



MUSEUM PROFESSIONALS IN DIALOGUE III : MUSÉE INTERNATIONALE DE LA RÉFORME GENÈVE, APRIL 18, 2008

The International Association of History Museums is organising a visit for museum professionals to the *Musée International de la Réforme (MIR)* in Geneva, Switzerland. All IAHM members are invited to participate.

Based on the very successful previous such visits by our Association to the *House of Terror Museum* in Budapest, 2005 and to the *Museu d'Historia de Catalunya* in Barcelona, 2007, we will once again visit an important, innovative and controversial museum and view the two year old permanent exhibition of the *Musée International de la Réforme*, which was awarded the Council of Europe Museum Prize in 2007.

The *Musée international de la Réforme* is housed in the Maison Mallet, beside the Cathedral of Saint-Pierre, where the people of Geneva voted for the adoption of the Reformation on the date of May 21, 1536. This mansion, built by banker Gédéon Mallet, was severely criticised at the time of its construction in the 18th century for its excessive luxury, unacceptable for austere Calvinist principles. In 1946 it was nevertheless bought by the protestant church.

The museum presents the history of the Reformation, to which Geneva played such a central role as to be sometimes called the "Protestant Rome". Jean Calvin, of French origin, was the foremost of the reformers to have found hospitality in this city, after publishing his *L'Institution chrétienne* in Basel. He participated in setting up a protestant theocratic government, and made the local council adopt his profession of faith and his ordinances on ecclesiastical discipline. His influence on morals and religion was so big, that his opponents would call him *the Geneva Pope*.

The *MIR* presents the complex story of Protestantism, from the 16th to the 20th century, based on the bible and boldly visualising theological disputes. There are manuscripts and books, portraits, liturgical objects etc. How to vividly present protestant spiritual and cultural tradition, austere in its material production as well as in its thinking? How to deal with a religious current in a city still immersed in it?

The morning of the visit day will be devoted to a profound visit of the museum, in company of the *MIR*'s director, Dr. Isabelle Graesslé and of the museographers. After a pause for lunch, in a restaurant nearby, we will spend the afternoon in a round table discussion. The agenda is open to be configured according to the participants' impressions and interests. We will particularly focus on innovation and controversy.

On behalf of the Administration Council of IAMH, I am inviting you all on **Friday, April 18th**, to the *Musée International de la Réforme*, to be followed the next morning by our annual General Assembly. Participation is free (lunch not included). Each participant will take care of his own travel and accommodation expenses. A maximum of 20 participants will be allowed. Please confirm your intention to participate (p.mazarakis@nhmuseum.gr, ++30-694-295.02.88). You will find hereby attached a list of recommended hotels.

On behalf of the IAHM administration board, I wish to thank *MIR* Director Dr Isabelle Graesslé, for accepting to host and support our meeting.

Philippos Mazarakis-Ainian
IAHM president