



HAITI EARTHQUAKE 21th of January 2010 status report

ICOM shares the grief of the Haitian people so deeply affected by the earthquake on 12 January and expresses its solidarity with those who are working to find the missing, help the injured and homeless and rebuild infrastructures vital for the Haitian people's survival. ICOM shares the concern of families who are longing for news of their missing relatives and is also deeply concerned by the fate of its members and the cultural institutions struck by the earthquake.

Although it remains very difficult to gather reliable data on the damages caused to Haitian heritage, ICOM, through its Disaster Relief for Museums Task Force (DRFM), its Secretariat and its national committees - especially those located close to the disaster site such as the Dominican Republic - is making every effort to get in touch with its Haitian colleagues, assess damages and consider the most appropriate actions to be taken. ICOM is working hand in hand with its Blue Shield, CER (Prince Claus Fund's "Cultural Emergency Response") and UNESCO partners. Given the unstable local situation, the initial information given in this report should be considered cautiously.

1. ICOM member status

ICOM was able to contact some of its members and make sure they were safe, but has no information yet on the remaining members. Below is the list of the members we could reach so far:

- Joseph Harold GASPARD, ICOM Haiti Chairman
- Michel-Philippe LERBOURS General Curator and Vice-President of the College Saint Pierre Haitian museum of fine arts
- Michaele Auguste SAINT-NATUS, from the Cane Sugar Historical Park

2. Museums' status

ICOM provides below a status on the museums that we could gather information about. Most of this data needs *in situ* cross-checking and should be considered cautiously. ICOM is still gathering and checking data on the remaining twelve Haitian museums.

a. Musée du Panthéon National Haïtien

Place des Héros de l'Indépendance, Port-au-Prince Ouest

Though we do not have eyewitness accounts to confirm this, analysis from satellite footage and from an architect familiar with the building leads us to believe that the mainly subterranean concrete structures should have resisted the earthquake.

b. Musée d'art haïtien

Champs de Mars, Angle Rues Légitime et Capois, Port-au-Prince

Michel-Philippe LERBOURS General Curator and Vice-President of the College Saint Pierre Haitian museum of fine arts provides a direct account: "The Art Museum is still intact, but in a very fragile condition. The exhibition hall is still standing, but we do not dare to enter - but at least the ceiling seems to be stable. The back end of the building is in a better condition. The collections are preserved. Everything possible has to be done to consolidate the exhibition hall to a degree that allows entry in order to rescue the paintings and other objects. Above all, the museum has to be protected from any looting because it holds the most important collection of Haitian painting."

c. [Musée Vaudou] Collection Marianne Lehmann

Pétion-Ville, abords de Port au Prince

The Lehmann Collection is the largest collection worldwide of Haitian Voodoo objects. About 350 exhibits are safe because they are being displayed in a travelling exhibition. The majority of the collection (more than 2,000 objects) is still in Haiti, stored in a relatively safe place, though some objects fell and were broken. The building has been seen in an interview that Marianne Lehmann gave for Swiss TV on 17 January, 2010

d. Musée de Guahaba

Limbé

No damage to this museum.

e. Parc historique de la Canne à sucre

Puerto Principe

Michaëlle Saint-Natus, a member of this heritage institution, reports that "two chimneys collapsed, two roofs on dependency buildings collapsed and display cabinets, lockers and cultural objects have been damaged"

ICOM will update this report as soon as new, reliable, information becomes available.