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Thema: Sammlungen aus der Arktis in Schweizer Museen

Mit diesem Heft widmet sich Kunst&Kontext zum zweiten Mal Schweizer Museumssammlungen. Dieses Mal steht nicht eine Sammler- und Händlerfamilie (Arthur Speyer, Kunst&Kontext Nr. 12) im Fokus, sondern eine Region: die Arktis.

Der erste Beitrag von Florian Gredig, Igor Krupnik und Martin Schultz entstand im Anschluss an eine Tagung des »Netzwerkes Arktissammlungen der Schweiz«, die im November 2018 in Zürich stattfand. Erstmals werden hier die ethnologischen Objektbestände aus der Arktis in Schweizer Sammlungen beschrieben. Übersichten zu den Beständen in Bibliotheken und Archiven sowie naturhistorischen Sammlungen sind in Zukunft noch zu erarbeiten.

Das Museum Cerny Inuit Collection in Bern besitzt sehr reichhaltige zirkumpolare Bestände und ist auf das Thema Klimawandel fokussiert. Seit mehreren Jahren schickt das Museum Wanderausstellungen auf Reisen und macht durch Veranstaltungen auf die Bedeutung des Themas aufmerksam.

Am Bernischen Historischen Museum findet sich eine archäologische Sammlung von der St. Lorenz-Insel in Alaska, die im Rahmen einer Reihe von Ausgrabungen des Bernischen Historischen Museums und der Universität von Bern durchgeführt wurden. Der Artikel von Sabine Bolliger Schreyer und Martin Schultz gibt einen Einblick in die Geschichte dieser archäologischen Exkursionen. Der anschließende Artikel von Bolliger Schreyer, Schultz und Elisabeth Anliker-Bosshard stellt ein besonderes Grab der Punuk-Kultur auf der St. Lorenz-Insel vor: Der Tote war von zahlreichen Pfeilen durchbohrt und wurde sorgsam bestattet.

Der folgende Artikel widmet sich gleichfalls einer Museumssammlung – den Arktisbeständen des Historischen und Völkerkundemuseums in St. Gallen. Seit mehr als 100 Jahren ist man hier an Arktisforschung interessiert und erwarb Sammlungen mit Hilfe von internationalen

Netzwerken.

Valentin Boissonnas stellt in seinem Beitrag über Speerschleudern Ostgrönlands ein neues Forschungsprojekt vor, das sich mit der Technologie dieser erst spät von Europäern kontaktierten Region befasst.

Die Re-staurierung eines Darmhautparkas des Bernischen Historischen Museums war das Masterprojekt von Astrid Gonnon. Neben der Restaurierung entwickelte sie ein Transport- und Aufbewahrungsbehältnis für das fragile Objekt.



Fig. 5 Parka, West Greenland, around 1900, leather, ivory, sinew, Otto Nordenskjöld (HVM St. Gallen, Inv. No. D 1007) (Siehe folgender Artikel)

Arctic Riches Revealed in Swiss Museum Ethnographic Collections

A land-locked nation in the heart of Europe, with no Navy or any colonial ambitions throughout its long history, Switzerland is an unlikely candidate for a 'hub' of Arctic ethnographic collecting. Yet, thanks to a long-established tradition of academic learning and many industrious and devoted private citizens, Swiss museums were able to amass a substantial number of ethnographic and archaeological collections from various parts of the Arctic. Only recently did these 'Arctic treasures' receive some public and scholarly attention; this short paper is the first attempt to summarize the ethnographic (and partly archaeological) collections from the North that are housed at many Swiss museums.

Altogether, Switzerland has many hundred museums, large and small – over 500, according to the Swiss Museum Pass network (www.museumspass.ch), more than 750 if one counts all of the institutional members of the Swiss Museums Association (including Liechtenstein), (www.museums.ch/en/home/vms/) and 150+ museums with individual entries on Wikipedia. (www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_museums_in_Switzerland) The earliest museums originated in the 1500s and 1600s, primarily from the private and university-based collections of antique books, manuscripts, and curiosities.

Only about a dozen Swiss museums have ethnographic (or archaeological) objects from the Arctic and Subarctic, though some have substantial collections of several hundred objects, such as the Museum der Kulturen Basel (Museum of Cultures Basel), the Bernisches Historisches Museum (Bern Historical Museum) and the Museum Cerny Inuit Collection in Bern, the Nordamerika Native Museum (NONAM) in Zurich and the Völkerkundemuseum der Universität Zürich (Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich), Musée d'ethnographie de Genève, and others (see below). The first documented objects from the North at Swiss museums date back to the 1700s (see below), though most were collected during the 19th and 20th centuries, even in the last decades of the latter. As the following review indicates, Swiss museum institutions continue to collect objects from the polar regions, in both Eurasia and North America, in the 21st century. They are also increasingly taking stock of their possessions by making their collections available online, in electronic databases, in printed materials, and, partly, on exhibits. Yet, only few museums feature any northern objects on their public displays, and most of the Swiss public as well as tourists and foreign professionals are mostly unaware of the riches stored behind the scene.

