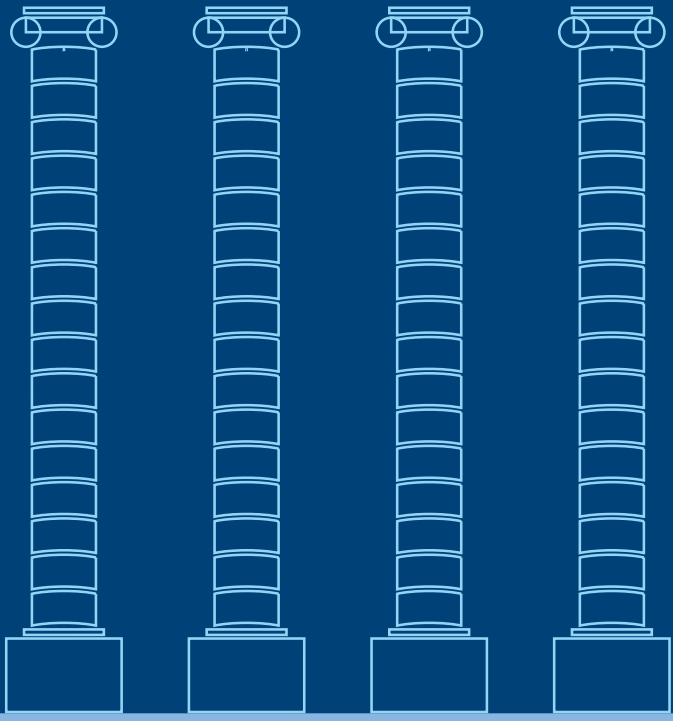
THE BEST IN HERITAGE

"la Caixa" Foundation

Barcelona

Diputació Barcelona

Generalitat de Catalunya
Government of Catalonia



BARCELONA 2026

THE BEST IN HERITAGE

Projects of Influence

25th Edition

BARCELONA
12 -13 NOVEMBER 2026

Dedicated to the memory of Kenneth Hudson OBE and Georges Henri Rivière

with

IMAGINES

NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND MULTIMEDIA

In partnership with

"la Caixa" Foundation, The City Council of Barcelona,
Barcelona Provincial Council & The Government of Catalonia

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UNDER PATRONAGE OF EUROPA NOSTRA &
THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF MUSEUMS (ICOM)

Contents

Introduction to TBIH2026 6

***IMAGINES* (NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND MULTIMEDIA)**

F@IMP Award 2025 by AVICOM / ICOM Dubai Special Prize
Museum of Ethnography | A Polyphonic Museum Experience 8

Heritage in Motion Awards 2025 / Virtual & Augmented Reality
HistoryCity 10

F@IMP Award 2025 by AVICOM / Museum Film, Animation Category / Research and Documentary Prize
The Dalí Theatre Museum | "History of Art, Short but Clear" by Salvador Dalí 12

blooloop Innovation Award 2025
Musa Guide 14

Museums in Short Award 2025 / Popular Choice Award 2025
Kode Bergen Art Museum | Heidi Bjørgan: Meet the Ceramicist Who Was Meant to Be a Footballer 16

F@IMP Award by AVICOM / Exhibition / Interpretation Prize 2025
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University | Roots of Eternity 18

2025 Ars Electronica Award for Digital Humanity
Synthetic Memories 20

European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Award 2025 / Research
Odeuropa 22

Heritage in Motion Awards 2025 / Overall winners & Heritage Audiovisuals
Hands Deep – A Journey into the Demoscene 24

Apollo Magazine Digital Innovation of the Year Award 2025
Getty Research Institute | Getty Provenance Index 26

CORE PROGRAMME

European Museum Academy / Art Museum Award 2025
Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) 28

CIMAM Award for Outstanding Museum Practices 2025
Museo Barda del Desierto 32

The Council of Europe Museum Prize 2025
Euskararen Etxea – The House of the Basque Language 36

APOM / Portuguese Museum of the Year 2025
Serralves Museum 40

IFLA/Baker & Taylor Public Library of the Year Award 2025
Gabrielle-Roy Library 44

European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Award 2025 / Citizens' Engagement & Awareness-raising
Casa Batlló | Integrating Neurodiversity in World Heritage 48

Museums + Heritage Awards 2025 / Permanent Exhibition of the Year
Showtown Blackpool, Blackpool, United Kingdom 52

European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Grand Prix 2025 / Citizens' Engagement & Awareness-raising
Hedgehog's Home – Inventing a Better World **56**

European Museum Academy / DASA Award 2025
Salon Stolz **60**

Chinese Museums Association / Most Innovative Museums in China Award 2025
Nanjing Chinese Imperial Examination Museum **64**

Museums + Heritage Awards 2025 / Sector Impact Award
30 Years of England's Largest Festival of History and Culture **68**

AMA's Robert R. Janes Award for Social Responsibility 2025
Millet and District Museum and Archives . **72**

EMF's Meyvaert Museum Prize for Environmental Sustainability 2025
MUZOO **76**

European Museum of the Year Award 2025
Manchester Museum **80**

European Heritage Award / Europa Nostra Award 2025 / Conservation and Adaptive Reuse
EC1 Łódź – City of Culture Complex **84**

2025 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation / Award of Distinction
Iwami Ginzan Library Conservation Project **88**

Family Friendly Museum Award 2025 as Best Large Museum
The Burrell Collection **92**

European Heritage Award / Europa Nostra Grand Prix 2025 / Research
Glacier Archaeology Programme – Secrets of the Ice **96**

2025 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation / Award of Merit
Lowo Nyiphug Namdrol Norbuling Monastery Conservation Project **100**

ICOM Award for Sustainable Development Practice in Museums 2025
Barbados Museum & Historical Society (BMHS) | Shared Island Stories Between Scotland and the Caribbean: Transnational Youth Exchange **104**

European Museum Academy / Luigi Micheletti Award 2025
Obersalzberg Documentation Center **108**

UMAC-ICOM Award of Excellence 2025
University of Navarra Museum (MUN) | Arts and Life **112**

CIMAM Award for Outstanding Museum Practices 2025
The Palestinian Museum **116**

The Activist Museum Award 2025 by RCMG, Museum Studies, University of Leicester
Sado Jirde & Black South West Network **120**

Speakers and Jury 124

Barcelona Partners and Venues 136

Word from our Patron 142

The Best in Heritage 2026: Twenty-Five Years of Excellence in Memory and Preservation

Professor Tomislav S. Šola
DIRECTOR, THE BEST IN HERITAGE

A Silver Anniversary in Barcelona

Twenty-five years. For a tiny non-profit organisation sustained by belief, dedication, and an often-volunteer team, this is not merely a milestone, it is a statement. The Best in Heritage has proven, year after year, that it was simply too good to disappear.

Barcelona, luminous and culture-rich, remains our host city for this exceptional anniversary edition. What began as a bold idea has grown into one of the heritage world's most distinctive gatherings, and this silver jubilee is the moment to celebrate that journey together.

A Quarter Century of the Profession's Best

Since its founding, The Best in Heritage has chronicled and celebrated exceptional achievements across museums, heritage, and conservation from every corner of the world. Our privilege, and our discipline, is to curate an annual selection from more than 300 award-winning projects, drawn from professional juries worldwide. In twenty-five years, hundreds of colleagues from those juries have made this possible. Our quality rests on their carefully developed criteria and their commitment to excellence.

We have never merely collected accolades. From the outset, our mission was to place achievements in dialogue, to lift them beyond their original context into a global arena, making hand-picked selections better known and more useful to the profession. This is how a profession is built: through the visible transfer of its finest experiences. The founder claimed the maximal goal, a profession that would encompass entire heritage domain, under the leadership of museum occupation and its world organisation.

Over the years in Dubrovnik and now in Barcelona, we grew into a convincing yet relaxed one-track event, attracting up to 200 participants from some thirty or more countries and, usually, six continents. Those who were conceiving new projects, organising thematic conferences, or seeking inspiration would come to our event, and leave with ideas, partnerships, and new colleagues. We have even been called "star makers": a reflection of our role in shining a light on dedicated professionals whose work too often goes unnoticed.

Adapting Without Losing Our Essence

Turning digital in 2020, compelled by COVID-19, was both a challenge and an opportunity. Through video interviews and care-

fully curated digital encounters, we demonstrated that the heritage community can adapt without losing its spirit. Five years of screens made the return to in-person gathering all the more meaningful. Thanks to our partners in Barcelona!

The streamlined format that emerged from those years has served us well: a three-day, fully packed programme of some forty projects, with ample time for the human exchanges that no recorded presentation can fully replace. Those face-to-face conversations, between laureates, practitioners, students, and curious visitors, remain the irreplaceable heart of what we do.

Technology, Memory, and the Profession's Future

Eleven years ago, we launched the IMAGINES segment, dedicated to the use of new technologies and media. Today, that conversation has moved to the centre of the entire profession. VR, AR, holograms, AI, the machines have already moved in. Technologies are reshaping the landscape in which heritage professionals work, urging us to rethink institutions not as static repositories of memory, but as living agents of change.

The conference serves both as a celebration and as a compass: charting where we are, and pointing towards where we might yet go. Our mission from the beginning was to contribute to the grand heritage profession, the one responsible for public memory, and to include libraries and archives as equal partners in that responsibility. The wisdom we can offer together to the troubled world has never been more urgently needed.

Projects of Influence

At the heart of each edition is the designation of two "Projects of Influence", one for each part of the programme. Selected by the conference audience and a Jury composed of moderators and former laureates, these projects represent what the community finds most inspirational. They do not remain isolated triumphs: they are regularly invited to international events, becoming part of a wider effort to amplify the meaning of heritage in a world facing profound challenges.

To preserve is to resist erasure. To innovate is to affirm that memory itself can evolve. To engage communities is to acknowledge that heritage lives not in stones and artefacts alone, but in people. Ideally, we suggest that public memory profession should have always been part of strategic developmental decision making.

An Enduring Resource

The Best in Heritage is not only an annual event but a living library. Our comprehensive digital archive remains accessible year-round, providing knowledge, inspiration, and educational materials to practitioners and students alike. Each edition adds to this resource, preserving not only the record of our encounters but their global, humanist spirit.

Twenty-five years on, we continue with the same conviction with which we began. At moments like this, the centre of the world for heritage is right here, where the winners, the bravest and most creative among us meet. It is a rare privilege for the city and the participants alike, for together we build bright arguments in the noble dialogue of civilisations.



F@IMP AWARDS 2025 BY AVICOM / ICOM DUBAI
SPECIAL PRIZE

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

F@IMP AWARDS 2025 BY AVICOM / ICOM DUBAI
SPECIAL PRIZE

Marianna Berényi
HEAD, COMMUNICATIONS, MUSEUM OF ETHNOGRAPHY

TECHNOLOGY AS A MEDIUM OF POLYPHONY

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The Museum of Ethnography's new permanent collection exhibition, opened in 2024, is the fifth permanent exhibition in the institution's 153-year history. Across 3,000 square metres, 3,600 objects, 1,600 photographs and around 1,000 stories present the diversity of the museum's collections. From the outset, the exhibition was conceived not simply as a representative display, but as a space where different periods, cultures, research perspectives and personal narratives could enter into dialogue.

A network of more than 500 digital devices forms an integral part of this interpretive system. Interactive applications, animations, films, data visualisations, digital object labels, map-based interfaces and sound installations extend the contexts of the artefacts and provide access to archival sources, research processes and multiple interpretations. QR codes allow selected content to remain accessible beyond the museum visit.

A central professional principle of the project is that technology should function not as spectacle, but as a medium of interpretation. Visitors decide which stories to follow and how deeply to explore them. In the immersive Museum Worlds installation, their digital silhouettes influence the movement of projected concepts, making physical presence itself part of the exhibition.

The professional significance of the project lies in demonstrating that digital innovation becomes meaningful when it supports polyphony, connects different levels of knowledge, and enables visitors to become active interpreters rather than passive recipients of cultural heritage.

