

A black and white portrait of Ralf Čeplak Mencin, a man with grey hair and a beard, smiling. He is wearing a light-colored corduroy jacket over a striped button-down shirt and a dark t-shirt. The background is blurred.

ICME

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for museums and collections
of ethnography

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RALF ČEPLAK MENCIN

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CONTENTS

<i>Word from the Chair</i> , Heidi McKinnon	3
<i>Word from the Editor: Museums Uniting a Divided World</i> , Ali Mahfouz	5
<i>Memorial of Ralf Čeplak Mencin</i> Viv Golding, Ali Mahfouz and Leif Pareli	6
<i>ICME at ICOM Dubai 2025</i> Heidi McKinnon and Anamaría Rojas Múnera	10
The announcement of the official poster for the ICOM-ICME 2026 General Conference	15
<i>Bridging Tour Guides and Exhibitions: A Community- Centered Approach at the Grand Egyptian Museum</i> , Fatma Ahmed Soliman	16
<i>Rethinking Expertise through Paliljaw 1874: A Collaborative VR Experience</i> , Anli Chang	19
<i>The Museum of Mlomp (Hutendukay Museum of the Diola Culture)....Challenges and opportunities of a “Community” Museum in Africa</i> , Alyssa K. Barry	20
<i>Short reflections from an academic visitor</i> , Zihui Ding	23
<i>Rethinking the Gulf: Museums, Innovation, and a New Cultural Landscape</i> , Alessandra Frontini	25
<i>Polyvocal Museums and Ethical AI: Reflections from ICOM Dubai 2025</i> , Isabel Beirigo	27
<i>From the storm to the port: the new “ship” of the Ventspils</i> , Dace Kamela	29
<i>Book Launch: Museums, Subjects and Territories in Dialogue</i> , Ilana Seltzer Goldstein and Andrea Rabinovici	33
Contact the News	35

WORD FROM THE CHAIR

Heidi McKinnon, ICME Chair

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to Issue #98 of ICME News. I would like to offer great thanks to our Editor, Ali Mahfouz, for gathering a collection of fascinating papers from our ICOM Triennial Conference in Dubai in November 2025. Thank you to all our contributors as well for sharing your research with our community. So much has happened since Dubai in the world and in our ICME community.

This issue marks a milestone that is hard to write about, as we are commemorating the passing of our dear ex-Chair of ICME, Ralf Čeplak Mencin. I met Ralf at my first ICME conference in Seoul in 2008. We were friends

for nearly twenty years. Many of you reading this would have known him for thirty or forty years. His loss is a tragedy for his family, his museum and our ICME community, and for ICOM in general. In this issue, we share some heartfelt statements from Ralf's friends and colleagues as well as a selection of images, much like the two I am sharing here. During the ICOM Annual Conference in Paris recently, Ralf was commemorated and we will do so again during our ICME Annual Conference in Taiwan.

All those years ago in Seoul, Ralf shared his experiences in ICOM with me and encouraged me to stay con-



nected to ICME. I was living in Guatemala at the time and deeply involved in developing an exhibition about Maya Achí genocides and supporting post-conflict reparations processes for Maya Achí communities. My focus was elsewhere.

Over the years, we maintained contact and collaborated. Ralf kept encouraging me to be more involved in ICOM. At the General Conference in Kyoto in 2019, Ralf and I discussed upcoming conferences once he became Chair, and how I could support hosting an ICME conference in Mexico or Central America in the future. I suppose fifteen years of conversations led to our annual conference in Mexico City in 2024, which was a wonderful experience for all involved.

Thank you, Ralf, for keeping that focus on future collaborations and for all your years of dear friendship and care. Please know you are dearly missed. Our love and wishes are with your family and friends.

More recently, I was able to attend the ICOM Annual Conference in Paris at UNESCO to celebrate the 80th anni-

Heidi and Ralf at ICME Annual Meeting in Seoul, South Korea, 2008





Heidi and Yaarob Alabdullah with ICOM President Antonio Rodriguez at the ICOM Annual Meeting and 80th anniversary in Paris, 2026

versary of our organization. Yaarob Alabdullah and I attended the 100th Advisory Council session and are profoundly grateful for the time we had with all our ICOM colleagues. We also hosted a party for ICME members and IC Chairs at the home of Valérie Sandoz which was a huge success. We have many collaborations to work on with our IC colleagues into the future.

One of my highlights from the final sessions of our annual meeting was hosted by Bruno Brulon Soares and focused on collaborative practices. The session was entitled, “Museums for Reparative Action: Rethinking

Community Agency.” All the speakers were brilliant, but a few comments really stuck with me and echoed the profound contribution by our keynote speaker and long-time ICME collaborator, Amareswar Galla, who discussed the need to address “frozen collections” in his keynote.

Samba Yonga of the Women’s History Museum in Zambia shared the same sentiments from her practice framework, which she calls Re-rooted. Her concept of petrified collections or a “petrified archive” is defined as “unprovenanced collections, left unaddressed, [that] become institutionally frozen.

The catalogue becomes authoritative by default.” Quoting her further, she considers that “the archive does not merely lack Indigenous knowledge—it actively displaces it. Petrification is not passive; it is reproduced every time the catalogue is consulted without question.” She further shared that she believes “...[r]estitution is not complete when the object moves. It is complete when knowledge, authority, relationships, and practice are repaired.”

The first speaker in this session was Dr. Michael Mel of the University of Goroka in Papua New Guinea, who shared his deeply impactful thoughts on Indigenous collaborations with museums. Below is a quote from his presentation that I want to share with all of you.

“You in the museum have just one half of the story—let us call that ‘the bones,’—but you need us, the living stewards of Pacific arts, we who have the cultural knowledge, the language, the songs, the stories, to fill out the rest. Let us call that ‘the flesh,’ as it were, the fullness that gives shape and builds a more complete picture. We need each other. Together we can bring the past back to its fullness, to guide and teach the younger generation (both here with us, and over there with you).”

Michael Mel, recorded by Sylvia Cockburn, **Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2023.**

I leave you with these statements and considerations before our upcoming conference in Taiwan. I look forward to discussing these ideas and more in greater detail amongst all of you who are able to join us.

MUSEUMS UNITING A DIVIDED WORLD

Ali Mahfouz, Editor-in-Chief, ICME Newsletter

“Museums Uniting a Divided World” was the theme of International Museum Day 2026. It is a theme that resonates deeply with the realities of our time.

Across the world, societies continue to face conflict, polarization, displacement, and uncertainty. In such circumstances, museums are not isolated from these challenges. Museum professionals often work under difficult conditions, collections may be threatened, and cultural heritage can become vulnerable during periods of instability. Yet history repeatedly demonstrates that museums also have a unique capacity to bring people together when divisions seem most profound.