Network Arctic Collections Switzerland

The only specialized exhibition in recent years that displayed northern objects from several Swiss museums, was called *Aiguuq!* («Look here!» in Canadian Inuktitut) and was organized in 2008 by the North American Native Museum (NONAM). It was on display for 5



Fig.1 Game ball, Alaska Pacific Coast, around 1900, Caribou leather and caribou hair (VKM UZ, Inv. No. 03914)

months and included about 110 objects (according to its printed catalog – Daenzer, Löb 2008). (Fig. 1)

Nine years later, in November 2017, some 20 museum specialists representing five institutions met at the Historisches und Völkerkundemuseum (Historical and Ethnographic Museum) in St. Gallen and established the Network Arctic Collections Switzerland (NACS, originally called 'Netzwerk Arktis-Sammlungen Schweiz,' NASS) with the aim to facilitate »a comprehensive exchange for people involved in Arctic collections in Switzerland« (Kern 2017). They also held a two-day session with presentations of Arctic collections at individual Swiss museums (St. Gallen, Museum Cerny Inuit Collection, NONAM, Bernisches Historisches Museum, and others) that resumed the collaborative efforts started during the NONAM exhibit of 2008.

On November 9, 2018, the NASS team held its second annual meeting at the Völkerkundemuseum in Zurich (with an evening visit and reception at NONAM). Though the number of attendees increased but slightly, the spectrum of participating institutions and people (museum workers, agency representatives, private collectors) was far more diverse. The list of speakers also included two foreign museum professionals, Igor Krupnik (National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution) and Martin Schultz (Statens museer för världskultur, Stockholm, Sweden), who presented overviews of Arctic collections at their respective museums. Schultz also pointed to important historical links between the collections held in Switzerland and Sweden. Two additional Swiss museums were also featured in the presentations – the Völkerkundemuseum in Zurich and Musée d'ethnographie de Neuchâtel, both with substantial northern holdings (see below).

A new issue raised at the meeting following Igor Krupnik's presentation was the online accessibility of ethnographic objects at the Swiss museums – to fellow museum researchers, online visitors, and, specifically, to Indigenous people from the object's 'home areas.' Whereas each modern museum now has an internal electronic collection database, Swiss institutions differ greatly in the ways they offer their collections to online researchers. There is neither a shared policy nor a common online database (like in Iceland or in Sweden) that allows external visitors to search collections on the Internet. The issue of accessibility is becoming ever more urgent with the growing demand by Arctic indigenous people for cultural resources

from their areas often held in distant countries.

Another factor is the ongoing effort to produce an international 'guide' for the Arctic ethnographic collections at world's major museums that can be accessed online (Krupnik and Parlato 2017; Krupnik 2018). The following summaries of individual museum holdings may be viewed as a preparatory work for the future Swiss museum 'entries' in that eventual online guide. For this paper, we selected not only those museums with the most significant collections (generally over 500 objects and historical photographs/drawings/artworks), with data on their ethnic and area distribution and online accessibility, but also smaller collections with sometimes barely any data. Following the criteria to be used in the future international guide, the 'Arctic' (or rather 'North') is defined broadly, to include the Arctic and Subarctic culture areas in North America, the northernmost (Alaskan) portion of the Northwest Coast (Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian), the northernmost portions of the Nordic countries (Sámi, Kvein), and the areas populated by Indigenous people across the Russian Arctic and Siberia.

Overview of Individual Museums

Museum der Kulturen (Museum of Cultures), Basel

The Museum of Cultures in Basel is the largest ethnographic museum in Switzerland, with more than 300,000 objects and 50,000 photographs covering all continents. Non-European collections were kept in Basel in private cabinets already in the 18th century. Ethnographic objects were actively sought by the first museum of the city of Basel founded in 1849. Its ethnographic department (since 1892) was transformed into an independent museum in 1918. Photography had been historically seen as integral part of museum holdings, accounting for the largest collection of ethnographic photographs in Switzerland.

The first significant collection from the Arctic (58 objects) was gathered during the Swiss Northwest Greenland expedition by meteorologist Alfred de Quervain in 1909. That same year, the museum acquired 11 objects from East Greenland from London-based dealer William O. Oldman that were originally collected by Capt. William Scoresby (1789–1857) in 1822, making this collection one of the world's oldest collections from East Greenland. Around 250 Nenets objects from Siberia reached the museum around 1922 from Russian-German art dealer Eugene Alexander.