↗ AN IMMERSIVE INSTALLATION AT THE END OF THE EXHIBITION.
→ THE FUNDRAISING BOOK OF THE BIKUR HOLIM JEWISH MUTUAL AID SOCIETY IN PÁPA (COLLECTED BY GYULA GRÜNBAUM, 1912),

ONE FOOT IN THE PAST: IMMERSIVE MOBILE STORYTELLING

HISTORYCITY APPS

ITALY/UNITED KINGDOM

HERITAGE IN MOTION AWARD FOR VIRTUAL AND AUGMENTED REALITY 2025

Fabrizio Nevola
CO-DIRECTOR, HISTORYCITY, UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

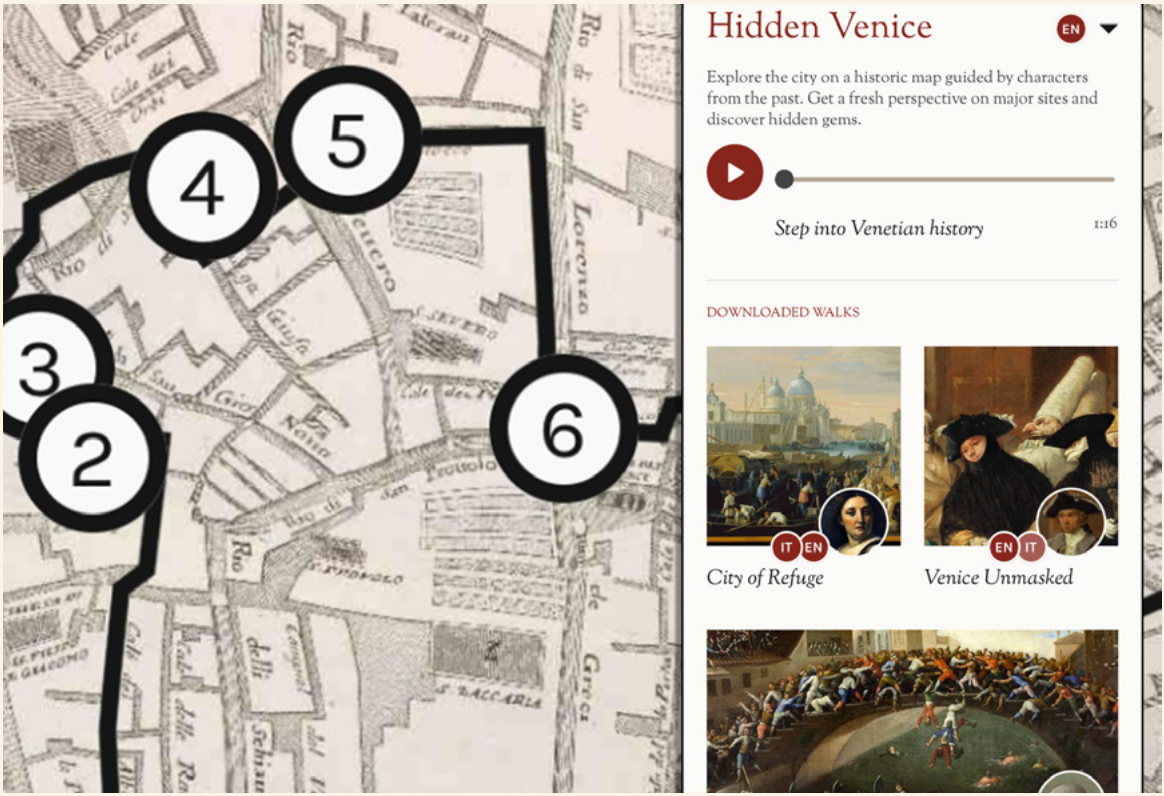
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HistoryCity

Step into the past with immersive mobile storytelling

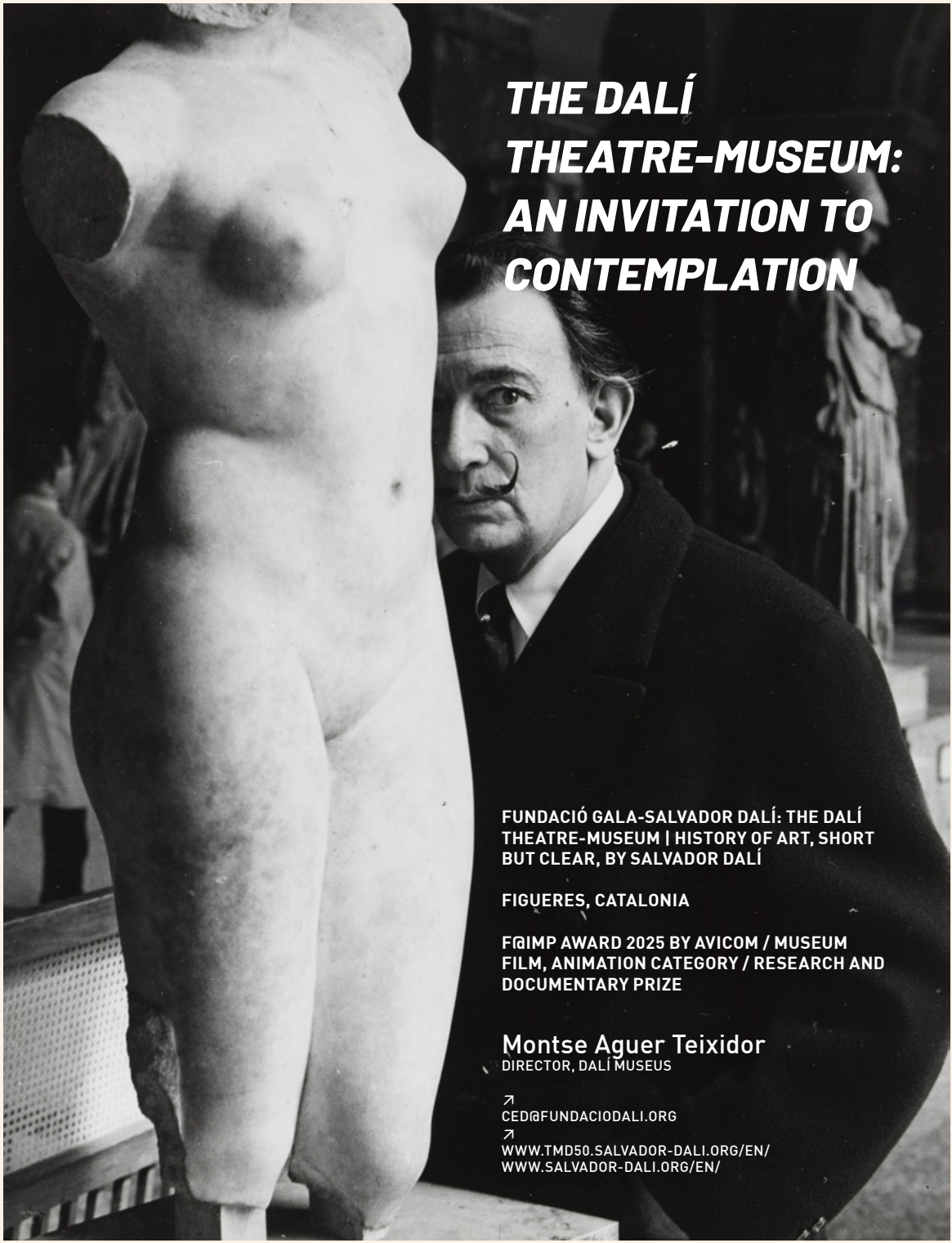




HistoryCity is a series of free AR apps that provide 'time travel' trails with the aim of expanding urban heritage. We wanted to see how historians could use smartphones to stitch the social and cultural past of the city to place, and to do that as accessible public history. We developed a first-person model where critically fictionalised historical figures, voiced by actors, take the app user on an urban adventure. On a georeferenced historic map, these characters take you off the beaten track, while bringing to life people and stories often invisible in conventional heritage tourism.

We are continually evolving our platform, our 'eyes up' audio storytelling design and our co-productive practice. All trails are made in collaboration with historians, museum curators and heritage stakeholders. Secondary audio and images connect artefacts from local museums and galleries to the trail sites.

Heritage in Motion recognised two recent efforts as pushing forward the boundaries of cultural heritage. Hidden Venice tackles early modern migration through the figure of a Greek immigrant in 1572; class, craft and masculinity through a shipyard apprentice in 1639; and tensions around libertine culture through a true crime story from 1730, in which you follow clues with the captain of the Venetian 'vice squad'. Meanwhile, Hidden Trento's latest trail explores the Fascist era through a story set on the day Italy surrendered to the Allies, 8 September 1943, a two-hander in which a father and daughter attempt to flee Trento as German forces take over the city.



THE DALÍ THEATRE-MUSEUM: AN INVITATION TO CONTEMPLATION

FUNDACIÓ GALA-SALVADOR DALÍ: THE DALÍ THEATRE-MUSEUM | HISTORY OF ART, SHORT BUT CLEAR, BY SALVADOR DALÍ

FIGUERES, CATALONIA

F@IMP AWARD 2025 BY AVICOM / MUSEUM FILM, ANIMATION CATEGORY / RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTARY PRIZE

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Produced by the Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí to mark the 50th anniversary of the Dalí Theatre-Museum, this award-winning audiovisual project invites audiences to rediscover the museum through a new perspective: the history of art as seen through Salvador Dalí's eyes.

The project is inspired by History of Art, Short but Clear, a text written by Dalí in 1947 in which he offers his own personal interpretation of art history, from Classical Greece to the twentieth century. Taking this text as a starting point, the audiovisual traces the artists, movements and masterpieces that shaped Dalí's imagination and reveals how they are reflected throughout the Theatre-Museum, one of his most ambitious and dearest creations.

Drawing on unique materials preserved at the Centre for Dalinian Studies, including manuscripts, photographs, magazines, intervened books from Dalí's personal library and rare film footage, the project combines scholarly research with an engaging visual narrative. Additional investigations in archives, museums and private collections across Europe and the United States further enriched the story.

More than a documentary, the audiovisual offers a new way of understanding the Theatre-Museum, highlighting the dialogue between Dalí and the artists he admired. By transforming archival research into an experience that can be enjoyed by both specialists and general audiences, the project seeks to strengthen the connection between cultural heritage, knowledge and public engagement.

Recognised with the 2025 F@IMP Award by AVICOM, it demonstrates how research, creativity and collaboration can bring museum collections and documentary heritage to life for contemporary audiences.

↗ SALVADOR DALÍ VISITING THE GREEK SCULPTURE ROOMS AT THE LOUVRE MUSEUM IN PARIS, C. 1965
→ THE DALÍ THEATRE-MUSEUM, A HISTORY OF ART, SHORT BUT CLEAR BY SALVADOR DALÍ



SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

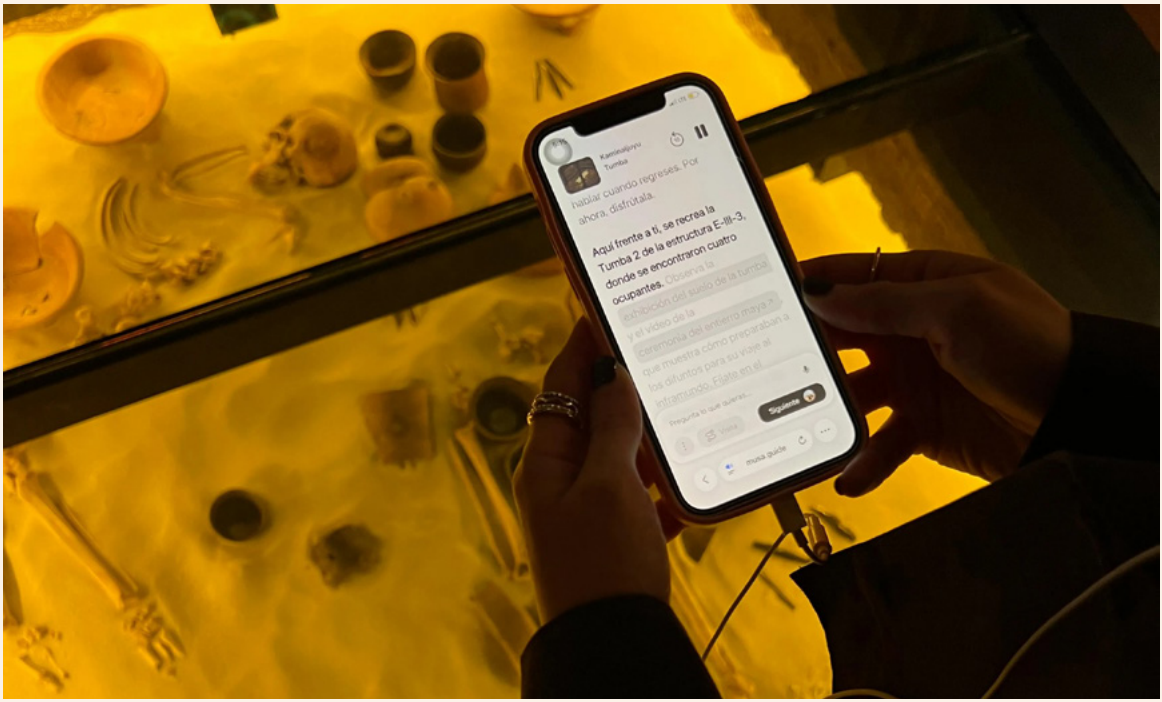
MUSA GUIDE

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM

BLOOLOOP INNOVATION AWARD 2025

Hendrik Schaefer
CO-FOUNDER, MUSA GUIDE

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Somewhere in every museum is the one object that will stay with a visitor for years. But between the layout, the flow, and the sheer depth of the archive, how do you make sure every visitor finds it?

Musa Guide is a modern, immersive audio experience built from a museum's own knowledge. It guides visitors along curated paths and answers their questions, in their own language and in the institution's own voice.

Miraflores, a museum in Guatemala City built on the ancient Mayan site of Kaminaljuyú, was our first partner. Once the guide was live, one object kept drawing questions: the Mayan ball game. Archaeologist Hari Castillo noticed and extended the knowledge base to cover the museum's entire ball-game archive. Very quickly, average time rose from ten minutes on the previous guide to forty with Musa, with most visitors still asking questions up until the end of their museum visit.

