

## CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA, EXPERTS FROM MEMORIST AND IZIKO MUSEUMS OF SOUTH AFRICA RESTORE THE FRESCO "THE MUTOKO", A NATIONAL TREASURE, ON SHOW AT POMPIDOU IN 2019.

The class of 2023 of the Centre de Formation de La Reliure du Limousin, a MEMORIST company, contributed, along with experts from the archaeological department of IZIKO museums of South Africa and restorers in Cape Town, to restore a copy of an emblematic cave painting entitled "The Mutoko", which will be exhibited at the Iziko South African National Gallery in May 2023.



The Mutoko ©Frobenius Institute

For a fortnight, from 27 March to 7 April 2023, students from the Centre de Formation de La Reliure du Limousin worked alongside the museum's South African experts and restorers to bring this unique work, a treasure trove of history and the beginnings of humanity, back to life.

*The Mutoko*, named after the site of Mutoko in Zimbabwe, a few hours' drive north-east of the capital Harare, is a 7-metre-long copy of part of the treasure trove of Southern African rock art, created in 1928 by three women artists: Elisabeth Mannsfeld, Maria Weyersberg and Agnes Schulz. During a 20-month expedition led by the German archaeologist and ethnologist Leo Frobenius, they copied more than 1,000 works of rock art in South Africa, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Basutoland (Lesotho) and south-west Africa (Namibia).

The French and South African experts worked on the main alterations identified: dusty documents, deep tears, smaller gaps, brittle paper, locally altered watercolours.

To do this, they stripped off the wooden poles and paper reinforcements, and dry-cleaned and dusted the front and back of the watercolours using Wishab erasers, cloths, brushes and dustpans.

They then proceeded to localise the deconsolidating areas by gluing the reverse side of carefully cut and defibrated pieces of Japanese paper.

Once this work was finished, they used a heated spatula to flatten the necessary areas and consolidated the edges with heavyweight Japanese paper to protect the watercolour when the wooden poles were reattached. They also touched up some of the watercolour paint.

*The Mutoko* was donated to the South Africa Museum (now The Iziko museums of South Africa) in 1929,

a year after it was made. It was exhibited for the first time that year. There were only two exhibitions in South Africa after the expedition was completed, in Pretoria and Johannesburg, in August and December 1929 respectively.

The work was exhibited at the Centre Pompidou in 2019 as part of the exhibition "*Prehistory, a modern enigma*", which highlighted the fruitful relationship between prehistory and modern and contemporary art. Copies of Mutoko and Makumbe were exhibited side by side at Pompidou, as they had been 82 years earlier, in 1937, at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York.

Before that, these works had been exhibited from 1930 to 1932 in Frankfurt, Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam and Zurich, and in 1937 in the United States, first at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, then on a 37-city tour.

In a video broadcast by RFI, Rémi Labrusse, one of the three curators of this exhibition, talks about the Mutoko copy, which is 7 metres long, and the Makumbe copy, which is 1.3 metres long. According to him, the Makumbe is "*extremely abstract*" whereas the Mutoko is "*completely figurative because it shows something like a hunt. It's full of animals, all sorts of hunters, men and women.*"

The work will be exhibited again in May 2023, 94 years after its last exhibition in South Africa, at the Iziko South African National Gallery, for the exhibition "*Breaking Down the Walls - 150 years of Art Collecting*", along with some 500 other works of art. Works by South African artists such as Irma Stern, Gerard Sekoto, Peter Clarke and Gladys Mgudlandlu will be displayed alongside historic paintings and sculptures by Rembrandt, Picasso and Goya.

Richard Kuba, head of rock art at the Frobenius Institute, wanted this material to be exhibited in southern Africa. His wish has now come true.

## LIMOUSIN BOOKBINDING

Founded in 1950, La Reliure du Limousin, with its 60 specialist restoration craftsmen, is France's leading workshop for safeguarding written heritage.

Since its creation in 1950, the company has been entrusted with the restoration of precious works in the libraries of the Senate and the National Assembly. The early 1980s marked a major turning point, with the company specialising in the restoration of archival documents and extending its services to departmental and municipal archives.

La Reliure du Limousin does everything it can to appraise, conserve and restore the written collections of our past, from the restoration of ancient collections to traditional bookbinding. In 1990, La Reliure became a training centre, and since 2022 has included an apprenticeship scheme for young people looking for an artisanal trade in heritage conservation.

La Reliure has been a Living Heritage Company since 2010.

References: Versailles, musée du quai Branly, Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, Archives nationales d'outre-mer, Ministère des Affaires étrangères...



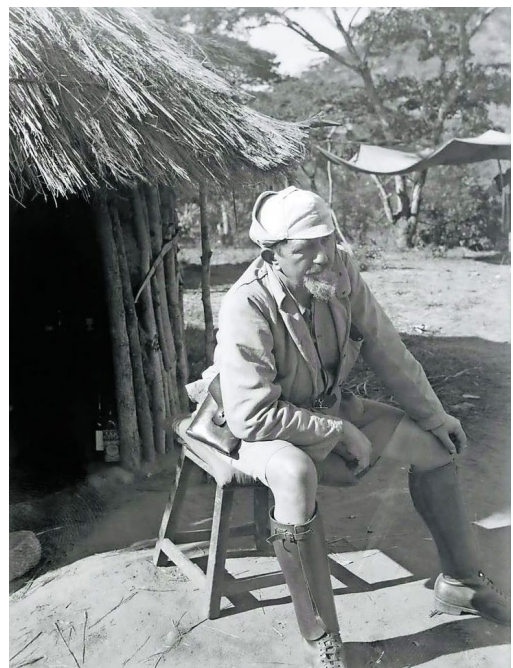
Dusting with a Chinese brush ©La Reliure du Limousin

## THE FROBENIUS INSTITUTE

The Frobenius Institute, founded in 1925, was destroyed in the bombing of Frankfurt during the Second World War. Despite the bombing, the collection, which Frobenius began in 1898 and which includes documents from tours carried out after his death in Asia, Australia, Europe, North and South America and Oceania, now comprises 8,300 items of rock art, 134,000 books and 60,000 photographs.