Another major acquisition of ca. 400 objects from Western Alaska came from German anthropologist Hans Himmelheber (1908–2003) after his fieldwork of 1936–1937 (Himmelheber 1938, 1951, 2000). His personal archives and over 15,000 photos, including those from Alaska, are housed at the Museum Rietberg in Zurich. In the early 1940s, some 80 Canadian Inuit (Padlermiut) objects were purchased from Jean Gabus, with the other half of his collection going to the Musée d'ethnographie de Neuchâtel.

The largest single Arctic collection in Basel (520 archaeological objects) was gathered by Hans-Georg Bandi (1920–2016) during the Danish Pearyland Expedition of 1948 in North Greenland (Bandi and Meldgaard 1952). This expedition started Bandi's research in the Arctic and ultimately led to his fieldwork on St. Lawrence Island in the 1960s and 1970s (see Bern Historical Museum). In addition, the collections include about 130 copies of photographs from Knud Rasmussen's expeditions to the North American Arctic and some 100 photographs from Siberia from various sources. Except for a handful of featured objects, no access to collections is currently provided on the museum's public website (www.mkb.ch/en/museum/collection), and information pertaining to object distribution and numbers is available from staff only.

Museum Cerny Inuit Collection, Bern

This unique privately-owned museum started in the early 1990s when the Cerny family acquired some 120 stone and ivory sculptures, lithographs and rare batiks produced by the contemporary Inuit artists from Arctic Canada. As the collection grew via more acquisitions in the Canadian Inuit communities and at art auctions, new objects made of stone, antler, whalebone, musk ox horn, sealskin, mammoth, and walrus ivory were added. They depict animals, people, family, hunting, human-animal metamorphoses, and shamanistic scenes, as well as, Inuit daily life. Since the 1990s, additional pieces from Greenland, Alaska, and, later, from Arctic Russia were added to the collection that now offers a circumpolar coverage of Indigenous artworks.

The museum currently occupies a two-story building in downtown Bern, with two large exhibit halls displaying over 500 objects to the public and a storage with roughly the same number of works. At around 1000 objects strong, it represents the largest public display of Northern objects in Switzerland. In addition, the Museum Cerny Inu-

it Collection (formerly 'Cerny Inuit Collection') organized dozens of off-stage exhibits and displays, making it the most active institution in publicly presenting Arctic artworks in Switzerland, and perhaps across Europe. It is also the only Swiss museum that explicitly links its objects in focused thematic displays to certain modern challenges facing Arctic indigenous peoples, such as climate change, cultural transition, impact of modern and commercial art, and the likes.

The museum's public website (www.cernyinuitcollection.com/Start-News/) does not provide online access to collections. An internal electronic database (in progress) cites over 700 objects from Arctic Canada alone; they are thoroughly organized by the home communities (Cape Dorset, Iqaluit, Pangnirtung, Kimmirut, etc.), from which they originated. The second largest group (over 80 objects) comes from Siberia, primarily from the ivory craftshops in Uelen, Chukotka, and Yamal, West Siberia. The collection also includes a handful of objects from Greenland and Alaska, with no artwork from the Sami areas. The museum is currently expanding its coverage and is the only Swiss institution actively acquiring modern art and ethnographic objects (clothing, jewelry, ornamentation) from across the circumpolar regions.

Musée d'ethnographie de Genève – MEG (Ethnographic Museum, Geneva)

MEG is one of the largest specialized ethnographic museums in Switzerland, with a global coverage and total holdings of 68,000 objects (plus audio and photographic collections), of which over 1,000 are on permanent display in five geographically-arranged exhibit galleries (Asia, Africa, Europe, the Americas, and Oceania). The museum was established in 1901, on the initiative of Swiss anthropologist Eugène Pittard (1867–1962), who brought together various public and private ethnographic collections from the Geneva area, mainly from the Archaeology Museum, Musée Ariana, the Evangelical Missionary Society Museum, and the Geneva History Museum. In 2014, the museum moved into an impressive new building, with extended exhibition and storage space.

MEG also has an impressive and easily navigable online collection database (www.villege.ch/meg/musinfo.php) that allows searching by five world's regions plus investigating special collections of musical instruments, audio recordings, photographs, and documents, as well as a separate search function for objects on permanent

display. In the online database, each object is accompanied by a full record on its provenance and a color photograph; objects in permanent exhibitions have up to 5-8 photos and extensive captions. The online database may be searched by fixed lists of ethnic groups (populations), countries (nations) or 'functions.'