At the 2025 blooloop Innovation Awards, the jury rewarded the experience: an audio guide that takes the visit further than the recordings that came before it. One judge described it as “removing friction and creating those seamless, personalized” experiences. Reaching that meant taming the underlying AI, so it represents a museum accurately instead of behaving like a generic chatbot. AI is powerful but never one-size-fits-all, and it takes real expertise to shape it into a curated experience that lets every visitor find that one object that stays with them.

↗ MUSA GUIDE AT MUSEO MIRAFLORES - VISITOR WITH MAYA CENSER (C) MUSEO MIRAFLORES
→ MUSA GUIDE AT MUSEO MIRAFLORES - KAMINALJUYU TOMB (C) MUSEO MIRAFLORES



KODE BERGEN ART MUSEUM | HEIDI BJ□RGAN: MEET THE CERAMICIST WHO WAS MEANT TO BE A FOOTBALLER

BERGEN, NORWAY

MUSEUMS IN SHORT AWARD 2025 / POPULAR CHOICE AWARD 2025

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HUMAN CONNECTION AS MUSEUM MEDIATION: BRINGING AUDIENCES CLOSER TO CONTEMPORARY ART



Contemporary art can inspire, challenge, and sometimes alienate audiences.

At Kode, Norway's second-largest art museum, we believe one of our most important responsibilities is to make art accessible without limiting interpretation. Our award-winning communication project therefore focuses on a simple but powerful idea:

helping visitors and online audiences connect with the people behind the artworks and understand how exhibitions come to life.

Since 2018, Kode's three-person communications team has produced short artist portrait films for exhibitions, shown both in the museum and online.

Rather than explaining what artworks "mean," these films invite artists to reflect on their creative processes, materials, motivations, doubts, and ambitions. Audiences gain insight into the human stories behind the work while retaining the freedom to form their own interpretations.

This is not about innovation for its own sake or creating "viral content". It is simply storytelling centred on human experience, voiced by the artists themselves.

In this presentation, we highlight our portrait of ceramic artist Heidi Bjørgan. By following her in the studio and documenting her reflections on creativity, craftsmanship, family life, and artistic ambition, we created a narrative that complemented the exhibition without replacing visitors' own encounters with the artworks.

What distinguishes this project is its emphasis on trust, empathy, and authenticity. In a time of fragmented attention and artificial intelligence, meaningful human connection remains one of the museum's most valuable tools for strengthening engagement, accessibility, and relevance.

↗ HEIDI BJØRGAN, PHOTO THOR BRØDRESKIFT
→ HEIDI BJØRGAN AT KODE, PHOTO THOR BRØDRESKIFT



ROOTS OF ETERNITY: IMMERSIVE STORYTELLING AS A MODEL FOR MUSEUM INTERPRETATION AND DIGITAL REPATRIATION

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY | ROOTS OF ETERNITY

BLACKSBURG, UNITED STATES

F@IMP AWARD 2025 BY AVICOM / EXHIBITION / INTERPRETATION PRIZE 2025

Eiman Elgewely

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Roots of Eternity explores how immersive technologies can transform museum interpretation while advancing digital repatriation. The project virtually reunites the 4,000-year-old garden models of Meketre, now divided between the Egyptian Museum in Cairo and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Reconnecting these dispersed objects within a shared digital environment restores archaeological context and invites audiences to experience cultural heritage as an interconnected narrative.

Conceived and led by Dr. Eiman Elgewely, exhibition designer, curator, and Principal Investigator, Roots of Eternity was realized through an interdisciplinary collaboration of faculty and students at Virginia Tech, with support from the Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology (ICAT). The exhibition combines projection mapping, spatial sound, generative AI, scent, tactile 3D-printed replicas, and immersive storytelling to reconstruct the garden at full scale, enveloping visitors in an ecologically informed soundscape of native Egyptian birds paired with regionally inspired botanical scents. Structured in three acts, the narrative moves through the landscapes, rituals, and labor practices of the original models, connecting ancient and contemporary Egyptian farming traditions to foreground the continuity of land, labor, and cultural identity.

Designed as a flexible model for museums and educational institutions, Roots of Eternity demonstrates how immersive technologies can extend the interpretive reach of museum collections, broaden accessibility, and foster cross-cultural dialogue. By centering labor, ecology, and everyday life, it expands conventional narratives of ancient Egypt and connects past to present. The project received the AVICOM F@IMP Exhibition / Interpretation Prize 2025 from the International Committee for Audiovisual, New Technologies and Social Media of ICOM, recognizing its innovative contribution to museum interpretation.



SYNTHETIC MEMORIES

BARCELONA, CATALONIA

2025 ARS ELECTRONICA AWARD FOR DIGITAL HUMANITY

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CAN AI PRESERVE OUR INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE MEMORIES?



Stories shape who we are; they anchor us to where we belong. Yet memory is fragile. Through ageing, trauma, displacement or destruction, it can fade, fragment or remain invisible.

Synthetic Memories was born in Barcelona in 2023 as a counter-narrative to the rise of AI. While much of this technology development focused on efficiency, productivity, and surveillance, at Domestic Data Streamers we began critically experimenting with generative AI to recreate images we wished had been part of our family albums. The aim was to transform society's contribution to AI into shared value.

We invited our grandparents to the studio and asked: What is your earliest memory? Do you have an image of it? Carmen remembered visiting her imprisoned father from a balcony; Antonio recalled clandestine trips to the sea by truck; Denia, her first dances after the war. By carefully listening to them and with the use of AI, we transformed these memories into images, revealing personal stories and, at the same time, a collective portrait of post-war Spain.

The methodology is simple: one person shares a memory, an interviewer helps describe it visually, and a "prompter" translates the testimony into anonymised prompts that create images in a matter of seconds. The participant guides the images until one feels close to their memory.

These blurry, imperfect and fragmented images reflect how we remember. As anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff wrote in 1982, to "re-member" is to gather back the pieces, people, places and past selves that make us who we are. At a time when our lives are documented, archived and shared in real time, Synthetic Memories invites us not to recreate the past exactly as it was, but to give visual form to the traces of what we remember.

In 2025, the project received the Ars Electronica Award for Digital Humanity; in 2026, it entered the collection of The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York.

↗ CITIZEN OFFICE_SYNTHETICMEMORIES
→ ENTREVISTA_SYNTHETICMEMORIES



PUTTING SMELL ON THE HERITAGE MAP

ODEUROPA

NETHERLANDS/FRANCE/GERMANY/ITALY/ SLOVENIA/UK

EUROPEAN HERITAGE AWARDS / EUROPA NOSTRA AWARD 2025 IN CATEGORY RESEARCH

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Smell is the sense most directly linked to our emotions and memories. Museums and heritage institutions are increasingly interested to use olfactory storytelling, to help visitors "experience the past", making history personal and deepening engagement with collections. Yet, we lacked the scientific standards, tools and data to identify and promote smell's role in heritage, as well as tangible tools to bring smells into the museum.

Odeuropa (2021–2023), an EU-funded Horizon 2020 project, filled that gap as the first pan-European research and innovation project on the history and heritage of smell. Using novel sensory mining techniques, it gathered rich data on Europe's smell culture and shared it through open-access resources:

- → The Odeuropa Smell Explorer, presenting over 2.4 million "nose witness accounts" spanning 300 years, built on the award-winning European Olfactory Knowledge Graph
- → The Encyclopedia of Smell History and Heritage
- → The Olfactory Storytelling Toolkit, a how-to guide for museum professionals
- → The Olfactory Heritage Toolkit, with policy recommendations for GLAMs
- → The European Heritage Smell Library of historical scents, created with perfumers

From its first press release, Odeuropa drew worldwide attention, from The Guardian and Le Monde to the New York Times, BBC and CNN, reaching millions. It also produced more than 25 peer-reviewed publications.

In 2025, Odeuropa received a European Heritage / Europa Nostra Award and was one of three EU research projects shown at the World Expo in Osaka. It won the Art and Olfaction Award for Contribution to Scent Culture as well, leading for instance to a keynote lecture at the World Perfumery Conference and a dedicated session on scent heritage with fragrance houses in the UK. These honours show that Odeuropa helped heritage institutions take an "olfactory turn", while encouraging the fragrance industry to embrace the cultural and historical value of smell.

↗ SMELLING HELL IN THE MUSEUM. DEVELOPED BY ODEUROPA FOR THE OLFACTORY MUSEUM TOUR 'DER NASE NACH – FOLLOW YOUR NOSE'. PHOTO: ALEXANDER KAYA FOR AUGSBURGER ALLGEMEINE.



DEMOSCENE – A LIVING HERITAGE OF CODE, CREATIVITY AND COMMUNITY

HANDS DEEP – A JOURNEY INTO THE DEMOSCENE

TAMPERE, FINLAND

HERITAGE IN MOTION AWARDS 2025 / OVERALL WINNERS & HERITAGE AUDIOVISUALS

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In 2024, the Finnish Postal Museum and the Finnish Museum of Games carried out Demoskene talteen ("Preserving the Demoscene"), a collaborative project documenting the Finnish demoscene from the perspective of its hobbyist community. Its central outcome was the documentary film Hands Deep – A Journey into the Demoscene, which introduces this little-known form of digital culture to wider audiences.

The demoscene emerged in the late 1980s as a form of digital creativity in which computers were used to produce audiovisual art. It played an important role in the development of the Finnish game industry and continues to offer a cultural counterforce to the commercialization of technology. Although Finland added the demoscene to the National Inventory of Intangible Heritage in 2020, much of its material heritage has remained difficult to access.

Hands Deep follows three young newcomers who form a demo group called miniHakkerit ("miniHackers") and begin creating their first demo for a demoscene competition. Their journey is placed in dialogue with interviews from experienced scene members and digitized archival materials, including swap letters, event flyers and video footage from the 1990s.

The film challenges the male-dominated and technically focused narratives often associated with the demoscene. Instead, it foregrounds humanity, inclusion, belonging, shared creativity, personal growth and the transmission of cultural values across generations. Created in close collaboration with the demoscene community, Hands Deep is both a film about living heritage and also a part of that heritage. In 2025, the project won Best Audiovisuals and the overall Heritage in Motion award.