Museums are among the few public spaces where different communities can encounter one another through shared stories, objects, and experiences. They provide opportunities for dialogue across cultural, social, and political boundaries. By preserving and interpreting heritage, museums remind us that human histories are interconnected and that cultural diversity

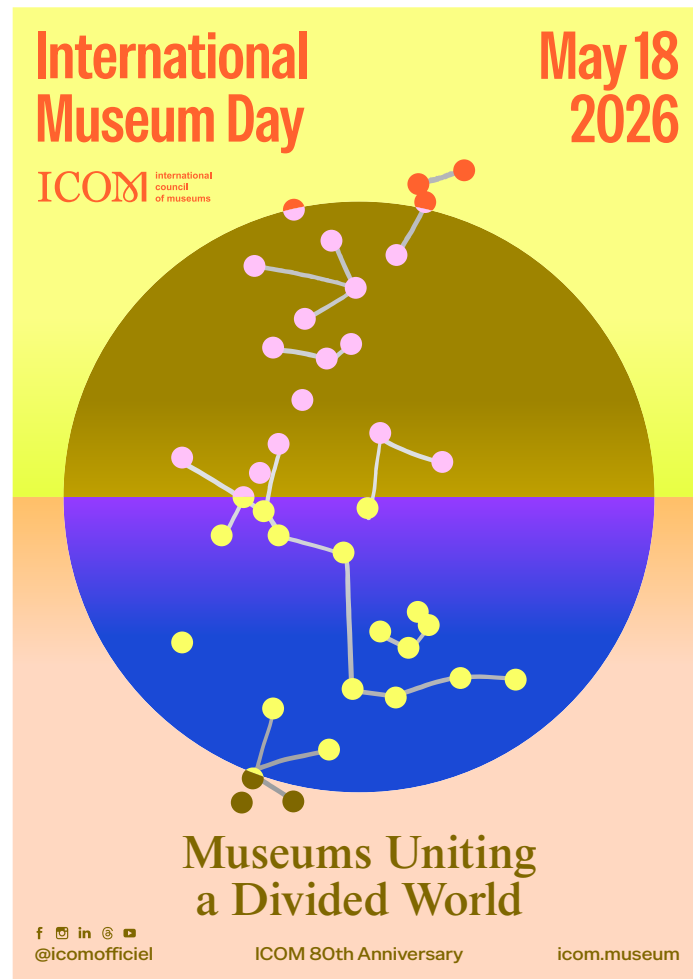


is not a source of division but a foundation for mutual understanding.

For ethnographic museums in particular, this responsibility is especially significant. Our work encourages engagement with different world-views, traditions, and lived experiences. In doing so, museums can challenge stereotypes, foster empathy, and create spaces where difficult conversations can take place respectfully and constructively.

The role of museums is not to ignore conflict, nor to offer simple solutions to complex problems. Rather, it is to safeguard memory, promote understanding, and strengthen the social bonds that connect communities. In a divided world, museums remain places of encounter, reflection, and hope.

As museum professionals, we have a responsibility to continue building these spaces of dialogue and inclusion. The challenges facing our world are substantial, but so too is the potential of museums to contribute to a more informed, connected, and peaceful future.





RALF ČEPLAK MENCIN

Remembered by
Viv Golding

As I sit sorrowfully at home in chilly Leicester, mourning the death of a dear colleague, I see his beaming smile and bright eyes lit up in kindness, as usual. He seems to warm me.

Over the last decades, since 2004 when we first met, I have come to know Ralf though our mutual membership of and joint project work in

ICME. We shared a number of beliefs about the value of material culture and contemporary crafts, which was inspired for us both during independent studies in the Far East, notably Japan, in the 1970s. Therefore, it was with great pleasure that I saw Ralf formally elected as Chair of ICME at the Triennial Conference in Kyoto 2019. ICME celebrated Ralf's election on the final day of our joint meeting with CIM-CIM, which was so generously hosted at the Japanese Museum of Ethnology (Minpaku) by the Director Professor Kenji Yoshida and his team.

In addition to a shared concern for objects in museums Ralf has also worked tirelessly for museums and social justice internationally. I was privileged to attend conferences on this theme with Ralf over the years. I particularly recall the incredible tradi-

tional washing collection including film at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum in Ljubljana. Through the human act of cleaning ourselves we considered developing museum audiences and connecting people around the world of all ages. I was also personally moved, because of my mother's Roma to be at The Roma and Sinti Dokumentation Centre in Heidelberg, Germany, thanks to conversations with Ralf about ethnicity. Again, this is how I remember Ralf, so easy to engage with, so genuinely interested in being in and sharing our world. Ralf always strove to communicate our vital points of contact, without ignoring difference, which as we know is not easy in an international context.

This brings me to the impressive human rights work of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum in Ljubljana, which was at the forefront the most recent ICME publication. Ralf's contribution to Part Four The Politics of Belonging: Art, Refuge and Citizenship is richly illustrated with the exemplary creative work of his institution. I cite it here as a tribute to Ralf:

Mojca Racic and Ralf Čeplak Mencin, 'Refugees are Front of Our Doors! Endeavours by the Slovene Ethnographic Museum towards the Deconstruction of Stereotypes and Prejudice', in Golding, Viv and Walklate, Jen *Museums and Communities, Diversity, Dialogue and Collaboration in an Age of Migrations*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, UK.

Dear Ralf, your gentle humanist voice is sorely missed in the troubled times we live today. Still, you live in our hearts and we send condolences to your family.

IN MEMORY OF RALF ČEPLAK MENCIN

Ali Mahfouz, Editor-in-Chief,
ICME Newsletter

I first met Ralf Čeplak Mencin in 2019 during the ICOM General Conference in Kyoto. My first impression of him has remained unchanged over the years: a thoughtful scholar, a calm presence, and a genuinely kind colleague whose warm smile made every conversation feel welcoming.

At that conference, we spoke about museums, ethnographic collections, and the future of ICME. Shortly afterward, Ralf began his first term as Chair of ICME, a role he would hold for two consecutive terms from 2019 to 2025. Over the years, our paths crossed through conferences, board activities, and professional exchanges. The last time I met him in person was at the ICOM General Conference in Prague in 2022, yet our conversations continued long afterward.

Ralf's contribution to museums extended far beyond organizational leadership. As a curator, museum advisor, and advocate for intercultural dialogue, he consistently emphasized the social responsibility of museums,

the ethical representation of cultures, and the importance of engaging with contemporary global challenges. His work at the Slovenian Ethnographic Museum and within ICOM reflected a lifelong commitment to openness,



inclusion, and international cooperation. In 2025, this dedication was recognized with Slovenia's Valvasor Lifetime Achievement Award, the country's highest distinction for contributions to the museum profession. ([link](#))

For many within ICME, Ralf was not only a respected leader but also a generous mentor and a constant source of encouragement. He believed deeply in the value of professional exchange and in supporting colleagues at every stage of their careers. His passing on 9 March 2026 is a profound loss for our community.

As we remember Ralf, we celebrate a life dedicated to museums, scholarship, and humanity. His legacy will continue through the many professionals he inspired and the values he championed throughout his career. He will be remembered with gratitude, respect, and affection.

MEMORIES OF RALF

By **Leif Pareli**

Long-standing ICME member, Leif Pareli (Norway), has shared some of his memories of Ralf through a collection of photographs.



My first meeting with Ralf was at the ICME tour to Val d'Aran in the Pyrenees after the General Conference in Barcelona 2001.



In 2003, I was at the ICME conference in Sibiu, Romania. Ralf was an active and engaged participant.



In 2010, we were all attending the General Conference in Shanghai. This photo is from the ICME dinner. Ralf between two participants, Bärbel and Anette Rein).



In 2014, we attended the ICME conference in Zagreb with Ralf. Here he is at a reception. From left: Leif Pareli, Norway; Ralf Čeplak Mencin, Slovenia; former ICME Chair, Per Rekdal, Norway; and Anette Rein, Germany.

**Top left:**

In Kyoto in 2019, we attended both the General Conference and the ICME conference. Here, Ralf is with two colleagues, including former ICME board member, Agnes Aljas, from Estonia to the left.

Left:

Ralf, as always, was an engaged participant in the discussions at ICME conferences.

Above:

As part of the ICME programme, we had a day trip to Minpaku, The National Ethnological Museum of Japan, in Osaka. They were experimenting with new technology which would make it possible for visitors to get exhibition texts and other information up on their mobile phones as they walk through the exhibitions. A new solution which would be practical and easy for all visitors. Here, Ralf is enthusiastically trying out things on a test phone which the museum provided. He looks happy with the result!