Northern/Arctic collections constitute a small portion (about 1%) of the total holdings and include about 600 objects, of which 42 are on permanent display. The vast majority comes from the Inuit people, primarily from Alaska (ca.300), Greenland (162) and Arctic Canada (75). Several of the MEG's best Alaskan objects were donated by a local private collector, Georges Barbey (1886–1963), or were received upon exchange with the U.S. National Museum, Smithsonian Institution. Smaller holdings on the Sámi of northern Scandinavia (41), the Subarctic nations of Alaska and Canada (36 objects) and the Alaskan portion of the Northwest Coast (ca. 30) make valuable additions, whereas Russian indigenous people (Sakha/Yakut and Nivkh) are represented by mere 7 objects. There are no photographs in the MEG collection database attributed to the Arctic/Northern regions.

Nordamerika Native Museum (NONAM), Zürich

The Nordamerika Native Museum was founded in 1963 under the name *Indianermuseum der Stadt Zürich* and is owned by the city of Zürich. It is based on a private collection originally assembled by Gottfried Hotz (1901–1977), a Zurich high school teacher who took interest in Native American cultures early in his life. Collecting Native American artifacts became Hotz's passion. He eventually succeeded in acquiring about 1200 objects from collectors, antique traders and Native American / First Nations contacts. The acquired objects are mainly from Plains/Prairies, Eastern Woodlands



Fig. 2 Tobacco pipe, Alaska Pacific Coast, mid-to late 19th century, Caribou antler, seal gut string (VKM UZ, Inv. No. 03921)

and Southwest cultures. Hotz was in touch not only with dealers and collectors, like the Speyer family, but also descendants of early Swiss travelers. After selling his collection to the city of Zurich, Hotz served as official curator of the »Indianermuseum« until his death in 1977. Until 1992, the Indianermuseum was housed in three converted classrooms.

It was only after 1993 that collecting Arctic objects was actively pursued. After the museum moved to a special building in 2003, it re-opened with an Arctic exhibition featuring objects from the Cerny Inuit Collection, Bern. At that time, the museum changed its name from »Indianermuseum der Stadt Zürich« to North American Native Museum, since the term »Indianermuseum« was clearly outdated and also did not reflect the inclusion of Arctic cultures. Henceforth, NONAM's collection scope was broadened through direct acquisitions and donations. Notably, the museum acquired many Inuit stone sculptures and art prints from Canada, as well as the private collection of anthropologist Jean-Loup Rousselot (former curator at the Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde in Munich), containing 309 objects from Alaska and Canada. The NONAM currently houses about 400 objects from the Arctic and about 300 from the Subarctic. Many of the objects are in the permanent exhibition, making NONAM's northern displays the second largest in Switzerland. Indigenous cultures represented in the collections are the Inuit/Eskimo of Alaska and Canada, the Gwich'in, Koyukon, Innu (Montagnais-Naskapi), Slavey, Subarctic Ojibway and the Inland Tlingit (with only very few objects from the Old World polar regions). A hunting coat of the Innu (Montagnais-Naskapi), supposedly made around 1700, is considered to be one of the oldest and finest remaining pieces of its kind. NONAM's permanent exhibitions are arranged by the North American culture areas. In 2008, NONAM housed a five-month exhibition of over 100 arctic objects from several Swiss museums (*Aiguuq 2008*), the first-ever such venue in Switzerland. The museum also features a small »soundscape« installation, offering sound recordings from the Arctic, the Southwest and the Pacific Northwest Coast, as well as a Gallery with original works of the Swiss artist Karl Bodmer (1809–1893), a member of Prince Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied's expedition to the American West (1832–1834). (Fig. 2, 3)

No public access to collections is provided via the mu-



Fig. 3 Permanent exhibit, Arctic, NONAM, Zürich

seum website (www.nonam.ch). The museum publishes catalogs of most of its temporary exhibitions, of which several have represented polar art and cultures. In 2012, the NONAM has been endowed with the private library of the late Swiss Arctic researcher Hubert Wenger (1927–1995), creator of the »Hubert Wenger Eskimo Database,« (www.wengereskimodb.uaf.edu/Welcome.aspx), with around 800 titles on indigenous cultures of the Arctic.

Bern Historical Museum
(Bernisches Historisches Museum), Bern

Institutional collecting in Bern started with the foundation of the Hohe Schule, a predecessor of the University of Bern, in 1528. The collections were later separated and kept at the public library. Several museums in Bern were founded by separating parts of these. Today, the museum houses 500,000 objects divided into four main categories: the archaeological collection, the historical collection, the numismatic collection and the ethnographical collection of roughly 60,000 objects. Though all museum holdings are computerized, there is no online access to collections and no option for online research besides for a handful of featured objects (www.bhm.ch/en/collections/ethnographical-collection/).