↗ TUULI AHLHOLM
→ MINI HACKERS

GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE | GETTY PROVENANCE INDEX

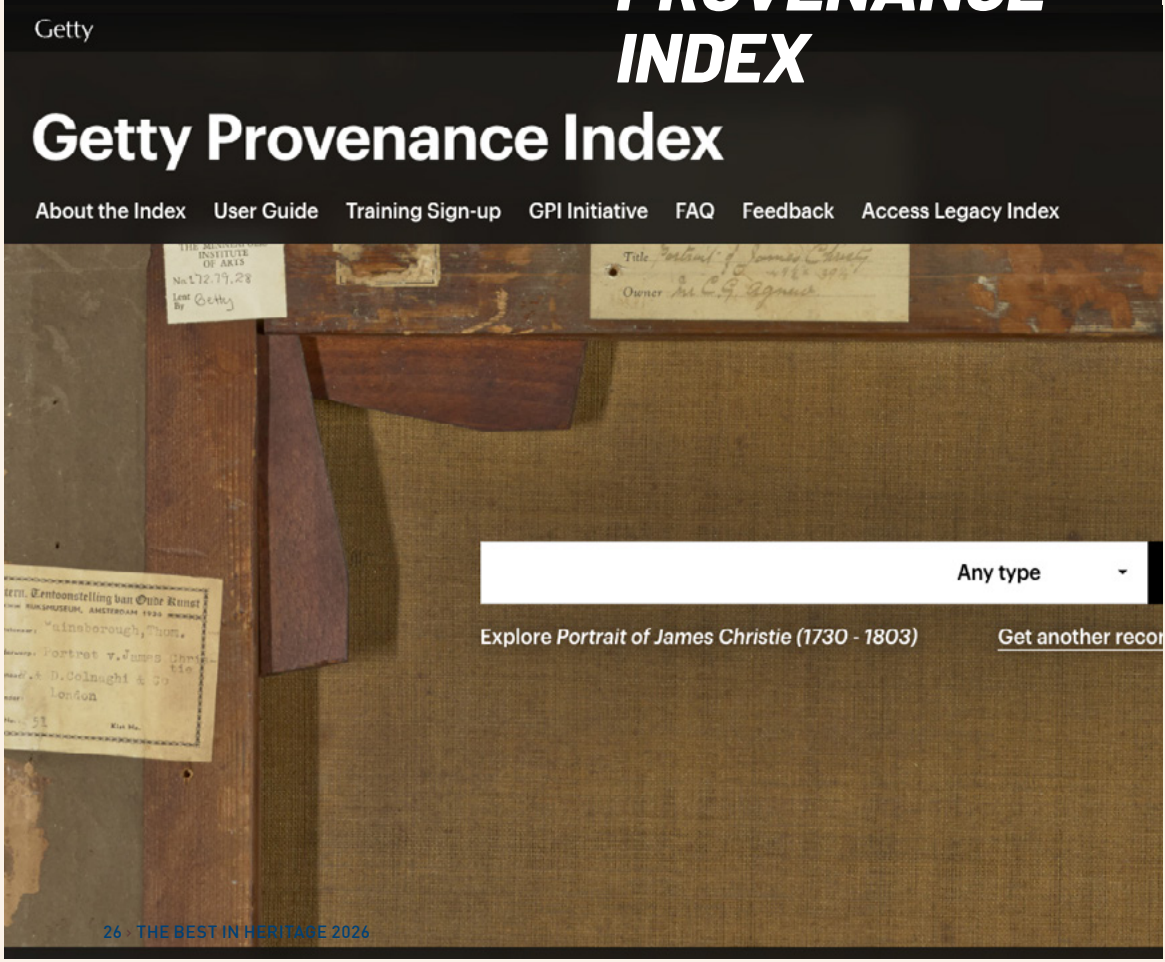
LOS ANGELES, UNITED STATES

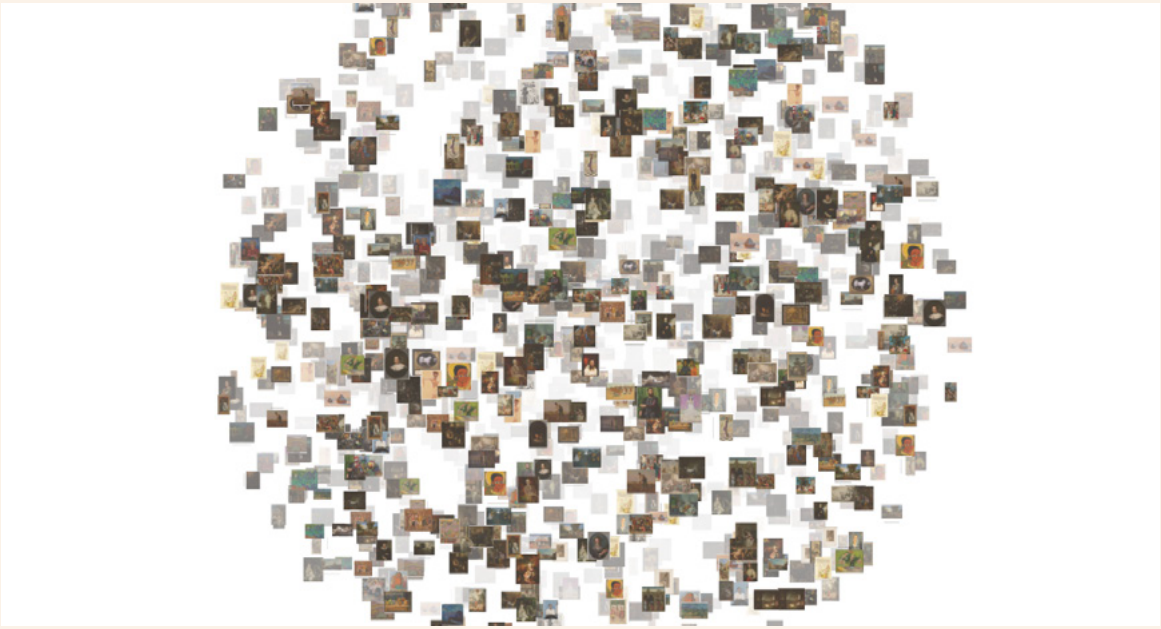
APOLLO MAGAZINE DIGITAL INNOVATION OF THE YEAR AWARD 2025

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FROM DATABASE TO KNOWLEDGE NETWORK: TRANSFORMING THE GETTY PROVENANCE INDEX





For more than 40 years, the Getty Provenance Index (GPI) has been a foundational resource for researching the ownership, collection, and movement of artworks. Built from millions of records transcribed from archival inventories, auction catalogs, and dealer stock books, the GPI has helped generations of scholars reconstruct art provenance histories and investigate art markets. In 2025, the Getty Research Institute released the GPI in a new form, transforming an innovative database into a linked data infrastructure designed to support future generations of cultural heritage research.

This presentation examines the decade-spanning effort behind the GPI's linked data transformation and the challenges of reimagining a trusted research resource while preserving its scholarly foundations. More than a technical migration, the project required a fundamental conceptual shift from records to relationships, restructuring provenance information around interconnected people, objects, places, and events. Built on international standards and open-source software, the remodeled GPI offers new ways to structure and navigate complex provenance histories while establishing a framework for greater data reuse, connection, and exchange.

Reflecting on the organizational, technical, and user-centered complexities of large-scale digital transformation, this presentation discusses balancing innovation with established research practices, responding to diverse user expectations, and engaging a community navigating substantial change. Finally, it considers how structured provenance data may reshape the field by creating opportunities for new forms of collaboration, computational analysis, and cross-institutional research. Recognized with the 2025 Apollo Award for Digital Innovation, the project offers a case study in rethinking legacy resources for an evolving digital landscape.

↗ GETTY PROVENANCE INDEX LANDING PAGE
→ VISUALIZATION OF THE GETTY PROVENANCE INDEX FROM THE DIGITAL STORYTELLING WEBSITE TRACING ART



IMMA – THE MUSEUM AS A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

IRISH MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (IMMA)

DUBLIN, IRELAND

EUROPEAN MUSEUM ACADEMY / ART MUSEUM AWARD 2025

Sheena Barrett
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The Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) is Ireland's national institution for modern and contemporary art, located in the historic Royal Hospital Kilmainham in Dublin. Since opening in 1991, IMMA has developed an internationally recognised programme of research, exhibitions, collections, learning and engagement. With ambitions to be Ireland's most welcoming cultural institution, IMMA's current strategy, A Creative Catalyst for Change 2024–2028, is structured around four pillars: being a Catalyst for Change, a Radically Public Space, a Centre for Research and Innovation, and a Global Connector.

We were delighted to receive the European Museum Academy Art Museum Award in 2025, particularly because the recognition was for IMMA's wider institutional transformation rather than a single project or exhibition. Under the leadership of Director Annie Fletcher, and with a relatively small team for a mid-sized museum, we have embraced a museum-wide approach to being radically public and a catalyst for change. The pandemic accelerated this thinking, prompting us to activate our 48-acre site, expand digital engagement, strengthen healthcare and community partnerships, and actively seek out marginalised audiences who had not traditionally engaged with the museum.

The objective was to mobilise IMMA as a socially relevant cultural institution capable of addressing contemporary challenges in a rapidly changing environment while remaining artistically ambitious. Our transformation emerged through collective leadership involving the Board, management, staff, artists, stakeholders and communities, supported by government funding, philanthropy, community partners and international collaborators, including L'Internationale.

At the heart of this work is a belief that museums are not neutral spaces operating outside society but active civic institutions with responsibilities to their communities. IMMA seeks to take advantage of the museum's capacity to foster curiosity and attention, to create opportunities for meaningful participation, critical discourse and knowledge production through contemporary art. Our work actively engages with issues including peace, climate change, social justice, ageing, migration, identity, decolonisation and wellbeing.

This philosophy is reflected in several major long-term initiatives. **IMMA Horizons**, our pioneering arts and health programme, explores the relationship between creativity, brain health and wellbeing, bringing artists, researchers, healthcare professionals and communities together to maximise the potential of the museum to support successful ageing. **Earth Rising** responds to the climate crisis through exhibitions, public programmes, festivals and partnerships that encourage hope, collective action and agency in the face of climate collapse. **Technologies of Peace** brings together exhibitions, artists' residencies, publishing, public programmes and research to explore peace-building through the lens of contemporary art, drawing on Ireland's experience nearly three decades after the Good Friday Agreement and connecting it to global conversations. While traditionally war and conflict are well aestheticised, peace is a messy process, often without clear dates or victors; a process of active forgetting can accompany traumatic memory, and we want to think about how the museum can hold space for rehearsing a more peaceful future.

The jury highlighted IMMA's innovative programming and inclusive learning and engagement strategy. They were particularly impressed by our ability to combine artistic



excellence with meaningful public participation, our willingness to address challenging contemporary issues, and our commitment to accessibility and inclusion. The concept of IMMA as a "radically public space" was central to the jury's assessment, as was our ability to balance local relevance with international ambition.

Many museums pursue excellence through collections, exhibitions and scholarship alone. IMMA's distinction lies in integrating these traditional museum functions with social engagement, environmental responsibility and public participation. Rather than treating community engagement as an additional activity, participation and accessibility are embedded within our institutional strategy. Contemporary art is used not simply as something to be displayed and revered, but as an anchor for conversations, multi-layered research and community building.

The success of this transformation depended on collaboration right across the museum. Curators, educators, human resources, visitor engagement teams, operations staff, researchers, communications and development professionals and senior leadership all contributed. Equally important have been artists, community groups, collaborators, international partners, researchers and participants.

The greatest challenge has been managing transformation while continuing to deliver existing programmes. Expanding participation and building new partnerships requires time, resources and cultural change. Staff needed to feel empowered throughout that process. What became easier over time was building trust. Once communities and partners recognised our commitment to genuine collaboration, relationships deepened and opportunities multiplied. An artist once described successful projects as moving at



"the speed of trust"—a phrase that continues to guide our thinking.

Looking back, if we could change anything, it is that we would have invested earlier and more consistently in measuring the long-term impact of our work, particularly in arts and health, given the successful feedback we receive. We have learned that institutional change cannot be achieved through isolated projects. It must be embedded across every department. If we want more inclusive programming, we must also have inclusive recruitment, decision-making and organisational structures.

At IMMA, excellence is not measured solely by visitor numbers, critical acclaim or collection growth, though rest assured we have ambitious targets for all three. It is also reflected in our ability to inspire artists, engage communities, stimulate public conversation and remain relevant to contemporary society while maintaining the highest curatorial standards.

Our advice to others is simple: start with a clear sense of purpose. We frequently ask ourselves, "Why Ireland? Why now?" Understanding our strategy and our aims to be a catalyst for change has helped us remain focused amid competing opportunities and challenges. Investing in relationships, listening carefully to communities and investing in staff through Erasmus-supported job shadowing in museums across Europe have helped us to understand our purpose better and learn from colleagues facing similar challenges. Most importantly, it's important to recognise that transformation is a long-term process. Awards are welcome milestones, but the real achievement lies in building institutions that remain responsive, meaningful and capable of shaping a more creative, healthier, inclusive and regenerative future.

MUSEO BARDA DEL DESIERTO

NORTHERN PATAGONIA, ARGENTINA

CIMAM AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING MUSEUM PRACTICES 2025

ARCHITECTURE OF DIFFUSE BOUNDARIES

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What Can a Museum Do at the Edge?

Contemporary approaches to museum-making are increasingly shaped by diverse structures, practices, and relationships. These broaden the question of museum architecture and shift attention toward the functions that make its existence possible: what it preserves and how, how it constructs knowledge, how it organizes its holdings, how it produces experiences, and how it establishes lasting relationships with its context.

Museo Barda del Desierto [mBDD] is located in the Northern Patagonian steppe of Argentina, across an area of seventy hectares in the province of Río Negro. Its practice brings together contemporary art, architecture, digital technologies, and pedagogy in direct relation to the cultural geography of the region. It takes shape as a museum architecture at the edge, between landscape and digitality.

The edge is both a geographical condition and a position from which to question ways of imagining an organism capable of generating relationships between art and community. Inhabiting this edge means engaging with different infrastructural conditions, dispersed communities, and vast territorial distances—conditions that make it possible to explore different temporal scales of proximity, exchange, and knowledge.

Thinking about territory through a museological practice means recognizing a landscape composed of overlapping historical strata, social relations, political and economic decisions, and forms of representation. In Northern Patagonia, a historical, social, and political narrative surrounding the concept of the desert persists, contributing to the invisibilization of the Indigenous peoples who inhabited the region prior to colonization and to the devaluation of the steppe within the collective imaginary.

The fruit-growing valley of this region is an artificial construction occupying a narrow strip along the Limay, Neuquén, and Río Negro rivers, where much of the population is concentrated. The steppe, where the museum is located, remains at the edges of this territorial organization. The idea of the desert and its affective and symbolic devaluation, sustained by colonial narratives, facilitates extractive practices that stand in opposition to a culture of care and environmental protection. In recent decades, the expansion of hydrocarbon extraction associated with Vaca Muerta has introduced new forms of exploitation and territorial occupation: areas traditionally devoted to agriculture now coexist with infrastructure associated with fracking.

It is within this landscape of ongoing tensions that Museo Barda del Desierto develops its practice. Its cultural geography constitutes an active field of research, and contemporary artistic practices make it possible to approach its transformations through other forms of knowledge.

From Antecedent to Holdings

This way of investigating the territory began in 2014 with an international artist residency program in Contralmirante Cordero. For six years, artists, researchers, and the community shared periods of work and exchange at the town's primary school, producing works through direct engagement with the cultural geography of Northern Patagonia.

These practices formed an archive that preserves the circumstances in which each work was produced: a place, a displacement, and a shared experience. We refer to these

↗ MUSEO BARDA DEL DESIERTO_ PHOTO CREDIT CECILIA MALETTI



circumstances as its antecedent. From this archive, a pact was established with the artists: to recover and sustain over time the experience constructed collectively, and to allow the works to remain connected to the territory where they were created. The holdings of mBDD emerged from this agreement.