ICME AT ICOM DUBAI 2025

By **Heidi McKinnon** and **Anamaría Rojas Múnera**

We would like to extend our thanks to everyone who joined our sessions at the ICOM General Conference held in Dubai in November 2025. It was truly lovely to reconnect with ICME members and familiar faces in the United Arab Emirates. We held our first meeting with the newly elected board as well to begin shaping roles and responsibilities, while discussing the ICME conference planned for Taiwan this year. These conversations felt like an important starting point for our board, helping us strengthen collaboration as we move forward together in the 2025–2028 term.

It was an intense and rewarding week, where we worked on coordinating, moderating, and developing three ICME sessions focused on AI and ethics, intergenerational change, and shared custodianship and collaborative museological practices. We were very fortunate to collaborate with the recently created International Committee for Social Museology (SOMUS) in shaping part of these sessions, as well as with our partner, Regional Alliance ICOM ARAB.

Our first session, *Museum Practice in the Age of AI: Use of New Technologies and Ethical Implications*, was moderated



by Sing-da Huang and Heidi McKinnon. The session opened a space for a thoughtful and critical conversation about how our museums are engaging with Artificial Intelligence, not only as a technical or helpful tool, but also as something that reshapes questions of authority and ethics. It brought together a rich combination of perspectives, with contributions from Anli Chang (National Museum of Taiwan History, Taiwan), Dr. Heng Song and Professor Mohamed Gamal Abdelmonem (The Centre for Architecture, Urbanism & Global Heritage CAUGH and York School of Architecture, University of York, UK), Isabel Cristina Stappers Felipe Beirigo (Netherlands Institute for Sound &



Vision, Netherlands), Agnes Aljas and Pille Runnel (Estonian National Museum, Estonia), and Alexandros Giannikopoulos (National Technical University of Athens, Greece). The discussion moved between practice, reflection, and experimentation, showing how our work is being reshaped by technology.

Session B, *Transformations in Museum Practice Through Intergenerational Change*, focused on heritage experiences across generations and evolving ways of working. Moderated by Anamaría Rojas Múnera (Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand / ICME Board member) and Ali Mahfouz (Falconviz Company, Egypt/Saudi Arabia), our second session had the contributions from Ana Isabel Maya (Comfenalco Antioquia, Colombia), Marenka Thompson-Odlum and Aolani Kaili Hou (Pitt Rivers Museum – University of Oxford, UK, and Kamehameha Schools, Hawaii,

USA), Ana Katarina Zihlerl (Slovenian Alpine Museum, Slovenia), Fatma Ahmed Soliman Abdelnabi (King Tut Ankh Amon Training Center, Egypt), and Alessandra Frontini and Ramona Quattrini (Università Politecnica delle Marche, Italy). Together, they shared reflections on youth, heritage mediation and learning, and the shifts happening within museums as new generations gradually take space in the museum areas.

Our third session, *An Ongoing Dialogue in Shared Custodianship and Collaborative Museological Practices*, developed in collaboration with SOMUS, was moderated by Bruno Brulon Soares (Chair of SOMUS) together with Heidi McKinnon (Curators without Borders USA, ICME Chair). It brought together voices from different regions and practices, focusing on multicultural dialogue, collective custodianship, and community-centred exhibition development. Contributions

came from Wan Ping Chen (National Taiwan Museum, Taiwan), Bouthayna Baltaji and Ajmal Maiwandi (Qatar Museums, Qatar), Indrani Bhattacharya (University of Calcutta, India), and Jane Maren M. Dasal, Frauline Rio Grace S. Jayo, and Danette Jennifer R. Megalbio (National Museum of the Philippines, Philippines). Additional reflections from Hadi Osni (Malay Heritage Centre, Singapore), Anamaría Rojas Múnera (Aotearoa New Zealand), Alyssa K. Barry (ICOMOS Senegal / AKB Heritage), and Yuling Lin (Another Year Studio, Taiwan) added further layers, especially around community museums in practice and future-oriented museum management.

ICME IC Day

We shared a meaningful day of dialogue during our IC Day, centred on “*Museum Agency in the Face of Cultural Sovereignty, Migration and Climate Crisis.*”

We opened with a letter from our ICME 2022–2025 Chair, Ralf Čeplak Mencin, followed by a warm welcome from the Al Shindagha Museum team. Our keynote speaker, Prof. Ahmed Rashed (Egypt), offered an important reflection on cultural sovereignty and community empowerment in Egyptian contexts.

Panel 1 focused on migration stories in museums (from exhibitions to education) and was moderated by Mario Buletic (Ethnographic Museum of Istria and outgoing ICME Board Member, Croatia). Contributions came from Sing-da Huang (National Museum of History, Taiwan), Francesca Liuni (USA), Hsiang Yin Chen and Hui Hua Jian (Taiwan), Aakanksha Tated (India), and Zihui Ding (UK/China). Panel 2 explored *Redefining Representation in Museums: Critical and Participatory Approaches*, moderated by Sing-da Huang (National Museum of History, Taiwan). Presentations by

Shaimaa Matar (National Museum of Egyptian Civilization, Egypt/ICME Board Member), Magali Dufau (Labex SMS, France), Zhen-hui Liu (Providence University, Taiwan), and Abdoulaye Imorou (Historical Museum of the Royal Palaces in Abomey, Benin) opened important reflections around representation and participation. Panel 3 focused on Museums and *Communities for Climate Resilience*, moderated by Anamaría Rojas Múnera, with contributions from Tina Palaić and Katarina Nahtigal (Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Slovenia), and Supreo Chandal (University of Calcutta, India), moving between local realities and shared global challenges.

Engagement with Taiwan at ICOM Dubai 2025 Museum Fair

During the conference, ICME's newly elected board, along with outgoing members and delegates, had the pleasure of connecting with leaders

from Taiwan's cultural and museum sector during the ICOM Dubai 2025 Museum Fair.

We are especially grateful to Vice Minister Hsu Yi Chun and Vice Chairperson Adralriw Abaliusu for their warm welcome at the engaging Taiwan exhibition. Our sincere thanks also to Lily Schneider for her invaluable support with translation, cultural interpretation, and workshop facilitation. A special thank you to Sing-da Huang, ICME Conference Chair, and Chun-wei Fang, representing our Taiwan 2026 Annual Conference partner, Museum of Prehistory Taiwan, for helping make these encounters possible.

To close our IC Day, we visited the historic Al Shindagha Museum and neighbourhood, where we learned about the history and growth of Dubai. Our gracious guides shared three of the dozens of exhibitions in the complex, including the foodways exhibition, the history of maritime trade in Dubai, and the refined exhibitions about pearl fishing in the region. Each exhibition was located in restored family homes in what was originally a neighborhood in Dubai.

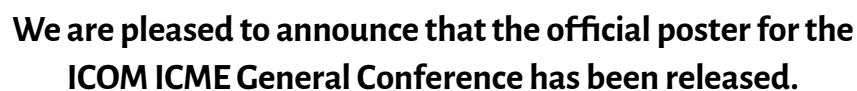
General Assembly

On the morning of the following day, we attended the General Assembly and had the pleasure of seeing the installation of the new President of ICOM, Antonio Rodriguez. It was a pleasure to engage with colleagues from across the ICOM community and see the new Executive Board and President begin their mandates.









