* (Michelin 1988) (commonly known as the "Guide Vert"), the *Hachette Guide bleu: Bourgogne* (1987), and the *Guide des Musées de Bourgogne* (Section Fédérée des Conservateurs 1989). The only place it is listed is in the CNRS publication on archaeological collections in museums in France (Lequeux, Mainjonet, and Roscian 1989:12).

Once the museum's existence is known, getting into it is the second hurdle. As its name indicates, the museum is located in the town hall and is accessible during operating hours: Mondays 2:00-4:00 P.M. and Fridays 5:00-7:00 P.M. Listed as a *musée contrôlé*, the museum consists of an ensemble of fourteen small cases on one wall in the entry hall of the town hall, as well as associated lapidary objects on the surrounding floor. It was founded in 1902 by the Abbé Alexandre Parat, and apparently the only thing added since 1902 is a "Médaille Commemorative (Alexandre Parat) TOUCY, 12 juillet 1964" (a commemorative medallion of Parat). Meanwhile, the Gallo-Roman coins originally displayed have been removed from their case, hopefully for safekeeping. Claude Renouard, the Conservateur départemental des Musées of the Yonne, under whose jurisdiction this miniature museum falls, does not know what to do about it. At first glance this "museum" seems absurd or at best quaint, but closer examination gives lie to the first impressions.

This turn-of-the-century museum is not the curiosity cabinet one might expect. In fact, it bears a close resemblance (albeit in miniature) to the French Museum of National Antiquities at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, where the current exhibits date to between 1962 and 1984 (Conservation du Musée 1988:1). The artifacts are perhaps less spectacular, but they are all from in or around the town, while the national museum has tended to commandeer the best pieces from all over the country. The objects are grouped chrono-

logically, beginning with prehistoric animal bones from the caves, each of which is labelled with the animal's common and scientific names, and continuing through the paleolithic, neolithic, Gallo-Roman, Merovingian, and medieval periods. Everything is neatly mounted and clearly—and correctly—labelled. The creator of this museum, Abbé Parat, in 1902 was ahead of his time and knew what he was doing. It is not even necessary to try to guess what he was thinking about, because he published an article in the departmental scientific society journal about the museum and his ideas and plans (Parat 1904).

Abbé Parat had an idealistic vision of the future and of the role of communal museums and archaeology in it. From his article it becomes clear that the resemblance of the Arcy museum to that of Saint-Germain-en-Laye was not accidental or coincidental; Abbé Parat took it as a model. "Le Musée d'Arcy, dans ses très modestes proportions, est tout à la fois populaire et savant comme ces deux modèles [le Muséum de Paris, le Musée de Saint-Germain]" [The Museum of Arcy, in its very modest proportions, is at the same time popular (for the general public) and learned like its two models] (Parat 1904:5).

Abbé Parat departed from the Saint-Germain-en-Laye model, though, in including in his classification the category "*L' époque féodale ou du moyen-âge*" [The feudal or medieval epoch] (Parat 1904:7). As has been previously noted, for historical reasons French archaeology museums

generally do not exhibit objects that post-date the Merovingian period. The larger local archaeological museums generally still follow this tradition, albeit some reluctantly or with misgivings, but there is a move on to try to medieval and early industrial archaeological artifacts exhibited as archaeology, not as art (or ignored) as is often the case. Again, Parat shows himself to be far ahead of his time with this category and the objects it contains, which come from digs at the Château de la Laume. The objects consist of two fifteenth- to sixteenth-century iron keys, some other iron objects, and a green glazed potsherd. Hardly beautiful or unique, they are important precisely because they represent quotidian medieval artifacts that are exhibited in a museum and given importance equal to prehistoric and Gallo-Roman artifacts. Parat understood that the history of an area that can be presented through archaeology does not stop at A.D. 750.

The placement of the museum in the foyer of the town hall also was carefully thought out by Parat. This was a public place, already available, and readily accessible and frequented—the hub of local civic life (the local café notwithstanding). Being always in view, it would remain in the people's minds, and the town residents would contribute new objects to it as they found them (Parat 1904). Clearly, Parat did not see the museum as static, but as a dynamic institution—however modest in size and funding—that would serve to educate and inspire. A strong proponent of decen-

tralization, Parat saw museums as agents of empowerment that would incite interest in the local populace and draw tourists from outside.