The holdings thus bring together the works and preserve an artistic memory produced from the landscape, along with the possibility of reactivating it. The question of conservation therefore acquires another dimension: what does it mean to preserve a work when its materiality is also composed of temporalities and affective experiences that have taken place within a territory?

It is within this dimension that the first museological operation takes place: returning to the territory.

Geolocating each piece establishes a coordinate between the work and its place of origin. The coordinate functions as spatial information while reconnecting the work with the site where it was conceived. In this way, geolocation begins to operate as a device of conservation. The geolocated points connect to one another, forming a digital map that establishes relationships with physical movement and makes it possible to navigate the holdings. The body then enters a new spatial organization.

Architecture of Diffuse Boundaries

The map operates as the plan of the museum. Like any architectural plan, it establishes positions, connections, and routes. In this case, the plan is superimposed onto the territory it represents. Visitors can locate themselves within it while simultaneously moving through physical space. The relationship between map and landscape ceases to be merely referential: both participate in the same spatial organization.

At Museo Barda del Desierto, the relationship between physical space and digital mediation constitutes its architectural condition. The museum draws on the principles formulated by the Japanese architect Toyo Ito in Blurring Architecture, in which the boundary operates as a membrane of exchange between interior and exterior.

This principle provides the theoretical point of departure for the mBDD's research into an Architecture of Diffuse Boundaries. Physical territory and the digital dimension operate simultaneously. The boundary becomes an active condition between landscape and map, body and work, interiority and exposure.

The work thus exists under two conditions: its digital existence and its relationship with physical space. The mobile device provides



access to it, but the experience is completed through its relationship with the territory. Screen and landscape operate simultaneously, constantly articulating perception between what lies before the body and what the device makes it possible to see, hear, or imagine again. We call these spatial relationships topogenesis.

Topogenesis refers to the generation of place through the aesthetic experience that emerges among body, imagination, and sensation. The architecture of mBDD is constructed through a process in which individuals find, within the boundaries of this interiority/exposure, the measures that give unity to the inhabited place.

The Museum Is a School

Art-education practice forms part of the body of work of Museo Barda del Desierto. Its programs establish ties with schools, teachers, institutions, and communities throughout the region, generating spaces of exchange through contemporary artistic practices and direct experience with the territory.

One of these art-education programs is linked to Luis Camnitzer's work The Museum Is a School, developed in augmented reality and incorporated into mBDD's holdings during 2023–2026. Its incorporation gave rise to a conversation with the artist and, subsequently, to the development of a permanent self-guided route that invites visitors to move through the museum by means of questions, actions, and exercises integrated into the circuit. These simple actions modify attention and generate other possibilities for affective relations among perception, artwork, and landscape.

In this territory, building audiences also means building continuity. A school visit, a family moving through the museum, or a group participating in an activity are experiences that exceed their quantitative dimension and acquire consistency when they can be sustained over time.

For this reason, generating an affective relationship with the Patagonian steppe through contemporary artistic practices constitutes a central part of mBDD's work. Poetic languages offer other ways of perceiving a territory historically associated with ideas of emptiness, unproductivity, and desert. Producing experiences and questions from this edge also makes it possible to construct knowledge, affective relationships, and a sense of identity and belonging.



A LANGUAGE BELONGS TO ITS SPEAKERS

EUSKARAREN ETXE – THE BASQUE LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION CENTRE

BILBAO, BASQUE COUNTRY, SPAIN

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE MUSEUM PRIZE 2025

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Basque is a minority language that continues to live on, because its community has decided to do so. When we think about this language, many questions spring to mind. What makes Basque special? Why do so many people fall in love with Basque? Is it a language associated with certain values? What is its history? How vibrant is it today? What challenges does it face?

In 2023 we renewed our exhibition discourse to show the vitality of our language with scientific rigour and an optimistic, forward-looking outlook, an outlook that is open to the world. Euskararen Etxea wants to inform visitors about Basque and awaken in them a sense of attachment to the language in a participatory, inclusive and human way. Because linguistic heritage lives through people. It evolves with speakers, with context, with society. Our job is to dynamise, interpret and make this heritage relevant for current and future generations. Not from nostalgia, but from action. Because a language is nothing without its speakers, and a museum is nothing without its community.

These are the keys to the success of our proposal.

A diverse and inclusive centre

Basque is one of the few indigenous European languages that remain alive today. Basque is not a pure language because, over the centuries, has incorporated influences from many peoples and cultures. Some of its oldest words may date back thousands of years, while later historical periods introduced new concepts and expressions. Celts, Romans, Arabs, French, Spanish and more recently English have all left their mark on the language.

This openness has helped Basque survive. Rather than remaining fixed, it has adapted to changing circumstances and coexisted with other languages. Migration and cultural exchange have enriched it, making it broader, more diverse and more useful.

For this reason, the centre promotes a modern, inclusive and realistic vision of Basque, leaving behind stereotypes and celebrating the language's openness and diversity.

An entertaining centre

The history of Basque includes periods of marginalisation and uncertainty, and concern for its future remains understandable. Yet this centre chooses not to focus on decline or pessimism. Instead, it highlights resilience and achievement.

It is an exhibition with a well-developed sense of humour. Scientific rigour is not incompatible with humour, and at every point in the exhibition visitors will see that the issues raised are dealt with in a playful and entertaining manner.

In sum, this is a centre for people with inquiring minds, people who are willing to leave prejudice aside in order to learn about something new, listen to new stories, transmit them and become part of something.

A young centre

Although Basque is ancient in origin, it is also remarkably young in spirit. It continues to evolve and develop, making it a language still under construction.

Many of its speakers are young people. While older generations were not always given opportunities to learn the language, younger



generations have increasingly gained access to Basque education. As a result, young speakers play a central role in shaping the language's future.

This centre celebrates their contribution and recognises Basque as a dynamic, evolving and contemporary language.

A centre full of stories

Basque has generated countless fascinating stories. Few people know, for example, about historical contact languages that combined Basque and Indigenous American languages, or about Basque-speaking communities that flourished far from Europe.

The exhibition draws inspiration from the Basque oral tradition, in which stories were shared around the hearth and passed from generation to generation. Through anecdotes, discoveries and personal experiences, visitors are invited to connect with the language in a memorable way.

These stories help people appreciate Basque not only as a means of communication but also as a source of human experience, creativity and identity.

A centre of culture

Basque culture has, for many years, been the mainstay of the Basque language. When those in power wanted to render it invisible, culture provided it with shelter and protection. Basque culture has always been highly creative and widely accepted by society; it has always been a way for us to be 'our true selves'. Our concerns, our celebrations - all have been transmitted through our culture—a vibrant, high-quality culture.

For this reason, culture plays a central role throughout the exhibition. It is both a tribute to those who have contributed to Basque and a recognition that languages thrive through creativity.



A small centre, but not a minor one

We Basques are a minority. This is important to bear in mind when attempting to understand our history and character. The Basque language is the 'smallest' language in our region, with far fewer speakers than either Spanish or French.

And just like other minorities, we know what it is to be excluded; although, like other minorities, we also know that we enrich the world with our unique perspective and participation. Minorities make the world a more liveable, plural and diverse place. It is thanks to minorities that we all have more rights; the presence of minorities makes society fairer and more equal for all.

The centre embraces the idea that small does not mean insignificant. Small communities can be flexible, dynamic and innovative. Likewise, Basque is a small language, but it is by no means a minor one. Every language has equal dignity and value.

The centre itself reflects this philosophy: modest in size, but ambitious in purpose.

A living centre

One of the jewels of our collection is a set of indicators presenting up-to-date information about the state of the Basque language, including numbers of speakers and patterns of use. And all this information is constantly being updated. Any question regarding the situation of the Basque language can be answered by looking at this screen.

As the language evolves, so too will the centre. It is intended to remain responsive, relevant and open to change.

Everyone is welcome, whether or not they speak Basque. We hope that visitors leave with curiosity, optimism and a renewed appreciation for linguistic diversity.

Above all, we hope they leave understanding that Basque is not only a language with a future—it is a language of the future.

→↗ TWO RESTORED SNOW WELLS

A MUSEUM EXPANSION AS A LIVING ARCHIVE: SERRALVES, ÁLVARO SIZA WING AND THE FUTURE OF THE COLLECTION



SERRALVES MUSEUM

PORTO, PORTUGAL

APOM'S PORTUGUESE MUSEUM OF THE YEAR AWARD 2025

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In 2023, Serralves Foundation opened the Álvaro Siza Wing, a new building integrated into the landscape of Serralves Park in Porto, Portugal. More than an architectural extension of the existing building of Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art, the new wing is a strategic development of the museum's mission: to preserve, study and share contemporary art, architecture, landscape and the critical questions that shape society. It expands the museum's physical capacity while also developing its ability to generate knowledge, reach communities and connect Portuguese artistic production with international contexts.

Founded in 1989 through an innovative partnership between the Portuguese State and civil society, Serralves Foundation brings together a Museum of Contemporary Art, Serralves Villa, an 18-hectare park and the Manoel de Oliveira Cinema House. Its mission is to stimulate interest in contemporary art, architecture, cinema, landscape, the environment and issues relevant to society and its future. Today, Serralves is a major cultural and knowledge centre in Portugal and an internationally recognised platform for exhibitions, research, education, performance, publishing and cultural partnerships. In recognition of Serralves' significant contribution to Portugal's cultural landscape, the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art has been named the 2025 Museum of the Year by the Portuguese Association of Museology (APOM). The recent opening of the Álvaro Siza Wing, together with the transformative impact this museum extension has had on the institution and its programme, played a fundamental role in the attribution of the award.

The Álvaro Siza Wing emerged from the natural growth of this mission and from a relationship with one of the most influential architects of our time. Álvaro Siza, Pritzker Prize-winning architect, designed the Museum of Contemporary Art, inaugurated in 1999, and subsequently the Manoel de Oliveira Cinema House, the Gardener's House, the rehabilitation of Serralves Villa and other projects within the Foundation. In 2015, Siza donated an important part of his archive to Serralves. The new wing therefore acknowledges a shared history while creating the conditions for its continued study and public interpretation. It consolidates Serralves as the place bringing together the most important collection of buildings designed by Siza.

The new building has three floors: one dedicated to archives and two dedicated to exhibitions. It significantly increased both the Museum's exhibition space and storage capacity. This expansion enables the museum to present new narratives about Portuguese contemporary art and architecture, placing them in conversation with international artists, movements and debates.

The Álvaro Siza Wing also changes the role of the Collection within the institution. The Collection of Serralves comprises over 6300 works, including more than 2,500 owned by the Foundation and the remainder held in long-term deposits from public and private collections. Its core concerns art produced from the 1960s to the present, with particular attention to the relationship between visual arts, performance and architecture. By providing additional space for storage, research and display, the new wing strengthens the museum's capacity to attract donations and deposits, conserve significant holdings and make the collection visible through successive, carefully researched exhibitions.

The opening programme of the new wing demonstrated exactly this approach. The exhibition "Improbable Anagrams – Works from the Serralves Collection" anchored the collection in the artistic and literary move-

↗ SERRALVES MUSEM_ PHOTO © FERNANDO GUERRA



→ SERRALVES MUSEUM - ÁLVARO SIZA WING_PHOTO © FERNANDO GUERRA

ments of the 1960s and 1970s, including Portuguese Experimental Poetry, the landmark exhibition "Alternativa Zero" and "Circa 1968", which inaugurated the Museum in 1999. Rather than simply reconstructing the past, it looked at historical works from the perspective of the present and established dialogues between works created in distant periods and geographies. "C.A.S.A. - Álvaro Siza Collection, Archive" presented a broad spectrum of Siza's projects, extending beyond Serralves and examining the many cultural, social and domestic meanings of the idea of the house. Together, these exhibitions showed how an archive can become a space of active interpretation rather than a static repository.

Serralves has long understood the museum as a place of dialogue between artists and audiences, and between artistic disciplines. The new wing reinforces this tradition by supporting the crossing of visual and performing arts, as well as increased editorial activity, research and educational programming. It provides a platform for partnerships with universities and research institutions, for the development of knowledge and for programmes designed for different ages, backgrounds and levels of familiarity with contemporary culture.

This social dimension is central to institution relevance and overall positioning. Serralves develops educational and social innovation initiatives for schools, young people, older people, people with disabilities, prison communities and people facing vulnerability. The expansion, Álvaro Siza Wing, creates more possibilities for these programmes to connect with exhibitions, archives, architecture and the park.

The quality that distinguishes the Álvaro Siza Wing is the coherence between architecture, collection and institutional purpose. The building is not an autonomous monument placed in the Park; it is carefully integrated into the landscape and into Serralves existing architectural ensemble. Its identity derives from continuity, precision and the possibility of creating new relationships between spaces, works, archives, visitors and the natural environment. The project is different from a conventional museum extension because its central achievement is not simply to increase the number of galleries. It expands the museum as an ecosystem: a



→ SERRALVES MUSEUM_PHOTO © FILIPE BRAGA

place for display, conservation, research, education, performance, publication, professional development and collaboration.