BRIDGING TOUR GUIDES AND EXHIBITIONS: A COMMUNITY-CENTERED APPROACH AT THE GRAND EGYPTIAN MUSEUM

Fatma Ahmed Soliman

General Director of King Tut Ankh Amun Training Center/Grand Egyptian Museum

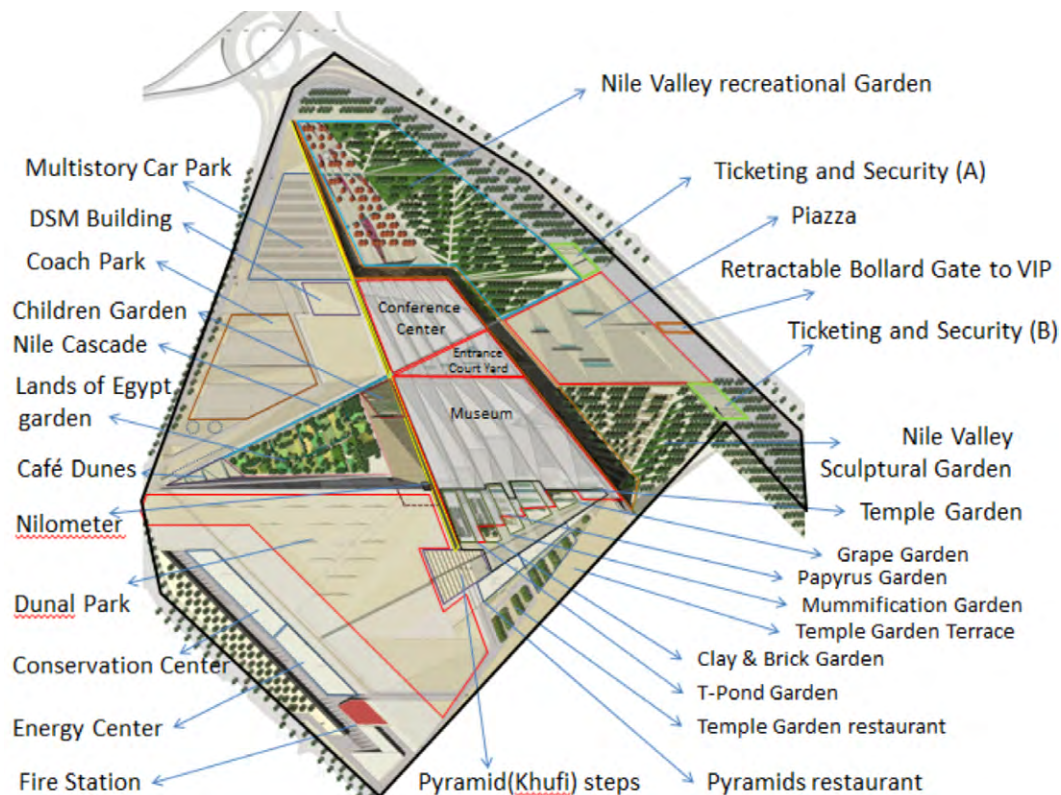
By participating in ICME's sessions as part of the whole general conference, it gives chance to exchange our skills about other museums with their communities from different regions specially indigenous groups and young generation and shows similarity in challenges and shows the power of inte-

grating all type of visitors makes the museum a community meeting point.

Traveling and exploration are inherent human habits, and the role of the tour guide can be traced back to ancient times. One of the most famous journeys is the expedition from Egypt to Punt for friendship and peace, ordered by Queen

Hatshepsut (c. 1470 B.C.), using seafaring boats through the Red Sea.

Moreover, multilingual translators always accompanied official visitors to translate and assist them. These translators were trusted officials, (as shown in the second picture), which depicts a guide and translator mediati-



Plan 1:
Plan of Grand
Egyptian
Museum "GEM"



Figure 1:
Exhibition themes and
chronology order
© Photo taken by the author

ing between Horemheb and Bedouin tribes who requested protection from the Egyptians. This journey included operators, guides, and suppliers of food and services from the queen's court.

During the Greco-Roman era, Caesar toured Egypt and reached the southern part of Egypt by Nile cruise for about three months, accompanied by several translators. The Roman era witnessed a large number of visitors, especially to the Pyramids and the Sphinx.

During the Arab era, guiding travelers became increasingly common. Nowadays, according to the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA), the number of registered tourist guides exceeds 200,000 across 87 member associations.

This community-centered approach enhances accessibility and the relevance of historical interpretation, ensuring that visitors connect with the past in meaningful ways.

Tour guides play an active role through storytelling and multilingual abilities "English, French, Italian, Japanese, etc.". However, they are not fully integrated into modern museum practices; for example, they are not sufficiently familiar with the new exhibition scenarios at the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM), which are complex (Map 1) and thematic and chronological structures (Figure 1).

The Training Center of King Tutankhamun team suggested raising the knowledge of tour guides and integrat-

ing them into the exhibition operation team, who felt they had been neglected after their hard work in selecting artifacts, writing labels, and following up the whole process, in order to bridge them together.

The Objectives of the Program

- Connect the exhibition team with tour guides for deeper understanding.
- Activate the curatorship role in transferring the correct narratives of the new display.
- Break psychological barriers.
- Empower licensed multilingual tour guides as carriers of word-of-mouth communication).
- Promote the museum through the power of tour guides.

Moreover, the initiative seeks to redefine the relationship between licensed tour guides and museum exhibitions by fostering an inclusive, interactive training program at the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM). Recognizing the pivotal role that guides play in shaping visitor experiences, the program introduces a structured process aimed at breaking barriers between guides and the newly curated exhibition, which integrates two approaches "thematic and chronological perspective" with new artifacts selected from storerooms, new discoveries, or transferred from other museums to be exhibited together.

Beginning with an online application system, the initiative allows tour guides to register for specialized training sessions. Digital promotion across social media and online platforms ensures widespread awareness, attracting a diverse pool of participants. Once accepted, guides engage with the museum's curatorial team to deepen their understanding of the exhibition's themes, narratives, and archaeological significance. Through collaborative discussions with exhibition specialists, they gain unique insights beyond traditional guidebooks, enabling them to present history in a more dynamic and engaging manner (Figure 2).

The program extends beyond knowledge-sharing, welcoming participants through interactive sessions in which they experience the exhibition. By embedding tour guides within the museum's interpretive framework, the initiative transforms them into cultural ambassadors who bridge academic research with public engagement. To ensure continuous development, an



Figure 2: An exhibition training team member, trains tour guides © Photo taken by the author

evaluation system is implemented, allowing guides to provide feedback and refine their storytelling approaches.

Beyond training, the initiative establishes a lasting network, a new community of tour guides who share experiences, exchange expertise, and contribute to evolving exhibition narratives. This community centered approach enhances the accessibility and relevance of historical interpretation, ensuring that visitors connect with the past in meaningful ways.

This program provides an opportunity for participants to deepen their connection to the material and develop a strong sense of involvement, which supports the promotion of the museum and transforms their role from outsiders into partners.

Benefits of the Training

- Integrate stakeholders into the GEM.
- Improve curators' skills in explaining their ideas for better interpretation.

- **For Visitors:** Richer, more memorable experiences.
- **For Guides:** Professional recognition and steady work opportunities.
- **For GEM:** Higher visitor satisfaction and global reputation.

Conclusion

The program aims to train 400 licensed tour guides within 10 training days "between April and May 2025". It aims to improve curators' skills to transfer their ideas through clear interpretation and to use the word of mouth of multilingual licensed guides. It gives curators the chance to understand common questions in order to improve the exhibition during the pre-opening phase and to make the exhibition more understandable through the official team of the museum. Digital promotion across social media and online platforms ensures widespread awareness, attracting a diverse pool of audiences. It gives a chance to share experiences, exchange expertise, and contribute to evolving exhibition narratives, and gives a chance to present history in a dynamic and engaging manner. The program reflects transformations in museum practice through intergenerational change. It gives a chance to deepen their connection to the material and create a strong sense of involvement, which will spread the word to promote the museum and transform them from feeling strangers to partners. The program may include tour guides as part of the ICOM community. Together, it can transform museum visits into unforgettable journeys through time.

