

ART AND SCIENCES

New GDRI to Focus on Artistic Creation

The Musée du Quai Branly in Paris was inaugurated June 23rd. Located near the Louvre and the Musée d'Orsay, this new museum is dedicated to non-western arts, with collections from Africa, the South Sea Islands, Asia,

and the Americas. It opened its doors with exhibits of some 3500 pieces from the 300,000 in its collection.

For the event, CNRS officially launched a new GDRI (International Research Network) entitled Anthro-

pology and History of the Arts (Anthropologie et histoire des arts). "This is a network of 15 partners' who directly or indirectly fund research projects on practices and production, submitted to a qualitative and esthetic appraisal," explains Anne-Christine Taylor, Research and Educational Director at the Musée du Quai Branly. "From its inception, the Musée du Quai Branly has been a genuine Institute where both teaching and research play a key role," says Taylor. A partnership was set up in 1999 with CNRS involving a joint-service unit intended to create multimedia tools to help popularize science.

During the initial meeting that took place in January 2006, the GDRI members identified major areas of research, such as the social and cognitive status of images, the crossbreeding of cultures, artistic creation practices, and music. "These GDRI-funded projects

should produce concrete results, such as the publication of books or reviews, or the organization of exhibits or seminars," notes Taylor. Each partner contributes €10,000 over a four-year period, and the GDRI may be renewed indefinitely depending on the evolution of its research topics.

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BELARUS

Closer Ties with CNRS

After a first agreement with the Belarus Academy of Sciences, CNRS just signed an agreement for scientific cooperation on June 14, 2006 with the Foundation for Fundamental Research of the Belarus Republic. This should expand the cooperation between CNRS and all the Belarus research institutes by providing financial support to joint research projects proposed as part of a biennial tender. The agreement will also help finance structural initiatives such as International Programs for Scientific Cooperation (PICS), European Associated Laboratories (LEA), and European Research Networks (GDRE). The first call for 2007-2008 joint projects is open (deadline for submitting projects: October 15, 2006).

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SOUTH AFRICA

Science, Technologies, and Rock Art

France and South Africa are two countries of primary importance for the study of rock art. In France, starting with the recognition of prehistoric rock art in 1902, research has been structured around the analysis of the support medium and interpretation schemes. The French archaeology community has been strongly involved in developing enhanced characterization and dating techniques (synchrotron, AMS carbon-14 dating) to better understand rock carvings and paintings. This has improved knowledge on the techniques used to produce rock art, on the contemporaneity of the compositions, the archaeological and environmental context and its conservation. In South Africa, ethnological evidence based on indigenous knowledge has led to impressive results on the actual interpretation of the carvings. Over the past ten years, teams from the two countries have started new joint projects.

The "Science, Technologies, Rock Art" international research group (GDRI) aims at reinforcing this collaboration. It focuses on recording, material micro-analysis and dating, conservation, and public rock art. An original feature of the GDRI is that it includes facilities providing state-

of-the-art techniques for material micro-analysis, dating, and 3D imaging. The GDRI brings together a number of diverse partners: in South Africa, the Rock Art Research Institute (Johannesburg), the Archaeology Department (University of Cape Town), and the National Museum of Bloemfontein; in France, the Synchrotron SOLEIL (CNRS/CEA), several CNRS laboratories, and the Ministry of Culture and Communication.

The GDRI will foster actions in various areas such as international training, research and networking activities, public rock art, and knowledge dissemination. International training courses will be launched at the start of the project to foster the development of new bilateral scientific cooperation. A strong mobility of individual researchers from participating institutions will be sought to facilitate both the exchanges between teams and the co-publication of their results. The international research group will then contribute to a better visibility of the ongoing rock art research in both countries at an international level.

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