A text and image dating 1578 of the Martin Frobisher Expedition is the oldest proof of a Bernese interest in the Arctic, kept today as part of the collections of the Burger-

bibliothek. A narwhal tooth was added to the natural history cabinet of the library in 1695 and subsequently became part of the collections of the Natural History Museum. The oldest ethnographic collections from the Arctic dated back to the 3rd voyage of James Cook and were donated in 1791 by Swiss-born John Webber (anglicized for Johann Wäber), who accompanied Cook as an artist. A bow, arrows, and throwing darts were collected in Alaska during that trip.

Today's Arctic collections at BHM are about 1,200 objects strong. The largest part of about 800 archaeological and 120 ethnographic objects (see von Graffenried 1972) comes from the fieldwork on St. Lawrence Island, Alaska during the late 1960s and early 1970s by the team led by Hans-Georg Bandi (1920–2016), with an additional collection of material from earlier excavations on that same island during the 1920s and 1930s. Various Swiss expeditions to Greenland led to another set of about 120 ethnographic objects received also partly from Danish officials, like Morten Porsild, who provided additional information on objects in letters sent to the museum. A small collection of about 20 contemporary art objects, carvings in stone, ivory, antler and bone, were acquired during the 1970s and 1980s.

From Siberia, around 20 ethnographic objects entered the collections, a Nivkh »chief's dress« was bought in 1886, and a collection of 18 Nanai objects in 1924. North-

ern Scandinavia is represented by a more substantial number of more than 120 Sami objects, mostly from Finland, that came between 1937 and 1939.

The ethnographic collections are accompanied by several hundred photographs, mostly from Hans-Georg Bandi's expeditions to St. Lawrence Island, and a few historic photos from Greenland. The St. Lawrence Island excavations were published in five volumes. New entries to the collection are published in the museum's yearbooks and nowadays in the annual report. The total number of northern/Arctic objects at BHM is, thus, close to 400, plus at least 120 ethnographic photos. None of them is currently displayed in the museum's permanent exhibits.

Musée d'ethnographie de Neuchâtel (MEN), Neuchâtel
MEN's earliest holdings originated from a private 'collection of curiosities' assembled by Swiss general, Charles-Daniel de Meuron (1738–1806), which he donated to his native town in 1795. The museum officially opened in 1904 and, according to its public website, houses some 50,000 ethnographic objects. Its prime strength comes from its massive African collections, objects from ancient Egypt, and world-wide set of early and tribal musical instruments.

MEN's Northern holdings are relatively modest but are extremely well documented and include about 450 objects plus some 1,100 ethnographic photographs, primarily from Arctic Canada and Greenland. MEN is the only Swiss museum that produced a detailed, book-size catalog of its Arctic collections from North America (Csonka 1988) and the only one that features 'polar regions' as a special collection division on its public website. The earliest Arctic objects came from the original Meuron's gift of 1795; other large donations include those of brothers Alfred and Antoine Borel (40 objects from Alaska, 1882), Rev. Émile Petitot (20 objects from Canada in 1915), Rev. Arsène Turquetil (130 objects, primarily from Caribou Inuit, 1920), and Jean Gabus (60 objects from Canadian Inuit of Hudson Bay, 1939). Gabus also donated recordings of traditional songs and a large set of several hundred prints, slides and negatives taken among the Canadian Inuit in 1938–1939. About 70 objects originated from Greenland, including an East Greenlandic kayak with full hunting equipment acquired by Alfred de Quervain in 1912 (see MDK Basel).

Besides Inuit/Eskimo objects, MEN has small collections from the Sami area (43 objects and ca. 90 photos),

the Canadian Subarctic (Cree and Chipewyan), the Alaskan portion of the Northwest Coast (38 objects), and a few pieces from Siberia (Sakha/Yakut and Khanty/Oshtyak). The objects may be searched in the open online database, either via 'polar regions' (Regions Polaires – www.men.ch/de/collections/arctique/) or by the fixed names of a dozen ethnic groups that reside in the Arctic/Subarctic areas.

Völkerkunde Museum der Universität Zürich – VKMZ
(Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich),
Zürich

The VKMZ was established in 1889 by the recently formed 'Ethnographic Society of Zurich' (*Ethnographische Gesellschaft Zürich*) which had inherited diverse objects amassed by several private societies and collectors. In 1914, the collections were handed over to the University of Zurich; the museum received its present-day name in 1972 and occupies its current building since 1980. The overall museum holdings comprise more than 40,000 objects, primarily from Africa, China and Southeast Asia, Oceania, and South America. The relatively small museum space is used primarily for temporary exhibits organized by curators.