RETHINKING EXPERTISE THROUGH *PALILJAW 1874*: A COLLABORATIVE VR EXPERIENCE

Anli Chang, Independent Professional (formerly National Museum of Taiwan History)

In November 2025, the VR project *Paliljaw 1874* was presented at the ICOM-ICME Conference. Developed by the National Museum of Taiwan History in close collaboration with a Paiwan Indigenous community and the VR production team Moonshine Studio, this immersive experience was created between 2021 and 2022. The project was informed by extensive archival research, script development, and visual design processes, bringing together historical documents and oral histories to create an immersive narrative of the 1874 Mudan Incident, often referred to in Japanese sources as the “Taiwan Expedition.” The project demonstrates how collaborative digital heritage initiatives can integrate community knowledge, historical research, and emerging technologies to support the interpretation and communication of complex historical events.

The motivation behind *Paliljaw 1874* was to rethink how this historical event has traditionally been viewed. In Taiwan, public understanding of the Mudan Incident has long been shaped by Japanese, Western, or Qing dynasty sources, which often frame it as a Japanese military expedition to southern Taiwan

following the killing of Ryukyuan sailors, framed as a punitive action against so-called “Ferocious aborigines(兇蕃).” Such narratives tend to marginalize local perspectives and obscure the long-term consequences of the event for Taiwanese society as a whole. For us, the Mudan Incident is not only the history of the Mudan community, but a critical moment that shaped Taiwan’s subsequent trajectory.

The discussion following the presentation highlighted important differences in how digital heritage projects are interpreted across professional and cultural contexts. While discussions in Taiwan often focus on institutional collaboration, technological implementation, and the division of professional responsibilities, questions raised at the ICOM-ICME Conference centered on community participation, intergenerational perspectives on historical narratives, and the definition of expertise within the VR production process. These discussions underscored a broader conceptual shift from technology-centered approaches toward critical considerations of representation, authority, and community engagement in digital heritage practice.

These questions pointed to a central issue, namely who participated in *Paliljaw 1874* and what roles they played. The high level of community involvement stemmed from two main factors. First, social networks within the community are extremely close-knit, making it nearly impossible to work with only one individual without others quickly becoming involved. Second, in Taiwan, any cultural project involving Indigenous heritage must be approached with great care, as it risks being perceived as cultural appropriation if handled improperly. As a result, many community members see themselves as holders of cultural knowledge, and therefore as experts.

This understanding became especially visible during the VR modeling stage. When recreating stone slab houses, for example, we encountered a critical question. Should we consult academic researchers who study traditional architecture, or families within the community who have inherited stone house construction techniques across generations? In Paiwan culture, skills related to houses, ceramics, weapons, and clothing are transmitted within families, follow distinct systems, and are not shared

externally. Community members can often identify the origin of an object simply by its technique or pattern. To ensure accuracy, we consulted scholars, technical inheritors, and community elders alike. Through this process, the boundary of who counted as an “expert” became fluid rather than fixed.

Scriptwriting proved to be an even longer and more challenging negotiation of expertise. Although we agreed early on to approach the 1874 event from a local perspective, every community member held a different interpretation and emotional connection to this history. As a result, nearly every version of the narration was rejected. Instead of continuing to provide answers, we shifted our approach and began asking questions. We asked, if 1874 represents a moment of defending the homeland, then what does “home” mean to you?

This question became the foundation of the script. Even after the VR experience was completed and publicly released, discussions around the meaning of “home” continued. Community members and audiences alike have kept adding memories and stories, allowing the narrative to evolve over time.

For this reason, *Paliljaw 1874* is not simply a finished VR artwork, but an ongoing conversation in which images, history, and community memories are continuously negotiated and rewritten. I am deeply grateful to ICME for providing the opportunity to reflect on this process together. After returning to Taiwan, I shared the conference experience with both the community and the VR team, and we all found it profoundly thought-provoking.

THE MUSEUM OF MLOMP (HUTENDUKAY MUSEUM OF THE DIOLA CULTURE)

Challenges and opportunities of a “Community” Museum in Africa

Alyssa K. Barry

Secretary-General of ICOM Senegal and Founder of AKB HERITAGE



Photo 1: Museum of Mlomp © Alyssa K. Barry, 2025

The Hutendukay Museum of the Diola Culture, also called Museum of Mlomp, stands as one of the most active community museums of Senegal. It is located in the royal village of Mlomp, in the Casamance region of southern Senegal. This small-scale museum houses a collection of artefacts showcasing the daily life and culture of the Diola community, living in the region,

in an architectural gem inspired by the traditional impluvium hut.

The museum was highlighted as a case study of an African community museum during the joint session organized by the International Committee for Museums and Collections of Ethnography (ICME) and the International Committee for Social Museology (SOMUS) as part of ICOM's 27th



Photo 2: Museum of Mlomp before construction of the hut
© Laurent Sambou, circa 2005



Photo 3: Museum of Mlomp before BHS project © RTS, circa 2020

General Conference, titled “An Ongoing Dialogue in Shared Custodianship and Collaborative Museological Practices”.

The presentation was based on a project for the renovation of the museum completed in February 2025, funded by the BHS Foundation (Foundation of the Senegal Housing Bank) and implemented by AKB HERITAGE, a consultancy and cultural engineering firm dedicated to the cultural heritage of Africa and its diasporas.

The Museum of Mlomp was founded in 1992 by Jules Sambou, a native of Mlomp, and is managed through the “Hutendukay Museum of the Diola Culture” Economic Interest Group (EIG) that he established. Initially built as an ephemeral open-air structure using palmyra palm leaves, the museum originally operated on a seasonal basis during the dry season. It was dismantled every year at the onset of the rainy season and reinstalled the

season after. It operated under this arrangement for several years, until sufficient funds were gathered to make it a permanent structure. In 2009, a hut inspired by the region’s traditional architecture was built to house the museum. Strong winds caused significant damage to the museum in 2016. Although it continued to function in this precarious state, this marked the beginning of a long effort to secure partners and funding to restore the museum. In 2023, the BHS Foundation provided financial support as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy for the rehabilitation of the museum through a two-phase project:

- The first phase, implemented from 2023 to 2024, consisted in the renovation of the museum in accordance with the rules of traditional architecture;
- The second phase, implemented from 2024 to 2025, consisted in the enhancement of the museum through the establishment of a man-

Photo 4: Museum scenography before BHS project © Alyssa K. Barry, 2024



agement committee, the acquisition and inventory of the museum artefacts; the conception of a new scenography; and the production of a catalogue for the museum.

Mlomp at large. As no formal management structure had initially been established due to the organic construction and evolution of the museum, this diversity of actors, for whom no role was

particularly the role of the community, remains one of the main challenges for the Museum of Mlomp, a positive outcome of the project was that it attracted a new type of audience: the village youth, many of whom had never visited the museum before. The excitement generated around the museum during the project, which culminated in a well-attended inauguration ceremony marked by the museum traditional blessing from the king, helped give the museum a renewed image within Mlomp and sparked the curiosity and pride of the young visitors.

The experience of the Museum of Mlomp illustrates both the potential and the challenges of community museums in Africa: while structural and management issues persist, targeted projects can successfully engage local audiences, revitalize museum spaces, and foster a sense of pride and cultural connection among new generations.



Photo 5: Museum scenography after BHS project © Alyssa K. Barry, 2025

While the project proved successful in renovating and enhancing the museum, it also highlighted some important weaknesses faced by the museum, particularly in terms of custodianship, management and funding mechanisms, thereby revealing structural tensions that challenge the very notion of the 'community museum'.