Unfortunately, Parat was perhaps too ahead of his time. Decentralization only came in the eighties, along with economic depression. The main highway by-passed the town, discouraging tourism. The museum became such a fixture in the town hall that it was no longer really seen, and the problem with the limited open hours of the building would further discourage any tourists enterprising enough to find the museum. The museum of Arcy-sur-Cure remains as a reminder of hopes for a better future that did not come, but not for lack of vision on Parat's part.

#### SEMUR-EN-AUXOIS

While the museum in Arcy-sur-Cure is a museum that was ahead of its time and now lost to the passage of time, the municipal museum of Semur-en-Auxois is a museum stuck in time. The museum that was founded in 1865 grew out of collections assembled by an art school, the *École de Dessin et Sculpture*, founded by the city in 1834 and installed in a disaffected Jacobin convent that eventually became the museum. The collections were added to by the State, by purchases by the town, and by donations from the *Société des Sciences historiques et naturelles de Semur*—the local *société savante*—of archaeological and other materials pertaining to the history of the city as well as collections of

natural history.

An 1886 catalogue of the archaeological collection (Collenot) divides the collection into the prehistoric era (paleolithic—divided into epochs—neolithic, and Bronze Age) and the historic era (Gaulish, Gallo-Roman, Merovingian, medieval, and Renaissance and modern) and lists individual objects by period and location. Clearly, the nineteenth-century society was not constrained by the notion that after the Merovingian period there is no archaeology: the catalogue lists everything from horseshoes to sculpture to a seventeenth-century German cannon.

Whatever changes the museum might have undergone in its more than one hundred year history, it was reorganized in the late 1980s and reopened in 1989. Except for building improvements, the collection is now installed as it was at the end of the nineteenth century. It was the intention of the conservateur, Monsieur Pinette (also conservateur of the Musée Rolin in Autun until 1990) to:

conserver l'originalité et l'identité du lieu, de respecter son aspect du siècle dernier et de modifier au minimum la belle muséographie qui avait alors imaginée et qui fait du musée de Semur en Auxois l'un des modèles du genre. [Pinette n.d.[1989]:1]

[to preserve the originality and identity of the place (the museum), to respect its last-century aspect and to modify as little as possible the beautiful installations/museography that then had been imagined and that made the museum of Semur-en-Auxois one of the models of the genre. (My translation)]

This has been achieved by returning the exhibits ostensibly to their previous, turn-of-the-century state, complete with

their nineteenth-century labels—now faded and frequently illegible. The mimeographed guide to the museum explains the display technique and gives brief explanations of each gallery. There is a Gallery of Sculpture (consisting primarily of plaster originals for bronze statues by Augustin Dumont<sup>1</sup> and others, and a series of chimney plaques), a Medieval Room: Thirteenth to Fourteenth Centuries (stone sculpture from tombs and churches), a Geology Room, a Zoology Room, an Archaeology Room (paleolithic through Merovingian), a paintings Gallery (with more Dumont plasters and paintings from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, including a Corot<sup>2</sup>), and a Medieval Room: Fifteenth to Sixteenth Centuries (church sculptures, murals, and reliefs).

The overall impression of the museum is good; it is a museum of a museum and is evocative rather than didactic, which can be refreshing. However, the idea of retaining the past this way, no matter how well-intentioned, locks the museum into its past and prevents it from responding to the present. However polished and cleaned, it is still a dusty relic of a bygone time. Not wanting to forget its past, the museum has become trapped in it. It is more embalmed than

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<sup>1</sup>Dumont (1801-1884) was a Parisian sculptor with a studio in Semur, who created such works as the Napoleon for the column in the Place de la Vendôme, the Génie de la Liberté for the Place de la Bastille, and numerous other sculptures for the Louvre, Palais de Justice, and other places. The works in Semur are the plaster originals from which molds would be made to cast the bronze statues.

<sup>2</sup>*Jeune garçon à la casquette* (Young Boy with Cap)

preserved.

When a museum cannot respond to the needs of the present, it becomes ineffectual. Many museums lack the financial ability to restructure and reach out to their communities, but the museum of Semur-en-Auxois has been actively prevented from ever doing so. Its mandate is to remain a preserved example of the past. This makes it an interesting novelty at first, but it will soon wear thin for the residents of Semur. They will continue to come to the building because it also houses the town library, but the museum will eventually appeal only to tourists and other first or second time visitors.