Such an achievement depends on people as much as on architecture. The project required collaboration across curatorial, collections, archives, conservation, education, production, technical, visitor services, communications, publishing, administration and management teams. It also depended on the knowledge of external architects, researchers, academics, artists, lenders, donors, public authorities and partner institutions. The experience confirms that a complex cultural project succeeds when teams are involved not only in delivery, but also in shaping the institutional purpose that the new infrastructure must serve.

The difficulties were substantial. Expanding a museum while preserving its daily activity requires careful coordination, technical planning and the ability to manage changing priorities. A new building also creates long-term obligations: conservation standards, storage management, programming, staffing, maintenance, accessibility, environmental performance and financial sustainability. What may appear easy from the outside "the opening of a new wing" is in practice the result of aligning multiple professional cultures while simultaneously protecting the quality of the visitor experience during a period of profound transformation. The Álvaro Siza Wing honours an exceptional architectural legacy, gives the Collection of Serralves a more active and visible role, strengthens research and education, and creates new opportunities for collaboration and social impact.

The advice to institutions considering a comparable endeavour is clear: begin with mission, not with the building. Define what new knowledge, relationships and public benefits the project must make possible. Involve teams and communities early, plan for the life of the building after the opening, and regard collections, archives and architecture as interconnected resources. The true measure of excellence is not the completion of the structure, but its capacity to remain useful, adaptable and meaningful over time. At Serralves, the Álvaro Siza Wing is conceived precisely in this way: as a living archive and an open platform for the future of contemporary culture.

GABRIELLE-ROY'S LIBRARY

QUEBEC, CANADA

IFLA/BAKER & TAYLOR PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE YEAR AWARD 2025

AT THE HEART OF THE CITY: A DEMOCRATIC SPACE FOR KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNITY

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Gabrielle-Roy Library

Located in the heart of Québec City's Saint-Roch district, the Gabrielle-Roy Library has evolved into much more than a place for books. After five years of closure and a major transformation, it reopened in February 2024 with a renewed mission: to serve as a collective, inclusive, innovative, and sustainable community hub. Led by the City of Québec in partnership with the Institut canadien de Québec, the project redefined the role of a public library within an urban environment. This ambitious vision and its outstanding execution earned international recognition, placing Gabrielle-Roy among the world's leading library projects in the IFLA / Baker & Taylor Public Library of the Year Award 2025.

A Library Designed for Its Community

From the outset, the transformation was guided by the realities of the Saint-Roch neighbourhood and by the library's original vocation as a gathering place and a "third place" beyond home and work. Saint-Roch is a vibrant district that brings together businesses, restaurants, educational institutions, technology companies, and community organizations. At the same time, it faces significant social challenges, including economic vulnerability, housing insecurity, and rising homelessness.

In this context, the library was envisioned as a welcoming civic space capable of strengthening social cohesion and fostering a sense of belonging. Its mission extends beyond providing access to information; it actively contributes to community well-being and inclusion.

An Open and Accessible Architecture

Architecture plays a central role in fulfilling this mission. A street-facing expansion increased the building's floor area by 25%, while transparent façades, balconies, and terraces create a strong connection between the library and the surrounding urban environment. Rather than functioning as a closed institution, the library now serves as a natural extension of the street and neighbourhood life.

The project, designed by Saucier + Perrotte and GLCRM Architects, preserved the essential qualities of the original building while introducing modern, flexible spaces filled with natural light. A central staircase bathed in daylight has become a symbol of openness and accessibility, encouraging movement and interaction throughout the building.

Thoughtful interior design further supports this vision. Varied furnishings, adaptable layouts, and welcoming materials create spaces that accommodate a wide range of activities, from quiet study and reflection to collaboration and social engagement.

Shaped by Public Participation

One of the project's defining features is its citizen-centered approach. The new library emerged from an extensive consultation process involving residents, community organizations, and future users. Throughout the planning phase, citizens shared their needs, aspirations, and ideas for the future of the institution.

The result is a library genuinely tailored to its community. Residents expressed a desire for creative spaces, a media lab, enhanced youth services, collaborative kitchens, and places that encourage exchange and inter-



action. These priorities directly influenced both the services offered and the design of the building.

Values such as inclusion, diversity, and civic participation are embedded throughout the project. Every decision was guided by the objective of creating an environment where people of all ages, backgrounds, and circumstances feel welcome.

Reinventing the Library Experience

Gabrielle-Roy embraces the concept of the "third place," transforming the traditional library model into a dynamic community destination. The library is organized around ten thematic hubs dedicated to areas such as youth, graphic novels, cinema, music, science, travel, and culinary arts.

This innovative approach encourages exploration and discovery while offering personalized experiences. Visitors can participate in culinary workshops, experiment with digital technologies, attend film screenings, discover artistic performances, and engage in a wide variety of cultural and educational activities.

By combining learning, creativity, culture, and social interaction, the library functions as a living laboratory where knowledge is shared in many forms. This ability to bring together diverse audiences and activities is one of the key reasons for its international recognition.

Sustainability Through Design and Action

Sustainability was a fundamental principle throughout the project. Rather than demolishing the existing structure, the project team chose to renovate and enhance it, significantly reducing the environmental footprint of the redevelopment.

Materials were selected according to rigorous environmental and performance standards. Green terraces improve the urban landscape, contribute to air quality, and provide valuable outdoor gathering spaces. Energy efficiency was optimized through extensive

use of natural daylight, efficient ventilation systems, LED lighting, and heat-recovery technologies.

The project's commitment to sustainability also extends beyond environmental considerations. By prioritizing accessibility, equity, and inclusion, the library contributes to the long-term social resilience of the community and aligns with broader sustainable development objectives.

Inclusion and Social Resilience

The transformation took place during an exceptionally challenging period marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, construction delays, labour shortages, supply-chain disruptions, and rising costs. At the same time, social realities within Saint-Roch continued to evolve.

In response to growing homelessness and social vulnerability, the library adapted its services and operations. A social intervention team was integrated into the institution, and staff received specialized training to better support vulnerable individuals. The design of the spaces emphasizes dignity, safety, and comfort for all users.

This approach reflects a contemporary understanding of the public library as an essential democratic institution that contributes not only to education and culture but also to health, well-being, and social inclusion.

A Comprehensive Cultural and Creative Hub

The breadth of programming offered is one of Gabrielle-Roy's greatest strengths. The media lab provides citizens with access to professional digital creation tools, while a fully equipped kitchen supports workshops and multimedia productions. Additional facilities include a 198-seat performance hall, a screening room, dedicated youth spaces, an art lending collection, and a seed library.

The library also offers 90 public computers, 900 seats, and 15 study and meeting rooms. Advanced technologies, including RFID systems, self-checkout stations, 3D printing equipment, and livestreaming tools, ensure that services remain relevant to the evolving needs of the population.

A Model for the Future

The results achieved since reopening clearly demonstrate the success of the transformation. In just over one year, the library welcomed more than 533,000 visitors, recorded nearly 484,000 loans, and delivered more than 1,000 free activities. These outcomes highlight both strong public engagement and the library's vital role in Québec City's cultural and social life.

Today, Gabrielle-Roy Library has reclaimed its place as the cultural heart of downtown Québec City. Through its citizen-centered vision, innovative architecture, commitment to sustainability, inclusive practices, and exceptional programming, it exemplifies a new generation of public libraries.

Its unique combination of innovation, social impact, architectural quality, and community engagement explains why it has earned international recognition and been celebrated among the world's most outstanding library projects in 2025. More than a library, Gabrielle-Roy stands as a source of civic pride for Québec City and an inspiring model for communities worldwide.



CASA BATLLÓ: INTEGRATING NEURO-DIVERSITY IN WORLD HERITAGE

CASA BATLLÓ | INTEGRATING NEURODIVERSITY IN WORLD HERITAGE

BARCELONA, CATALONIA, SPAIN

EUROPEAN HERITAGE AWARDS / EUROPA NOSTRA AWARD 2025 / CITIZENS' ENGAGEMENT & AWARENESS-RAISING

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Casa Batlló is one of Antoni Gaudí's most remarkable works and part of the UNESCO World Heritage property "Works of Antoni Gaudí". It is also a living cultural institution, receiving visitors from around the world every day. In 2021, we began a project that asked a fundamental question: could a World Heritage site become a place where neurodivergent people are not only welcomed as visitors, but recognised as professionals who shape the visitor experience?

The answer became Casa Batlló's model of workplace inclusion, developed in partnership with Specialisterne, an organisation specialising in the employment inclusion of neurodivergent people. The project was recognised in 2025 with the European Heritage Award / Europa Nostra Award in the category of Citizen Engagement & Awareness Raising, under the nomination "Casa Batlló: Integrating Neurodiversity in World Heritage". The award acknowledged not a temporary campaign, but a change in the way a heritage institution understands its workforce, its visitors and its social responsibility.

The initiative emerged from a desire to create long-term social value. Casa Batlló's management and ownership had a personal connection with autism, but the project was conceived as an institutional commitment rather than a charitable gesture. Its objective was to create meaningful employment, challenge stereotypes and demonstrate that neurodivergent people can perform demanding public-facing roles with professionalism and excellence. Today, the team comprises 100 members, 85% of whom are neurodivergent. They work alongside neurotypical colleagues in the operational areas that make the visit possible.

At the beginning, the project also changed the institution's own expectations. Casa Batlló's director general, Gary Gautier, later recalled that the team revealed talents the organisation had not expected and offered creative solutions to complex situations. For him, the new team opened "another window on the world". This insight became central to the project: inclusion was not only about offering opportunities, but also about recognising capabilities that conventional recruitment methods often overlook.

The project was implemented progressively. During the planning stage in early 2021, Casa Batlló and Specialisterne defined the objectives, recruitment model and support structures. From April to the middle of that year, selected candidates received theoretical and practical training, followed by gradual integration during a period of lower visitor numbers. The team then expanded as visitor numbers increased. From 2022 onwards, regular assessment and feedback allowed the organisation to adjust working processes, clarify responsibilities and improve the relationship between employees and visitors.

This gradual process was essential. Inclusion was not understood as simply filling positions with neurodivergent employees. It required the institution to review recruitment, training, supervision, communication and daily operations. Specialisterne contributed expertise in identifying strengths, preparing candidates and supporting their professional development. Casa Batlló adapted roles and environments to individual capacities while preserving the standards expected in a high-volume cultural attraction.

The resulting team is involved in several aspects of the visitor experience. Members welcome visitors, validate tickets, distribute devices, provide assistance, support the tour and audio-guide services, manage the photo experience and work in the Simbòlic store. These roles require concentration,

↗ CASA BATLLÓ TERRAT_ERIC YANGUAS



communication, flexibility and the ability to respond to unpredictable situations. Their presence therefore challenges a common assumption: that neurodivergent people should be protected from public interaction or restricted to tasks conducted away from visitors.

The most important innovation is not the number of employees involved, but the fact that neurodiversity has become part of the institution's operational model. The project combines neurodivergent and neurotypical teams, provides individualised support and treats the workplace as a space for mutual learning. Employees are not presented as an attraction or as evidence of corporate virtue. They are colleagues with responsibilities, expectations and opportunities for professional growth.

This approach has also changed the visitor experience. Casa Batlló uses quantitative and qualitative feedback to identify friction points in the visit. In April 2024, an unusually high increase in visitor numbers coincided with a significant fall in the Net Promoter Score. The organisation responded by analysing feedback, reorganising workflows and reducing pressure points in the interaction between visitors and staff. In the following months, the score recovered to its historical average of 67. The process showed that employee wellbeing and visitor satisfaction are not competing priorities: when the work environment improves, the quality of the visit can improve with it.

The project has not been free of difficulties. Staff needed continuous training to work confidently in a demanding, fast-moving environment. Individual support had to be sufficiently flexible to respond to different needs without isolating employees from the team. Existing staff also needed to understand neurodiversity and modify established habits. At the same time, the institution had to confront public misconceptions. Direct contact became one of the most effective educational tools: visitors encountered neurodivergent professionals not through an abstract message, but through ordinary, competent and positive interactions.

These experiences are shared through Casa Batlló's "Neurodiversity With New Eyes" campaign and its podcast series, which bring together employees, families, trainers and experts. Their stories show that inclusion is a process of listening and adjustment. They

→ CASA BATLLÓ PLANTA NOBLE_CLAUDIA MAURIÑO



also reveal that the project's impact extends beyond employment. It has enabled families to see new possibilities, encouraged visitors to reconsider assumptions and given colleagues a more complex understanding of talent and teamwork.

When Ana María Acosta accepted the Europa Nostra Award in Brussels, she recalled that some people had initially considered it unrealistic to integrate neurodiversity into the management of a World Heritage site. The recognition therefore belonged not only to the institution, but above all to the people whose daily work had made the model credible. Their experience gives the award its most important meaning: a bold idea becomes heritage practice only when it is sustained by real responsibilities and real professional lives.

The European Heritage Award / Europa Nostra Award has strengthened Casa Batlló's responsibility to share both its achievements and its unfinished work. Professional excellence does not mean that a project has solved every problem. It means establishing a clear purpose, building the right partnerships, measuring results, learning from difficulties and being willing to change institutional habits. In this case, excellence lies in connecting social inclusion with the everyday responsibilities of heritage management.