The main challenge was related to the diversity of actors involved. Although the museum was initiated by Sambou through his EIC, the project revealed that several other stakeholders were also associated with the museum, in particular the traditional king of Mlomp, the municipality's administration, partners such as the BHS Foundation and Echos Communication (a Belgian NGO), the museum team, as well as the community of

clearly defined, led to conflicts driven by diverging interests and unclear governance structures. This deficient structural organization was also combined with limited visibility into the monitoring of incoming funds, making the long-term management and maintenance of the museum fragile.

Ultimately, the BHS Foundation project was unable to establish the management committee that had been initially planned due to these challenges. It revealed that the museum, although presented as a community museum, was more akin to an individual venture.

Overall, the project challenged the definition of a community museum, notably highlighting the limitations that such a form of museum can have in an African context. While the question of the diversity of stakeholders,



Photo 6: Youth of Mlomp visiting the Museum © Alyssa K. Barry, 2025

SHORT REFLECTIONS FROM AN ACADEMIC VISITOR

Zihui Ding, Postgraduate researcher, University of Leicester, UK

An academic visitor. This is how I would describe myself on the ICME IC Day. I was a speaker undertaking academic activities, including giving a presentation and joining the panel discussion; I was a first-time visitor to the United Arab Emirates, cherishing every experience and moment.

As a researcher working on the representation of migration stories and identity within museum discourse, I benefited greatly from the panel discussion about the right to represent, showcase and decide behind storytelling.

Such discussion sparked my thoughts on museum representation, a process of selecting, elaborating and deciding. For example, a curator needs to handle the relationship between 'who is representing' and 'who is represented', which greatly influences whether and how the voices of a group can be heard in the museum space. In the case of exhibiting *qiaopi* (*qiaopi* can be understood as the combination of correspondence and remittance), which I mentioned in my presentation, overseas Chinese are represented under the master narrative of Chinese nation and history.

The curator also acts as a decision-maker, deciding 'what to say' and 'what not to say' about the particular

group. Indeed, in the museum sector, representation is an unavoidable issue. The following museum visits, well-organised by the ICME board, provide several cases of how Dubai museums represent and display their culture and

ture and is thus chosen to be exhibited. When entering the house, all visitors were invited to sit down together on a large, woven carpet to experience the local dining style (Figure 1). We learned about different sitting postures for dif-



Figure 1: The ground floor of the Traditional Food House (photo by the author)

customs to the public, including visitors like me, a Chinese visitor with a different social and cultural background.

For me, one of the most memorable museums is the Traditional Food House, located in Al Shindagha. Food occupies a highly significant place in Emirati cul-

ferent genders and also enjoyed the food presented digitally – meals were provided via electronic display screens.

As there are no ropes or barriers to stop visitors from stepping onto the carpet, every visitor is warmly welcomed by the museum, which intentionally



Figure 2:
Food products
(photo by the
author)



Figure 3:
New friends
(photo by the
author)

incorporates the concept of hospitality into the design of this interactive installation. Here, the idea of 'everyone is a visitor to a museum' in the museum

sector and the idea of 'everyone is a guest to a food gathering' in UAE culture coincide. Around this installation, several rooms encourage us to explore

the Emirati food world, e.g., coffee and Dallat Al-Takdeem (coffee pot), imported and exported food products, which reminded me of the wonderful food and drinks I tried over the last few days, such as Karak chai and dates (Figure 2). In the rooms showcasing Arabic-style plates, we could further understand UAE food culture by flipping the plates fixed to the wall, which are distinguished by colour and pattern from one another and serve different traditional Emirati food. The white plate with a purple rim serves Aseedah (a common Arabic dessert), and the white plate with a green rim serves Rgag (a kind of flatbread).

To give a brief summary, this food exhibition manages to represent not only the food but also the local people. It introduces multiple facets of Emirati food and its rituals, customs and practices, which are 'what to say'; and, naturally, the rest of the stories of food and its culture are 'what not to say', which encourage visitors, especially visitors unfamiliar with Emirati culture.

Admittedly, my reflections are unable to cover all the interesting details of the ICME IC Day and might be somewhat subjective. However, these reflections are genuine and echo the feelings I had three months ago. I am glad that I embraced rich insights from different disciplinary fields, enjoyed the museum visits, and met my peers working on museum representation and migration. Equally importantly, I made new friends, the two cats wandering around the Traditional Food House, which was an unexpected surprise (Figure 3).

RETHINKING THE GULF: MUSEUMS, INNOVATION, AND A NEW CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Alessandra Frontini, Università Politecnica delle Marche, Department of Civil Engineering, Construction and Architecture, Ancona, Italy

From scepticism to surprise: arriving in Dubai

I must admit, I belonged to that group of people who felt sceptical about Dubai. I found myself wondering why it had been chosen as the host city for the 27th General Conference. More than that, I wondered what I would possibly do for almost ten days in what I imagined as a sanctuary of concrete rising out of the desert. Yet that uncertainty began to shift the moment I arrived at Dubai International Airport. Along with my passport, I was handed a complimentary 24-hour SIM card branded with the ICOM GC identity. For a brief moment, I wondered how they could possibly know I was there for the conference. Only later did I realise it was offered to every visitor entering the country.

And that was precisely the point: there was a remarkable sense of pride. Despite the fact that Dubai was simultaneously hosting at least ten other major international events, we - the museum community - were being treated as the jewel in the crown. The event of the month, if not of the year. Billboards were everywhere, and even souvenir

shopkeepers knew about the conference. Never in my life had I experienced such visible and widespread attention for a gathering devoted to culture. Whatever certainties I had brought with me finally collapsed when I witnessed the extraordinary way the conference itself was organised, and later, when we travelled on to Abu Dhabi.

Abu Dhabi and the making of a cultural district

the first time I visited Abu Dhabi, for the ICOM Europe meeting on 10 November, I was genuinely struck by the remarkable concentration of world-class museums in the capital of the United Arab Emirates. We were welcomed by the then Director of the Louvre, Manuel Rabaté, on the museum's ninth anniversary, marking nine years since its opening on 10 November 2017. What an emotion! For him and for the audience! A touching moment that invited a quiet reflection on how swiftly those years had passed. Later that afternoon, from the Louvre's terrace reception, we were able to observe the vast Guggenheim Abu Dhabi rising directly

opposite. With its 45,000 square metres, it is set to become the largest institution within the global constellation of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation museums.

The UAE has deliberately envisioned, planned, and delivered an entire Cultural District on Saadiyat Island. At the time of the ICOM General Conference, it already included Louvre Abu Dhabi, teamLab Phenomena Abu Dhabi, and Abrahamic Family House. Just one month later, the Zayed National Museum and the Natural History Museum Abu Dhabi opened their doors, while the Guggenheim is expected to follow in 2026. Any museologist would inevitably ask: what exactly is happening here?

A foreign guest at the ICOM UAE annual meeting

A brief aside: I decided to return in order to visit those newly opened museums, which promised to be truly remarkable. On 14 February 2026, the electoral assembly of the ICOM UAE took place at the newly inaugurated Zayed National Museum. Having kindly



Participants in the ICOM UAE electoral assembly gathered in front of the 18-metre-long Magan boat, one of the iconic symbols of the museum.

received permission to attend as a guest, I made my way to the museum.

What I encountered was a committee composed in almost equal parts of Emiratis and expatriates living in the UAE. Everyone was exceptionally welcoming, and the presence of around fifty participants created an atmosphere that naturally encouraged conversation, exchange, and conviviality. Despite the committee's relatively modest size, no fewer than two candidates stood for the presidency. It was also particularly encouraging to see that the leadership legacy of Nasir Aldarmaki, now Vice President of International Council of Museums, will be carried forward by a woman: Salama Nasser Al Shamsi. The meeting was followed by a guided tour of the museum, with participants divided into two equally sized groups: English-speaking and Arabic-speaking.