The municipal museum of Semur-en-Auxois lacks any relevance to the lives of the residents. Not only is the museum living in the past, by intentionally retaining its past state it is actively looking to the past, subtly implying that the best times Semur had were in the past and that the present can never hope to match them, so why bother trying. Not only that, but the past that is there is not presented in a way that may make it meaningful. The visual language of the exhibits is of the past and is not readable by visitors of the present. Confounding the past and denying the future, the musée municipal of Semur-en-Auxois fails the ICOM test of a museum in that it is *not* "in the service of society and of its development" (ICOM 1990:3). It is a relic of the past as much as any archaeological artifact; by "renovating" it to make it as it was in the past is compara-

ble to washing a potsherd but neglecting to interpret it in a way that would make it mean something.

#### NEVERS

The Musée Archéologique de la Porte du Croux, founded as the Musée Archéologique du Nivernais in 1851, is an association museum of the Association nivernaise des Lettres, Sciences et Arts located in the fourteenth-century Porte-du-Croux, a fortified city gate. The collections are devoted exclusively to the Nivernais region and span the Bronze Age to the modern period. The building also serves as a lapidary depot, the most important examples of which are housed in the Salles des Gardes. A mimeographed sheet provides complete and informative labels for the various lapidary pieces, including translations of inscriptions (all in French).

The second floor has cases lining the walls; the top two shelves are filled with old books, like a private library, and the room is reminiscent of a nineteenth-century scholar's study. There is even a bust of Hadrian. The antique vitrines give the room the feel of a period room, but similarities to the museum in Semur-en-Auxois turns out to be superficial. While not all the objects (Bronze Age to modern) are labeled, most have an ID-type label, and the more important pieces have full, explanatory labels. In the center of the room is a case containing finds from a 1988-89 salvage dig of the ducal palace of Nevers. There is a

photograph of the site, and labels identify the objects and explain their use and significance at the site.

While the setting of the Musée Archéologique de la Porte du Croux may seem similar to the Musée de Semur-en-Auxois, the effect achieved is very different. The labeling, especially the explanatory labels, shows an interest in the didactic role of museums; for example, a label for a marble statue of "Le Distributeur des Recompenses" (the Distributor of Rewards) tells not only who this figure is, but also by what emblems one can distinguish him from other deities. Also, a label from the salvage site imparts some basic archaeology, by noting that some terra sigilata fragments excavated are not necessarily indicative of Gallo-Roman habitations at the site, because they were found in some fill dirt that may have been brought in from elsewhere.

The presence of the vitrines with objects from the salvage dig also indicates that this is a living museum—it may look like a nineteenth-century period piece, but it is also involved in current affairs. Labeling in these vitrines indicates that the dig was conducted by Le Groupe de Recherches et de Protection Archéologique de Nevers, which lets anyone who comes to the museum know that there is an active archaeological society in town. The Musée Archéologique de la Porte du Croux is a good example of a museum grounded in the past but active in the present.

## MONTBARD AND BOURBON-LANCY

The museums of Montbard and Bourbon-Lancy are also museums that are grounded in the past, but their future is somewhat dubious. Both the Musée Archéologique in Montbard and the Musée St-Nazaire in Bourbon-Lancy are *musées contrôlés* by the DMF. As such, each is required by law to have a conservateur, but they do not, and there is no money in the town budgets to hire one. Without a conservateur to look after them, the collections are at risk, especially so in these two cases because the buildings housing them are detrimental to the preservation of the artifacts.

The Musée Archéologique of Montbard was founded in 1935, and while it is now a municipal museum, it likely came into existence due to the efforts of the Société archéologique et biographique du canton de Montbard, which was founded in 1910 with the explicit purpose to create and maintain a museum. The museum is now housed in the bottom of the fifteenth-century Tour de l'Aubépin, one of the two remaining towers of the old château (the Musée Buffon, formerly in the Tour Saint-Louis, had, at the time of this study, been dismantled for an unknown reason). While the building is "quaint" in a vaulted, dungeon sort of way, it leaks, has no heat, is incredibly humid, and is thought to have mice in the room above it, all of which give the museum a generally disused appearance (and make it very dirty).

The exhibits—paleolithic through Merovingian, with local fossils as well—were designed by a local school teach-

er and her class. The collection is small but good, though not spectacular. The presentation is well thought-out and traditional, divided into the standard archaeological periods by vitrine. The major problem with the museum (aside from the fact that it needs to be relocated) is that with no one to look after it (the guard who let me in thought that the teacher who had created the displays had since retired), it is languishing. It has no advocate itself, so it cannot be an advocate for the town, the people, their history, or anything else. Even in the middle of summer it was cold, dank, and uninviting.

The Musée St-Nazaire is even more problematic.