Our advice to other museums and heritage sites is to begin with a real institutional commitment. Do not treat neurodiversity as a communication campaign added after the main project. Involve specialised partners, redesign recruitment and training, prepare managers and colleagues, and create mechanisms for continuous feedback. Most importantly, recognise people for what they contribute rather than defining them by a diagnosis.

Casa Batlló's experience demonstrates that World Heritage is not only about preserving significant buildings. It is also about deciding who has the opportunity to care for them, interpret them and welcome others into them. By integrating neurodiversity into its daily operations, Casa Batlló has learned that accessibility is not an external service and inclusion is not a symbolic gesture. Both are essential dimensions of a living, responsible and excellent heritage institution.

→ CASA BATLLÓ BALCÓ_PERE VIVES

PRESERVING JOY: SHOWTOWN AND THE FUTURE OF ENTERTAINMENT HERITAGE



SHOWTOWN BLACKPOOL

BLACKPOOL, UNITED KINGDOM

MUSEUMS + HERITAGE AWARD 2025 FOR PERMANENT EXHIBITION OF THE YEAR

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Showtown is Blackpool's first museum, celebrating and preserving the stories of Britain's first mass seaside resort and its unrivalled role in popular entertainment over the past 150 years.

Located on Blackpool's iconic promenade beside Blackpool Tower, the museum explores the stories of circus, magic, variety, dance, seaside entertainment and the famous Illuminations. Led by Blackpool Council, the project was developed in partnership with local communities, heritage organisations, international entertainers and national cultural institutions. Showtown has become a major cultural landmark and a symbol of Blackpool's continuing renewal. Since opening in March 2024, it has welcomed around 50,000 visitors per annum while establishing itself as one of the UK's most distinctive museums.

Preserving a National Entertainment Heritage

The origins of Showtown stretch back more than a decade. Blackpool, on England's north-west coast, grew into Britain's first mass seaside resort and an internationally recognised centre for popular entertainment, from circus and variety to the Blackpool Illuminations. Yet its nationally significant collections had no permanent public home. The project emerged to protect this heritage, open it up to the public and strengthen Blackpool's cultural offer. Its objectives were to preserve collections, increase engagement in local heritage, support skills development, strengthen civic pride and contribute to regeneration. From the outset, Showtown was conceived not simply as a museum, but as a community asset telling Blackpool's story through the voices of the people who lived it.

The vision was developed by Blackpool Council's heritage service and a dedicated project team, supported by elected members, funders and a wide network of cultural partners. Crucially, the project was shaped through consultation with more than 19,000 people over its development period. Major investment from the National Lottery Heritage Fund was complemented by support from trusts, foundations and national cultural organisations including the V&A, Arts Council England, Art Fund and Friends of the National Libraries. Local communities, performers, schools, volunteers and specialist networks all contributed expertise, stories and lived experience. This broad coalition became one of the project's greatest strengths.

Working Without a Script

Showtown's core values are rooted in co-production, accessibility and shared authority. Rather than presenting history from a single institutional perspective, the museum was developed with performers, families, young people, disability groups and community organisations. This ensured heritage was interpreted in ways that felt authentic, inclusive and relevant. Socially, the museum seeks to demonstrate that culture can make a meaningful contribution to wellbeing, confidence, belonging and civic pride. In a town facing significant economic and social challenges, Showtown demonstrates how heritage investment can support community development through learning, participation and cultural engagement.

Co-production shaped far more than the stories told; it influenced how visitors experience the museum. Rather than relying on traditional labels and text-heavy displays, Showtown worked with entertainers, comedians, magicians, circus performers,



→ ROLL UP ROLL UP GALLERY VIEW_SHOWTOWN©HUFTON+CROW

dancers and Punch and Judy artists to understand how people engage with fun. Their insights informed everything from gallery design to interpretation and interactivity. Specialist scriptwriter Jayne Kirkham transformed curatorial research into playful, accessible content using poems, character voices, questions and humour, helping make the museum welcoming to non-traditional museum audiences.

Throughout the galleries, visitors are encouraged to step into the shoes of performers and makers. They can learn magic tricks from professional magicians, try ventriloquism, walk the tightrope, create their own Illuminations designs, strum along with George Formby, or experience the sights, sounds and even smells of the circus. Personal stories and performer voices appear throughout displays, while recurring characters, Jenny the Donkey and two mischievous seagulls, guide visitors through the museum's more complex stories. This approach combines robust research with playful interpretation, creating an experience that is both entertaining and meaningful. This received national recognition, including winning the Museums and Heritage Awards for Permanent Exhibition of the Year in 2025.

Described as "full of fun, laughter and a real celebration of local heritage... lively, engaging and unapologetically playful," Showtown reimagines the museum experience. Visitors are immersed in Blackpool's joyful history, from circus and showbusiness to seaside magic, in what has been dubbed the "museum equivalent of a thrilling arcade."

Laughter, Through and Through

What makes Showtown different from other museums is its focus on popular entertainment and its commitment to joy as a legitimate interpretive tool. Few museums hold collections comparable to Blackpool's, which include more than 100,000 objects linked to circus, magic, dance and variety entertainment. Equally important is its commitment to making visitors feel welcome. Free entry for Blackpool residents, accessible design, family-focused experiences and an engaging front-of-house "cast" help break down traditional barriers to museum-going. This approach has attracted many first-time and infrequent museum visitors.

People have been at the heart of the project. The development involved curators, con-

servators, educators, designers, performers, volunteers, community participants and young people. More than 80 volunteers contributed over 4,500 hours to the project, helping with collections care, research, interpretation and events. The experience demonstrated that co-creation takes time and commitment but leads to stronger outcomes, deeper trust and a greater sense of ownership among communities. Volunteers and participants helped shape the museum's identity.

Behind the Curtain

The journey was not without challenges. The project faced significant disruption due to the Covid-19 pandemic, construction delays, redesign requirements and issues arising from working within a privately developed building. Marketing was also complicated by uncertainty around opening dates. Despite these difficulties, the team maintained momentum by adapting engagement activities, continuing consultations and preserving community relationships. While the process was demanding, local enthusiasm never diminished. Communities consistently wanted to engage with and contribute to the project.

An additional challenge arose from the fact that Showtown was effectively delivering two major projects simultaneously. While developing a new museum, the team was also establishing a new charitable trust, creating the governance, operational systems and organisational culture necessary to sustain the museum long-term. Equally, the collections themselves required extensive groundwork. With no comprehensive collections or asset register in place for much of Blackpool's entertainment heritage, the project team undertook the painstaking task of documenting, cataloguing and understanding the collections from the offset. This work laid the foundations for the stewardship and accessibility that now underpin the museum's success.

The Show Goes On

Like many major cultural projects, Showtown provided valuable lessons. Earlier investment in marketing, fundraising infrastructure and operational systems would have strengthened resilience, while the scale of co-production and audiovisual interpretation required more staff time than originally anticipated. However, these experiences have informed the museum's future development and strengthened its long-term sustainability.

Professional excellence at Showtown is defined by the successful combination of collections care, community participation and visitor experience. The museum has safeguarded nationally significant collections while creating meaningful connections between people, place and heritage, demonstrating that museums can be rigorous, inclusive and joyful in equal measure.

That’s the way to do it!

For organisations embarking on similar projects, our advice is simple: invest in relationships from the beginning. Co-production should be viewed as a delivery strategy, not an engagement activity. Build trust early, remain flexible and stay true to your values. Strong partnerships and community involvement provide the resilience needed to navigate uncertainty. Showtown demonstrates that when people are placed at the centre of a project, the results can exceed expectations. It’s also important to remember to have fun!

HEDGEHOG'S HOME – INVENTING A BETTER WORLD



HEDGEHOG'S HOME – INVENTING A BETTER WORLD

BELGRADE, SERBIA

EUROPEAN HERITAGE AWARDS / EUROPA NOSTRA GRAND PRIX WINNER IN THE CATEGORY CITIZENS' ENGAGEMENT & AWARENESS-RAISING 2025

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Hedgehog's Home – Inventing a Better World

The Hedgehog's Home – Inventing a Better World project reimagined a beloved children's poem through co-creation with young children and students, creating a space for intergenerational dialogue and inclusivity. It sparked reflection on home, community, and shared memory in Serbia and the region.

Branko Ćopić's poem Hedgehog's Home holds a special place in the childhood memories of numerous generations born in Yugoslavia. Today, seven decades after its publication, this literary work represents a shared place of memory and a powerful trigger for nostalgia.

Starting from the iconic status of the poem and the turbulent history of its reception, as well as that of its author, the exhibition was created to initiate a dialogue about shared heritage and its potential to help us rethink our identities today, the meaning of home, our relationship to the recent past, the communities we belong to, xenophobia, memory, nostalgia, and mental health.

The exhibition consists of two parts. The first, dedicated to the poem Hedgehog's Home and designed as a fiction, was realised in cooperation with children aged five to ten from Belgrade, Zagreb, and Sarajevo, as well as students of scenography at the University of Belgrade. Based on their ideas and drawings, this part of the exhibition was further shaped through dialogue with numerous collaborators. The result is an interactive space that provides a ground for play and the activation of imagination, but also a framework for reflection and intergenerational encounters and exchange.

The second part of the exhibition takes a documentary approach, focusing on the life and work of Branko Ćopić (1915–1984) and the changing public perception of his legacy. The exhibition draws attention to the work of an author who was neglected and forgotten as a Yugoslav and partisan writer, and gradually reduced to being known primarily as a children's author. New generations were introduced to, and inspired by, Ćopić as an engaged intellectual who actively defended his position as a writer critical of the society he had fought for during the Second World War.

Bearing in mind the writer's biography, the issues of mental health, depression, and suicide were also addressed in a responsible way. This included a conversation with a psychotherapist, who offered nuanced commentary on key and sensitive moments in Ćopić's biography. The aim was to talk about mental health openly and without stigmatisation, while emphasising its complexity.

This Best in Heritage presentation will share the story of how the exhibition was co-created and the rationale behind the decision to create it.

WHY

This project was initiated and realised at the Museum of Yugoslavia in Belgrade, a unique institution that deals with the heritage of a country that no longer exists but still holds significant meaning in negotiating the multifaceted identities of people from the region.

Hedgehog's Home serves as a memory trigger, provoking reminiscence and reflection on the importance of home, our relationship to the recent past, to others, and to memory. The relationship to home and homeland, and to those who have or do not have a home, emerged as unavoidable topics not only because the story itself addresses them, but also because of the current social circumstances. These circumstances ultimate-



→ HEDGEHOG HOME DRAWINGS THAT GAVE INITIAL IDEAS FOR THE CONCEPT

ly shaped and changed the relationship to Hedgehog's Home and Ćopić in the newly formed states of the post-Yugoslav context.

In her famous essay Confiscation of Memory, Dubravka Ugrešić draws a parallel between home and homeland, then extends it by questioning what happened to memories after the breakup of Yugoslavia and how people incorporate them into the personal biographical puzzles they reassemble in new times. We believe that these questions remain relevant today, and that the exhibition can offer a specifically designed space, somewhere between the documentary and the imaginary or fictional, where visitors can feel safe to reconsider and open up some of these questions — by themselves, with someone close to them, or with someone completely unknown.

As a liminal space that can be both personal and public, the exhibition offers the potential for individual and collective, potentially transformative experiences. Hedgehog's Home – Inventing a Better World is conceived as a performative place that encourages active participation, interaction, and ultimately a highly individualised interpretation, created by each visitor. The exhibition was designed as a meeting place for generations that share Hedgehog's Home as a common value, while addressing each individual differently and leaving space for personal interpretations to emerge and be shared within the museum.

HOW

The exhibition Hedgehog's Home – Inventing a Better World established a unique space for intergenerational encounters. Based on the belief that children and adults could share a meaningful experience, the exhibition relied on sensory engagement and an atmosphere designed to evoke a strong emotional response. To achieve this, the space was curated in collaboration with children, whose opinions were essential in creating an experience intended for all visitors.

By cross-referencing the results of children's workshops with research findings, the basic concept of the exhibition was established and further developed by an interdisciplinary creative team using a co-design methodology. The methodology of co-creating the exhibition with children from Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, alongside a large team of experts and artists, demonstrated that children and adults



→ HEDGEHOG HOME INTERIOR OF THE HEDGEHOG HOUSE

can share a meaningful museum experience when it is sensory, kinesthetic, and imaginative.

One of the most important outcomes was the contribution of members of the Deaf community, who produced the first translation of the poem Hedgehog's Home into Sign Language. This video is now used by schools for deaf pupils in Serbia, and it is also available online and shared throughout the region.

In the regional context, shaped by a turbulent recent past, this project is important as one way of re-establishing intercultural dialogue based on shared heritage and the joint exploration of the multilayered values of a single children's book. Over 150,000 visitors, both regional and international, attended the exhibition. It was warmly embraced by teachers and educators, youth workers and activists, NGOs working with migrants, and socially engaged artists. Its digital outreach was also far-reaching, with audiences actively creating new content documenting their experiences.