The Zayed National Museum: where phygital truly comes to life

The architectural space is extraordinary. Conceived and realised by the

celebrated architect Norman Foster, the exterior evokes the stylised wings of a falcon, a symbolic animal of the UAE. Inside, harmonious white forms create an atmosphere of remarkable comfort, inviting visitors to slow down and dwell in the experience. The entire building has been designed with sustainability at its core: the museum's five lightweight steel wings form part of a natural ventilation system. Through a thermal effect, air is naturally cooled before flowing into the atrium through a low-level ventilation network, seamlessly integrating environmental responsibility into the architectural concept itself.

At the same time, the museographic journey reveals an extraordinary variety of interpretive supports: immersive environments, video projections, carefully orchestrated light design, digital showcases, and interactive interfaces for many of the displayed items. Tactile printed photographs also make the experience accessible to blind and visually impaired visitors. In my

own modest experience, I have rarely encountered such a sophisticated range of technologies integrated with this degree of coherence. If there is a place where the digital truly meets the physical, becoming genuinely phygital, it is surely this jewel of the Arabian Peninsula.

As if this were not enough, the museum's education and accessibility department for people of determination is developing with striking clarity and purpose. Since 1 February 2026, the museum has introduced what it calls "Quiet Mornings," opening one hour early on selected Sundays to offer visitors on the autism spectrum and those with sensory sensitivities, together with their families, the opportunity to experience the museum in a tranquil environment. Softer lighting, reduced sound levels, and gentle sensory settings provide a space designed for comfort and inclusion.

It is therefore no surprise that in March the museum was selected among the TIME World's Greatest Places 2026. Without question, it deserves a visit, as does the wider Saadiyat Cultural District in Abu Dhabi. Let this, then, be an invitation to all of you not to underestimate what is taking shape here.

Acknowledgements

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POLYVOCAL MUSEUMS AND ETHICAL AI: REFLECTIONS FROM ICOM DUBAI 2025

Isabel Beirigo, Researcher and Project Manager

Introduction

From 11 to 17 November 2025, Dubai hosted the 27th ICOM General Conference. The theme focused on the future of museums in a fast-changing world. I attended as a member of the ICOM Working Group on Decolonisation and presented the paper Ethical AI for Cultural Heritage: Lessons learnt from the DE-BIAS project.

Polyvocality: Rethinking Our Collections

The conference programme addressed sub-themes including Intangible Heritage, Youth Power, and New Technologies. Despite their diversity, these topics shared a common concern – how cultural heritage institutions respond to a changing world and stay relevant to society.

A recurring theme throughout the conference was the growing effort by museums to reinterpret collections through more polyvocal and participatory approaches. Many presentations highlighted how institutions are increasingly collaborating with underrepresented communities, not only to improve access but also to promote shared



authority and mutual understanding. In this context, museums are gradually moving beyond traditional gatekeeping roles and becoming spaces for dialogue, exchange, and multiple perspectives. Discussions repeatedly emphasised that these processes require time, trust, and sustained collaboration.

There were also discussions around innovative approaches to provenance research, in which the main shift is going beyond the institutional research to include the perspectives of audiences and communities in collection meta-data. This changes how collections are described, accessed, and understood.

AI, Ethics, and New Challenges

As expected, the topic of AI and emerging technologies were central topics throughout the conference. Discussions explored how these tools are reshaping museum practice and raised

questions about ethics, ownership and accountability. While museums are co-creating content with Indigenous communities and using digital platforms to make collections more accessible to wider audiences, these devel-

opments also raise important ethical concerns that museums must address.

Critical and ethical reflections are essential if cultural organisations want to embrace emerging technologies. In my presentation, I shared lessons learnt from the work at Sound & Vision on the project DE-BIAS. One key point is the need for long-term relationships with communities, which call for programmes and projects developed in close collaboration with these communities.

My presentation was part of the ICME session on Museum Practice in the Age of AI: Use of New Technologies and Ethical Implications. Together with colleagues from the heritage field, we shared experiences from our museums. From examples like the National Museum of Taiwan History to the Estonian National Museum, our conversation revolved around how AI has a positive impact on the daily work of museums but also presents challenges that we all need to be aware of. Questions such as „how to reconcile privacy and access?“ or concerns around ownership and data stewardship guided the discussions. The conference created opportunities for exchange among museum professionals working across diverse cultural and institutional contexts, but who are engaged with similar challenges.

One of my main reflections from the conference is that the future of museums and cultural organisations call for adaptability as much as it requires accountability and respect. Respect for the diversity of our society and the need to listen to other voices.



FROM THE STORM TO THE PORT: THE NEW "SHIP" OF THE VENTSPILS SEASIDE OPEN-AIR MUSEUM IS MOORED

Dace Kamela, M.A. (History), M.A. (Education), Historian of the Ventspils Seaside Open-Air Museum

April 26, 2024 marked a significant moment in the history of Ventspils, as the city symbolically “moored” a unique new addition to the Seaside Open-Air Museum — a museum building designed to resemble a ship docked along the coast. Designed by architect Ija Rudzīte of SIA “Balts un Melns,” the building has already earned recognition in several prestigious architectural and construction competitions.

Architecture Inspired by the Sea

The project originally envisioned a three-storey structure, but practical considerations led to a revised two-storey design without a basement. Today, the 1,317-square-metre building houses exhibition spaces, climate-controlled collection storage, and modern restoration workshops for wooden and metal objects.

However, the construction process resembled sailing through a strong storm. Construction began in 2021 but was severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. These events caused major disruptions in material supplies. After terminating the contract with the first



builder in 2022, the project was successfully completed under the leadership of SIA “Warss+”. The result is technically impressive: almost 10 kilometers of cables are hidden in the “belly” of the building, while the outer walls are decorated with more than 1,200 cubic meters of coniferous boards and modern rusty metal cladding.

"Two Worlds" in One Story

The museum’s new permanent exhibition, “By the Sea and on the Land:

Traditional Way of Life in Northern Kurzeme in the 19th–20th Centuries,” was created by the “Ddstudio” team in collaboration with museum specialists. The exhibition explores the relationship between two contrasting yet interconnected worlds: sea and land, fishermen and farmers, Livonians and Latvians. The exhibition features more than 300 collection items – from massive fishing boots to delicate hooks. One of the exhibition’s most emotionally powerful themes focuses on the Soviet-era

From left: Director of the Investment and Development Agency of Latvia Ieva Jāgere, Project Manager of Ventspils Museum Ilva Zavicka, Historian of the Seaside Open-Air Museum Dace Kamela, Director of Ventspils Museum Solvita Ūdre and Minister of Economy of Latvia Viktors Valainis. Photo: Investment and Development Agency of Latvia (LIAA)



“closed zone,” when coastal residents were within arm’s reach of the sea but were unable to access it freely due to barbed wire and border guards- physically unreachable.

From traumatic life stories to voices of the forest

The museum is not just about serious topics and histories; it is alive and sincere. Visitors are delighted by digital animations and characters hidden in the exhibition, such as the cats Muris, Bocis and Rūdis, who are waiting for their fate. Meanwhile, on the second floor, in the North Kurzeme nature exhibition, you can immerse yourself in the atmosphere of the forest, listening to the voices of birds and animals.

The open-air section is complemented by the renovated Boat House, which houses the largest collection of

fishing gear in the Baltics. Interestingly, during the restoration it was discovered that many boats were painted gray during the Soviet years so that they could be mobilized for military needs if necessary.