After Frobenius's death in 1938, the world changed. Reproductions, in the age of colour photography, became obsolete. But part of the rock art collection that had been kept safe before the Second World War was rediscovered in a damp basement by the institute's staff in 2007.

It is now enjoying a renaissance and is exhibited in numerous galleries and museums, notably at the Centre Pompidou, as mentioned above, but also in Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, Dakar, Mexico City and the Paul Klee Zentrum in Bern.



German archaeologist and ethnologist Leo Frobenius in Zimbabwe in the late 1920s ©Frobenius Institute



# MEMORIST

HERITAGE & BEYOND

## THE LEADING SKILLS CENTRE FOR PRESERVING, RESTORING, DIGITISING AND SHARING OUR HERITAGE.

The Mobilitas Group has brought together five key players to create MEMORIST, the first skills centre for :

**Preservation:** MEMORIST offers strategic support to holders of heritage collections of all kinds, to establish targeted action plans.

**Restoration:** MEMORIST uses traditional methods to restore all types of ancient documents (parchments, bundles, covers, iconographic documents, film supports, etc.) and contemporary documents (administrative documents, audiovisual and film supports), in order to prolong their life and give them back the appearance that time may have altered.

**Digitisation:** MEMORIST digitises paper, iconographic, audio, video and film documents in 2D, and sculptures, monuments and historic sites in 3D, for the purposes of conservation and distribution to different audiences.

**Sharing:** MEMORIST facilitates the enhancement of heritage, whether historical, documentary or architectural, by relying on a perfect mastery of digital and immersive technologies.

MEMORIST's unique expertise is undeniably recognised on the French market, and it is part of a group that is resolutely international in scope, with a presence in almost 100 countries.

Its 240 experts deploy their know-how, in France and abroad, to support museums, public and cultural institutions, private companies and NGOs.

The combination of traditional techniques and innovative technologies supported by human talent means that we can implement tailor-made solutions or large-scale projects.

MEMORIST offers a full arsenal of expertise in the field of heritage enhancement, whether tangible or intangible, paper, photos, audiovisual, tangible or built.

MEMORIST's achievements in France include the restoration of eighth-century parchments, the 3D digitisation of the Victory of Samothrace at the Louvre, the management and preventive conservation of Renault's heritage collections, the exhaustive digitisation of the Abbey of Mont-Saint-Michel and Notre-Dame de Paris, and an immersive experience at the Musée d'Orsay using a virtual reality system.

Internationally, Memorist has deployed its expertise in Switzerland (UN, TAG Heuer), South Africa (Jagger Library), Kuwait (Ministry of Information), Austria (National Library), the United Arab Emirates (Louvre Abu Dhabi) and Ethiopia (holy city of Lalibela).

Watch the MEMORIST presentation video by  
clicking on the link below

[www.thememorist.com/video](http://www.thememorist.com/video)



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## MEMORIST'S EXPERT COMPANIES

**Arkhênum:** a leader in digitisation and heritage enhancement, Arkhênum helps to shed light on the past and preserve what exists so that history can be passed on to future generations. From archive audits to collection development consultancy, Arkhênum supports its customers at every stage in the development and deployment of their heritage strategies. With the largest technology park in Europe, Arkhênum digitises all types of media, from the simplest to the most complex, whatever their format, material or state of preservation.

**Art Graphique & Patrimoine:** from laser scanning to 3D digitisation, from 3D modelling to augmented and virtual reality, AGP offers its innovative approach to art and historic monuments, for museums, institutions and businesses. Thanks to its R&D department, which specialises in architectural and archaeological surveys, in 2009 it developed the first mobile augmented reality prototype for reconstructing decors.

**La Reliure du Limousin:** since it was founded in 1950, the company has been restoring precious works from the libraries of the Senate and the National Assembly, then those of the departmental and municipal archives. From the restoration of antique collections to traditional bookbinding, the company does its utmost to appraise, conserve and restore the written collections of our past. In 1990, La Reliure became a training centre for the craft of heritage conservation. Since 2010, La Reliure has been a Living Heritage Company.

**TRIBVN Imaging** digitises all types of photographic documents (glass plates, cellulose nitrates, cellulose acetates, polyester, etc.), images graphic documents (drawings, tracings), images of textiles and accessories, creates "high-performance" digitisation lines for projects requiring them, takes photogrammetric images and carries out preventive conservation work (repackaging in permanent paper, polyester sleeves, cleaning).

**Vectracom:** founded in France by Gérard Letienne, Vectracom is now run by Célia Letienne and François Tranchand, representing the second generation. This family management of the company echoes that of the Mobilitas group. Vectracom offers content digitisation, digital preservation, metadata creation and film remastering services, as well as a multimedia laboratory (digitisation from all types of media, colour grading, image and audio restoration, etc.).