The northern regions account for a small segment of museum collections of ca. 500 objects. Whereas the overall share of the Arctic/Northern regions is fairly small, the VKMZ's holdings are notable for the largest portion of objects from Arctic Russia/Siberia (over 300) among all Swiss ethnographic museums. They include some of the earliest known specimens from Siberia (24) and Alaska (29), collected by Johann Caspar Horner (1774–1834), Swiss astronomer on Ivan (Adam Johann) Krusenstern's Russian circumnavigation expedition of 1803–1806. A major Russian/Siberian collection of 240 objects was received in 1895 from Herman Decker (1869–1939), a German chemist born in Moscow, who evidently had connections to Russian and German art dealers and commercial collectors. It includes a large number of objects from the Komi (135) and Nenets (26) people of the European Arctic Russia (clothing, tools, jewelry and metalwork), also from the Khanty (49) and Nanai people in Siberia. Another notable addition was a rare sample of objects (18) from the Kurile Ainu people received in 1932 from Arnold Gubler, a Swiss geographer who taught at the University of Sapporo and visited the Kurile Islands, then under the Japanese jurisdiction.



Fig. 4 Permanent exhibit, Arctic, NONAM, Zürich

The second largest portion of the VKMZ polar collections comes from Greenland (about 140), including significant acquisitions from Swiss geophysicist Alfred de Quervain (26 objects from his 1912 expedition; a portion of the larger collection given to museums in Basel and Neuchâtel), Norwegian ethnomusicologist Christian Leden (1882–1957, 20 objects) and later Greenlandic Inuit carvings from the private collections of Ernst Brühwiler (24 objects) and Werner Schwartz (38 objects). Other areas of the Arctic are represented by scores of objects from Alaska and northern Canada, primarily from the late 1800s. The VKMZ polar collection, though listed as a special category (Polarvölker), has not been researched and is not accessible for search on the museum's website (www.museethno.uzh.ch/de/sammlungen/objekt.html#11). (Fig. 4)

Historisches und Völkerkundemuseum
(Historic and Ethnographic Museum), St. Gallen

With some 20,000 objects from all over the world, the Historic and Ethnographic Museum of St. Gallen houses the sixth largest ethnographic collection in Switzerland. Opened in 1921, the museum united older collections transferred from other institutions, like the Ostschweizerische Geographisch-Commerzielle Gesellschaft. The museum's first director, Robert Vonwiller (1863-1928), aimed at presenting a broad picture of world's cultures. He acquired a large number of manikins and busts from the Hamburg-based company of Heinrich Umlauff (1868-1925), including those of the Sami, Ainu, and Nanai, and an Inuit hunter in a kayak acquired in 1909 from Otto Nordenskjöld (1869-1928). On Nordenskjöld's visit to St. Gallen in 1908, he was asked to collect for the museum. His collection of 300 objects from West Greenland of 1909 was divided between the Ethnographic museum of Gothenburg, Sweden (200 objects) and St. Gallen (100 objects). (Fig. 5)

Among them was a Greenlandic tent with poles and two



Fig. 6 Pouch, Greenland (?), ca. 1900, leather, fur, textile, sinew, bone, glass beads (Naturmuseum Winterthur, Inv. No. 21047)

layers of skin covering, the only such object in Switzerland.

One of the important collectors and dealers of ethnographic art, the German Arthur Max Heinrich Speyer (1894-1958) provided St. Gallen with a large number of objects, among them 15 objects from Alaska. In addition, 13 textiles from Iceland can be found in the collections. Finally, the museum has more than 60 early photographs and reproductions showing people of Siberia and Sami, largely before 1874, and a collection of drawings from Alaska and Siberia by the Swiss artist Trautmann Grob (1819-1873) from 1867.

Only a small portion of the collections (about 5,500 objects from total 70,000) is currently accessible on the museum's public website at www.hmsg.ch/sammlung.asp, of which 18 belong to the Arctic (Inuit) and Subarctic (Sami, Cree) people. Thus, the total count and the distribution of northern ethnographic objects in St. Gallen can be accessed from its staff only.

Smaller collections

Several Swiss museums have small collections of Arctic art. Most of them have little information on their origin; they are mostly unpublished and are not available online.

One of the larger collection is that of the *Musée cantonal d'archéologie et d'histoire* in Lausanne (www.mcah.ch/collections/ethnographie/) that holds about 40 photographs from Arctic North America and about 60 objects mostly from North America. About a dozen originally came from the Moravian Brothers mission stations in Labrador and were sent to Europe in the 1850s. Several harpoons, arrows and an oar probably originated from Greenland, as also did two pairs of skin boots and an East-Greenland hunting visor, unfortunately fragmented. The collection also contains a few bark objects from West Siberia.