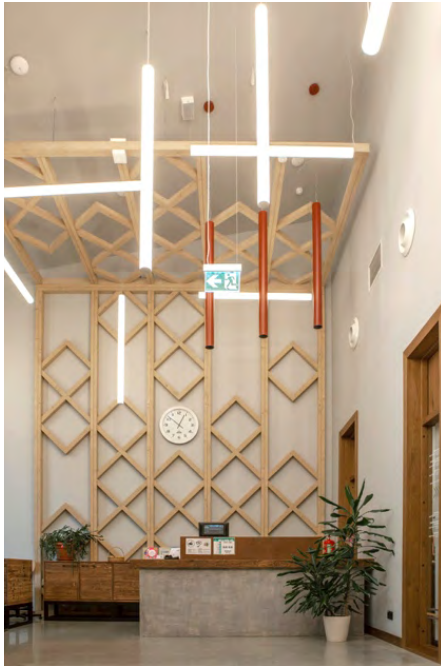
Recognition and quality mark

The new museum complex has already received high praise among industry professionals. The building and exhibition have received several prestigious awards, including 1st place in the "Latvian Construction Award 2023" competition in the "Wooden Building" nomination, as well as recognition at the "Best Building of the Year in Latvia" show. These awards confirm that Ventspils has acquired not only a new tourist attraction, but also a world-class architectural pearl that honors the cultural and historical heritage of Northern Kurzeme.

On December 4, 2025, the award ceremony of the Latvian Investment and Development Agency (LIAA) and the Ministry of Economics competition “Export and Innovation Award 2025” took place in Riga, at the Dailes Theatre, where the most successful exporters and leaders in the field of innovation in Latvia were identified. This year, the “Export and Innovation Award” competition was held for the 20th time. The new multifunctional building of the Seaside Open-Air Museum with an exhibition has received the award “The Most Export-Capable New Tourism Product” in the public sector!

This project, implemented with the support of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), is proof that even through the greatest challenges it is possible to arrive at a safe and beautiful port.





All Photos:
Ventspils Museum Archive.

BOOK LAUNCH: MUSEUMS, SUBJECTS AND TERRITORIES IN DIALOGUE

Ilana Seltzer Goldstein and Andrea Rabinovici (Federal University of São Paulo)

The book *Museus, Sujeitos e Territórios em Diálogo*, edited by Andrea Rabinovici and Ilana S. Goldstein, brings together testimonials and reflections on fifteen Brazilian museum initiatives that are surprising in their variety, power and creativity. These community organisations are

organised at Federal University of São Paulo in the end of 2024, open to people outside the academic world. The course attracted around 1,200 students. In order to be more widely disseminated and perpetuated, the talks and debates were transcribed, edited, and illustrated for this book.

ums in which the territory itself is museumised. We have testimonials referring to institutions focused on coexistence between peoples and memory actions aimed at segments that are normally invisible, such as indigenous peoples, quilombolas, masters of traditional crafts, resi-



dedicated to local memory, intergenerational transmission of knowledge and political representation of non-hegemonic groups. The book's starting point was a free education programme

The texts reveal museums and cultural spaces with a wide variety of formats, missions, and collections. There are institutions whose collections are predominantly immaterial and muse-

dents of peripheries and GLBTQIA+ segments, among others.

The flourishing of museums linked to territories and communities is a recent phenomenon in Brazil, com-

pared to the emergence of large museums with national, imperial and “universal” narratives. We can venture some hypotheses that help explain the emergence of such distinctive and innovative museological practices and thinking.

One of them is the progressive strengthening of social movements in Brazil since its redemocratisation in the 1980s. Another is the shift in the early administrations of President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, beginning in 2003, which worked with a pluralistic and less elitist view of culture. In this context, for example, the Intangible Heritage Programme in Brazil was consolidated, valuing the recording and safeguarding of knowledge and practices from different ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic strata. Cultural policies that work with a broad and inclusive anthropological concept of culture and a concept of heritage that encompasses more sectors of the population, going beyond material goods and hegemonic narratives, created a favourable environment for such initiatives.

The expansion of spaces for memory and community representation may also be related to recent discussions about the decolonisation of museums. In the field of art, museology, and Brazilian cultural policies, the discussion about who speaks what, about whom, from what social position and from what racial and gender perspective arrived with force in the 21st century, valuing the protagonism of segments of the population that were previously silenced and subalternised.

Such processes and ideas have generated a veritable ‘museological insurrection’ (Brulon, 2025). These are museums that question the right to collective memories and narratives as a determining value for thinking about the present and the future. Museums focused on human rights and social justice, valuing local knowledge and territorialities that are very powerful for communities and territories in search of citizenship.

Museums also become tools for collaboratively addressing issues related to the development of groups and communities, through the reinterpretation of heritage and the appreciation of their own narratives.

It is possible that the proliferation of such initiatives is also due to the progressive openness and flexibility of the museum sector, with social museology, culminating in the new ICOM resolution of 2022, which included terms such as ‘intangible,’ ‘inclusive,’ ‘diversity,’ and ‘community participation.’

It is interesting to note that much of what is contained in the resolution is already practised in the museums and memory spaces presented in this book, in an organic way that is rooted in the territory. They often lack continuous funding; specific training in management, cataloguing and exhibition design, as well as equipment

and technical conditions that enable long-term projects. However, they do not need to make an effort to engage the community, dialogue with their surroundings, contribute to the country’s cultural diversity, or serve the public. They were born that way and for that purpose. And perhaps they can be considered the vanguard of museology today. Hence the importance of the publication, which has a small print run, is free of charge, but also has a digital version available at the link below. The possibility of launching an English version is being studied. Finally, it is worth noting that the organisers of the course and the publication derived from it are anthropologists who work at the interface with environmental sciences - Andrea Rabinovici - and art history - Ilana Goldstein. The two coordinate complementary bodies to the Dean’s Office of the University of São Paulo, respectively the Kaapora Chair of Non-Hegemonic Traditional Knowledge and the Sustainability Visions of the Future Chair.

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ICME News

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ICME News is, above all, a platform for its members. We warmly invite ICME members and museum professionals worldwide to share their experiences, research, exhibitions, projects, and reflections. We welcome contributions on upcoming conferences and exhibitions, as well as reviews of past events. We are also interested in articles that explore current trends in museum practice and contemporary debates in the field.

We encourage submissions that introduce ICME member museums or provide critical insights into key issues such as restitution and repatriation. In future editions, we also aim to explore these themes through innovative formats, including comics, to better understand how ethnographic museums are engaging with these topics. We aim to reach all members around the world and the wider museum community. The newsletter is currently published in Arabic, English, and Spanish, and French will be added starting from this Issue 98.

Editorial Team: ICME Newsletter No. 98

Ali Mahfouz, PhD

Cultural Heritage Consultant,
FalconViz, KSA.
Editor-in-chief of ICME News
E-mail: ali_mahfouz55@yahoo.com

Ana Isabel Díaz-Plaza Varón

Senior Technician in Ethnography
and Conservator / Museo de Artes y
Tradiciones Populares, Universidad
Autónoma de Madrid (Spain)

Heidi McKinnon

ICOM ICME Chair
Founder, Curators without Borders

Marenka Thompson-Odlum, PhD

Research Curator- Critical
Perspectives / Pitt Rivers Museum-
University of Oxford

Anamaría Rojas Múnera

PhD Candidate in Museum
and Heritage Studies / Victoria
University of Wellington, Aotearoa
New Zealand / ICME Vice Chair

Mai Khaled Amer

M.A. in Museum Studies – Helwan
University, Egypt / Museologist –
Arab Council of the General Union of
Arab Archaeologists.

Lara Corona, PhD

Researcher, Universitat Internacional
de Catalunya / Director of Rosas
Museum, Italy

Graphic Design

Tihana Nalić
E-mail: tnalic@gmail.com