The Museum Rietberg in Zürich has a small portion of its 35+ objects from Alaska Panhandle and Inuit on display. They were formerly owned by Baron Eduard von der Heydt (acquired originally from the American Museum of Natural History in New York), whose private holdings made the core of Rietberg founding collection. In addition, the museum has a few Yup'ik objects and almost 900 ethnographic and landscape photographs from Western Alaska, primarily from the Lower Yukon-Kuskokwim area and Nunivak Island, among some 15,000 black-and-white negatives and photos taken by German anthropologist Hans Himmelheber (1908-2003) during his fieldtrips to the Arctic and Africa in 1933-1976 (received in 2012-2013 www.rietberg.ch/en-gb/collection/photo-archiv.aspx; Haberland 1971). Many of the photographs meticulously document work of individual Yup'ik ivory carvers and graphic artists, as well as daily life of the Yup'ik communities in the 1930s (partially reproduced in Himmelheber 1938, 1951, 1993, 2000). The museum online database for Himmelheber's photo collection yields total of 1,248 photos from »Alaska« and 947 »Eskimo,« including 196 »Bering Sea-Arctic Ocean, between Bethel and Point Barrow,« on board the *USCG North Star*. This is by far the largest collection of ethnographic photographs from the Arctic regions in all of the Swiss museums (since the bulk of H-G Bandi's collection from St. Lawrence Island contains photos from archaeological excavations and field trips).

The ethnographic collections of the *University of Fribourg* are quite small and contain ca. 30 Inuit objects from Alaska and Canada, amongst them eight pieces from Jean Gabus' work in Canada in 1938-1939 (80 more objects are

housed in Basel and 60 in Neuchâtel). Gabus received his PhD from the University of Fribourg.

Around 20 objects from Greenland and Scandinavia are housed in the *Museum für Völkerkunde in Burgdorf*, most of them acquired from German collector and trader Arthur Max Heinrich Speyer (1894–1958) in the 1920s and 1930s.

The *Naturmuseum Winterthur* owns a small number of objects from the North American Arctic, including about a dozen pieces from Alaska donated in 1933 (Ernst Huber Collection, Baltimore, USA). Among them is a small pouch with a decoration made of fish ear bones (Aeberli Collection, 1965, Inv. No. 21047). (Fig. 6)

Perhaps the only museum in the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland containing Arctic material is the *Museo delle Culture* in Lugano (www.mcl.lugano.ch/il-museo.html). Its holdings include the former private collection of Serge Brignoni (1903–2002), Swiss avant-garde painter, sculptor, and collector of ethnic art. His small sample of Arctic objects contains a Greenlandic kayak.

An Inuit camp model dating before 1873 and a small number of northern European objects can be found at the *Musée régional du Val-de-Travers* (www.mrvt.ch/le-musee) in Môtiers. Scores of Arctic objects are also available at the *Musée Barbier-Mueller* in Geneva (www.barbier-mueller.ch/collections/amerique-du-nord/?lang=fr), *Rätisches Museum* in Chur (www.museums.ch/org/de/Raetisches-Museum), and *Museum Allerheiligen* (www.allerheiligen.ch/en/collections) in Schaffhausen.

Conclusion

The Arctic/Northern collection ‘scape’ in Switzerland is rich and contains at least 6,000 ethnological and archaeological objects plus several thousand photographs; it is also remarkably diverse. At least *seven* museums (*eight* if we include Hans Himmelheber’s Eskimo art and photo collection from Alaska at Museum Rietberg) have more than 500–600 objects each, and four museums (MDK in Basel, Cerny Inuit Museum and BHM in Bern, and MEN in Neuchâtel) have over 1000 objects, including photographs, or even more. It is an unexpectedly high number for a small land-locked European nation with no history of colonial or imperial ambitions.

Though individual museums differ substantially by the regional/ethnic strength of their respective collections, *cumulatively* the Swiss museums offer fairly solid

coverage of indigenous cultures across the Arctic/Northern regions – over 3000 objects from Alaska (including photographs and archaeological specimens); 1500 objects from Canada (with a good coverage of specific regions and communities), about 500 (plus 500 in Archaeology) from Greenland, and some 650+ objects from Siberia and Arctic Russia. Only the Sami culture of Northern Europe is relatively underrepresented, and hardly any objects come from Iceland.

We may also point to certain specific features of the Swiss Arctic/northern holdings – besides the above-mentioned weak coverage of the Scandinavian Sami area.

First, as in many world ethnographic museums, the Inuit collections are quite extensive (over 5000 objects totally), including various regional groups (Caribou Inuit, Greenland, Hudson Bay, St. Lawrence Island, Western Alaska), whereas collections on the North American boreal forest (Athapaskan/Dene and northern Algonquian) are generally scarce. Except for two museums (MEG in Geneva and NONAM in Zurich), Swiss ethnographic collections offer little, if anything, on the Subarctic indigenous people of North America.

Second, Swiss museums have surprisingly few objects from the Alaskan indigenous groups of the Northwest Coast of North America, particularly the Tlingit and Northern Haida. Both groups are well represented at many world museums, both in Europe and North America, with the total number of objects in the hundreds, even thousands. Yet a relatively small portion of these objects ever reached Swiss institutions or private collectors – for reasons unknown and to be explored.

Third, most of the Swiss museum collections from Arctic Russia/Siberia (primarily at MDK in Basel and VKMZ in Zurich) evidently originated from the booming European commercial market in ethnological objects of the late 1800s and early 1900s, associated with the names of prominent art dealers such as Eugene Alexander and Heinrich Umlauff. Because of that, their geographic strength is limited to groups and regions that were heavily ‘mined’ for ethnographic objects, such as the Komi (Zyrian) and Nenets of Northern Russia, the Khanty people of West Siberia, and the Nanai of the Russian Far East. Also, the provenience of such objects is commonly weak, the documentation remains sketchy, and the collections are in a dire need of additional research.

Fourth, several individual collectors made exceptional contributions to the Swiss northern museum scape by of-

ten splitting the objects among several institutions. We may cite, for example, Jean Gabus (whose collection from the Hudson Bay Inuit is in MDK in Basel and MEN in Neuchâtel), Hans Himmelheber (his objects from Alaska are housed at MDK and photos at the Museum Rietberg in Zurich), and Alfred de Quervain (who offered his objects from Greenland to MDK, VMKZ, and MEN). It remains a special task to 'reunite' these and other similarly dispersed collections – via online databases, focused temporary exhibits and/or publications.

One person, archaeologist Hans-Georg Bandi (1920–2016) has contributed over 120 ethnographic and 900 archaeological objects, plus over 1500 photographs from St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, to two Swiss institutions (BHM and Laténium in Neuchâtel), plus 500 Greenlandic objects to MDK. In addition, members of Bandi's archaeological team offered personal photographs, objects, diaries, and other documents in their possession to the BHM. That combined contribution makes Switzerland the third largest hub of St. Lawrence Yupik cultural heritage, after the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC and the Museum of the North in Fairbanks, Alaska. The specific role of Bandi and of Swiss cultural institutions in preserving collections from St. Lawrence Island remains generally unacknowledged, in spite of several publications by Bandi and his team (Bandi 1987; Von Graffenried 1972) and earlier temporary displays of collected objects at BHM.

Whereas Swiss Arctic/Northern collections, cumulatively, have some obvious gaps (e.g. Sami, North American Subarctic, Alaskan Northwest Coast, etc.), they also have several first-class collection 'gems' of world significance and excellent quality. These include, but are not limited to: over 900 pieces of modern Inuit art from several communities in Canada at the Cerny Inuit Museum; Central Alaskan Yup'ik objects, over 1000 ethnographic landscape photographs, and dozens of graphic art samples from Hans Himmelheber at MDK and Museum Rietberg in Zurich; Jean-Loup Rousselot's collection from the North American Arctic at NONAM (more than 300 objects); a remarkable collection of objects and photographs by Jean Gabus from the Hudson Bay Inuit (split between MDK and MEN); over 50 early 19th century objects from Siberia and Alaska from Johann Horner (now at VKMZ), and others. These and other collection gems are poorly known outside Switzerland and even among Swiss Arctic professionals, except from one temporary exhibit at

NONAM and its German-language catalog (*Aiguuq* 2008). It is an urgent task to publicize its significance in international publications and in other languages, using formats addressed to Arctic indigenous audiences (e.g. Himmelheber 1993, 2000).

Generally, the Swiss Arctic/Northern ethnological collections remain poorly researched and, with a few notable exceptions (Cerny Inuit Museum, NONAM, MEG in Geneva, HVM in St. Gallen) are not presented to the public in the current museum displays. They have been published but scantily and, by and far, lack accessible summaries and printed catalogs. Yet, the Arctic themes are generally quite popular with the Swiss audience, as revealed by several temporary exhibits produced particularly by NONAM, such as the *Aiguuq* exhibit, Marcus Bühler's photography from North Greenland (www.buehler-fotograf.ch/inuit/#/vanishing-thule/) and the exhibit *Calling the Animals*, as well as by the Cerny Museum since 2000.

Finally, the online accessibility of Swiss northern collections is still in its infancy and many valuable museum holdings may be surveyed through staff curators only. We should therefore encourage every effort to make these collections available and better known to Swiss museum professionals, to the general public, as well as to Arctic specialists, indigenous people, students, and interested visitors from around the world.

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*Text: Florian Gredig, Igor Krupnik, and Martin Schultz
Fotos: NONAM (Fig. 1-4), Historisches und Völkerkunde-
museum St. Gallen (Fig. 5), Naturmuseum Winterthur (Fig. 6)*

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