Recognised as a subversive initiative that awakens shared regional memory while promoting European values, the project won the prestigious Europa Nostra Grand Prix. The jury praised it as an emotionally powerful and inclusive museum project that focuses on storytelling, intangible heritage, and the safeguarding of shared cultural narratives. Intergenerational dialogue is at the core of the Hedgehog's Home – Inventing a Better World project, engaging children and other visitors through a hands-on experience.

This recognition made possible the exhibition's tour to Zagreb and the continuation of dialogue with audiences across the region.

This project showed how the "small stories" recognised as precious by communities can engage audiences and incite dialogue, despite official politics of memory. Through a curatorial approach that combines multiple sensory experiences and awakens emotions, the exhibition provides an experience that is educational and entertaining, but also potentially transformative and even healing. In this way, it demonstrates the potential of museums to become active participants in establishing connections and dialogue based on shared heritage and its relevance in today's world.

SALON STOLZ: WHERE TRADITION AND INNOVATION MEET

SALON STOLZ

GRAZ, AUSTRIA

EUROPEAN MUSEUM ACADEMY / DASA AWARD 2025

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Tradition and innovation - few pairs of concepts describe both the work of Robert Stolz and the place where his music can be experienced today more aptly.

At SALON STOLZ in Graz, this connection forms the central guiding principle. Here, cultural heritage and contemporary approaches to interpretation come together in a unique way: the music and life story of the renowned composer are preserved, reinterpreted, and made accessible to a broad audience through modern, interactive methods. The result is a place where past and present engage in dialogue, allowing music to be experienced as a vibrant and living art form.

Opened in the summer of 2023, SALON STOLZ is not a traditional museum but a dynamic venue for music, dance, and social participation. At its heart lies the question of how Robert Stolz's legacy can be carried forward into the twenty-first century.

Robert Stolz (1880 – 1975) ranks among the most important Austrian composers and conductors of the twentieth century. He composed operettas, stage works, film scores, popular songs, art songs, and music for ice revues. His life spanned almost an entire century marked by wars, political upheaval, and profound social change. Yet throughout these decades he remained remarkably successful. One reason was his extraordinary ability to embrace innovation. Stolz recognised emerging musical trends at an early stage, incorporated new influences into his work, and never hesitated to have his compositions rearranged and reinterpreted.

This openness to change forms the foundation of the SALON STOLZ concept.

Rather than reconstructing Robert Stolz's life and work through original artefacts displayed in glass cases, the museum focuses on keeping his music alive by presenting it in ever-changing and contemporary ways. Its primary mission is therefore to bring Robert Stolz's music beyond the museum walls. His work is not simply preserved - it is actively shared, interpreted, and experienced.

The aim is particularly to inspire children, families, and people who have had little previous contact with classical Viennese music. SALON STOLZ seeks to breathe new life into Robert Stolz's oeuvre and present it in ways that resonate with contemporary audiences.

Accordingly, the museum does not rely on passive knowledge transfer but on active participation. Visitors can hear, see, feel, explore, and create music themselves. In the Music Pavilion they can conduct, compose, and experiment. The Life Stage tells the story of an artist who constantly reinvented himself. In the Dance Hall, his melodies are reinterpreted through contemporary dance performances. Concerts, workshops, and collaborations with music schools, universities, and cultural institutions complement the permanent exhibition. Music is presented as a living language that continues to move people today.

A second key focus of SALON STOLZ is inclusion.

From the very beginning, the museum was conceived with the ambition of providing equal access for everyone. Inclusion was not treated as an afterthought but as a fundamental principle underlying the entire project. During the planning process, people with disabilities were actively involved as advisors and co-creators, enabling their experiences and perspectives to shape the museum's development from the outset.

At SALON STOLZ, inclusion extends far beyond physical accessibility. It encompasses

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language, interpretation, exhibition design, and everyday interaction. Inclusion concerns everyone, requires everyone's commitment, and ultimately benefits all visitors alike.

Inclusion is not limited to people with disabilities. Rather, it creates added value for every visitor. Exhibition texts are available in Easy Language, while information is also provided in Braille and sign language. Music can not only be heard but also felt, seen, and touched. Modern technologies - including induction loop systems, vibration technology, and interactive installation - create additional forms of access and enable cultural participation for people with diverse needs and abilities.

SALON STOLZ also understands inclusion as an ongoing process. There can never be a perfect solution, because inclusion requires continuous reflection and development. This attitude makes the museum an important example of contemporary cultural practice and demonstrates how cultural institutions can actively assume responsibility for social participation.

Another distinctive feature of SALON STOLZ is its location. The museum is situated within the entrance area of a senior living residence.

This unique setting shapes the museum's identity and distinguishes it from many conventional museums. SALON STOLZ forms part of a vibrant social environment in which residents encounter families, school groups, kindergarten classes, and concert audiences on a daily basis. These interactions create meaningful exchanges between generations that extend far beyond the traditional museum visit. As part of a senior living community, the museum benefits from an environment naturally characterised by empathy, appreciation, and human connection.

The senior residence is therefore an integral part of the museum's identity. Music becomes the connecting element between different generations and life experiences. At a time when many groups within society increasingly live separately, SALON STOLZ creates spaces for encounter, dialogue, and shared cultural experiences. The combination of museum and senior residence makes the institution a unique model within the Austrian museum landscape. As an interdis-



ciplinary interface between music education and museum education, SALON STOLZ provides fertile ground for innovative forms of cultural engagement.

With regard to its scholarly foundation, it should be noted that, unlike many traditional museums, SALON STOLZ currently does not possess its own collection. Most original artefacts, documents, and personal belongings remain in the ownership of Robert Stolz's family and are therefore only accessible to a limited extent.

This circumstance was consciously taken into account during the museum's development. Instead of allowing original objects displayed in showcases to tell the story, the museum deliberately places music itself and active engagement with Robert Stolz's work at the centre of the visitor experience. For contemporary music mediation, original artefacts are not indispensable. The crucial question is how people can meaningfully engage with Robert Stolz's music.

Autograph manuscripts, photographs, letters, musical scores, and personal belongings nevertheless possess considerable cultural and historical significance. Developing a long-term strategy for preserving, researching, and making these materials accessible will therefore be an important task for the years ahead.

SALON STOLZ is far more than a museum dedicated to a celebrated composer from Graz.

Its central mission is to bring Robert Stolz's music into the present and pass it on to future generations. At the same time, the museum strives to be an inclusive place for everyone, actively promoting participation in cultural life. Its unique location within a senior living residence creates opportunities for meaningful encounters between generations and establishes the museum as a place of empathy, appreciation, and shared experience.

The music of Robert Stolz lies at the heart of everything we do. His legacy is best honoured by ensuring that his music remains accessible to everyone. This is the defining purpose of SALON STOLZ: not only to preserve memory, but to create new encounters with music - and with the enduring legacy of Robert Stolz.

THE TIME CAPSULE UNEARTHED: REVITALIZING CHINA'S IMPERIAL EXAMINATION HERITAGE THROUGH THE "LIVING MUSEUM" MODEL



NANJING CHINESE IMPERIAL EXAMINATION MUSEUM

NANJING, CHINA

CHINESE MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION / MOST INNOVATIVE MUSEUMS IN CHINA AWARD 2025

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Nestled within the Confucius Temple-Qinhuai River Scenic Belt in Qinhuai District, Nanjing, Jiangsu Province, the Nanjing Imperial Examination Museum of China is a thematic museum erected on the ruins of the Jiangnan Imperial Examination Hall. Driven by innovative development concepts and industrial transformation, the museum has powered cultural tourism upgrading and consumption revitalization across Qinhuai District. It has built a virtuous development ecosystem that unites relic conservation of the ancient examination hall with the construction of a specialized imperial-themed museum, and realizes complementary benefits between the Confucius Temple cultural tourism district and public cultural services. Boasting a slew of top honors including the National Top Ten Museum Exhibitions, National First-Class Museum and China's Most Innovative Museum, it has established an innovative development template for district-level and relic-based museums in the new era.

A breathing Museum: Forward-thinking low-carbon Architectural Design Rooted in History

Innovation is embedded in the museum's architectural planning from its inception. The main building sinks 20 meters underground, equipped with natural lighting and ventilation systems to cut energy consumption. Shaped like an ancient treasure chest enshrining centuries of historical memories, the design pays sincere homage to the original heritage architecture while optimizing urban public space. This distinctive design won the 2021 China Architectural Society Award for the Inheritance and Innovation of Historical and Cultural Heritage, and was showcased at the Venice Architecture Biennale. Its core exhibitions interpret the spiritual essence of the imperial examination system: the pursuit of self-improvement, fair competition, merit-based talent selection, and dedication to national service, demonstrating the extraordinary institutional innovation wisdom embedded in Chinese civilization.

A dedicated Museum: Mixed operation mechanism & nationwide industrial alliance

Innovation extends far beyond architectural design to its operational framework. The museum adopts a dual-track management model combining public institutional administration and market-oriented corporate operation, achieving self-sufficiency and profitability merely one year after opening, carving out a sustainable growth path for local cultural tourism. It operates from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. every single day of the year to satisfy the public's surging demand for cultural resources. As the leading institution of Qinhuai's cultural venues, it chairs the Qinhuai Museum Alliance and initiated the National Imperial Examination Museum Alliance, rallying relic sites and cultural preservation institutions nationwide to share exhibition resources, academic research achievements, research and study programs, and creative cultural products.

A professional museum: Academic research & oral documentation of scholarly lineages

Rigorous professionalism and dedication to cultural inheritance make Nanjing Imperial Examination Museum of China a core national hub for imperial examination research. It collaborated with the Nanjing Qinhuai River Cultural Tourism Foundation to launch the "Search for Descendants of Jinshi Graduates" project, tracking down nearly 10,000 descendants across 20 provinces. Family

↗ GROUNDSCAPE ON LEVEL B4 OF THE MUSEUM



→ MINGYUAN MANSION – NIGHT VIEW OF THE MUSEUM

heirlooms donated by these descendants, together with research outcomes, are transformed into special exhibitions, oral history archives and documentaries, presenting tangible family relics and touching personal stories to carry forward fine family traditions. The museum has built a nationwide shared academic database platform, which encompasses databases of ancient Jinshi graduates, their descendants, and global research archives on the imperial examination system and its studies, laying a robust foundation for cross-regional and international academic collaboration.

An empowering museum: Integrated school-museum education for all ages

To fully unlock its educational function, the museum has built extensive multi-party collaborative partnerships. Drawing on the ethos of "investigating knowledge to achieve rigorous perfection", it pioneered a branded system of research and study programs through cross-industry cooperation. Its signature program "Top Scholar Academy" offers more than 30 themed courses. It maintains cooperation with 58 primary and secondary schools in Qinhuai District to compile customized school textbooks, and hosts field practice activities for over 50 universities based in Nanjing. Partnerships with Nanjing University's College of Overseas Education, Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology and other institutions have established national conditions education bases for domestic and international students alike.

A boundaryless museum: Global cultural exchange & integrated cultural tourism

Breaking physical and geographical limits, Nanjing Imperial Examination Museum of China pioneers a "boundaryless" cultural communication model that fuels tourism through cultural vitality. It invited renowned musician Bian Liunian to produce the grand light and music show A Thousand-Year Dream, its flagship cultural event. The museum houses an international exchange studio led by He Yong, former UN China Pro-

gram director, and co-hosts the "Top Scholar Lecture Hall" with the New York Chinese Arts Society. It organizes joint study tours with world-renowned universities, and curated the art exhibition Light of Peace: Jiangsu Women Painters for UN Chinese Language Day. It also hosts the national finals of the China Outdoor Archery Championship each year, themed on military imperial examinations. These cross-domain events have cemented its status as the most iconic cultural landmark along the Qinhuai River and Confucius Temple area.

An imaginative museum: Creative cultural merchandise as a cultural carrier

Creative cultural merchandise stands out as another landmark innovation of the museum. Designers reinterpret imperial examination culture from diverse perspectives, integrating ancient history, folk customs and contemporary values into product development. Four major product lines covering 1,300 distinctive items have been launched: exhibition-themed souvenirs, cultural relic derivatives, daily lifestyle goods and literati-style crafts. The hit "Top Scholar Boy" series accounts for 30% of total cultural merchandise revenue and has become an indispensable souvenir for visitors to Qinhuai. The museum has forged partnerships with 200 well-known enterprises including Huatu Education, Shanghai Traditional Restaurant and JD.com, building multi-functional retail spaces integrating brand display, cultural content, experiential activities and derivative products. Over eight years, its cultural merchandise business has generated nearly 580 million yuan in revenue within the scenic zone.

A warm museum: Inclusive public cultural services rooted in people-centered values

Adhering to a people-centered development philosophy, Nanjing Imperial Examination Museum of China commits itself to delivering warm, inclusive cultural services to all citizens. It develops localized, differentiated community cultural programs that integrate museum resources with community education and volunteer services, creating immersive offline learning spaces. It designs cultural routes such as "Tour Qinhuai Through Classical Literature" and special exhibitions like Uniform Scripts, Unified Ethics: The Historic Driving Force of Imperial Examinations on Chinese National Development. It also participates in ethnic unity promotion campaigns organized by sub-districts including Chaotian Palace, helping foster a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation among residents. Every year, over 300,000 free admission tickets are distributed to the public, expanding the coverage and influence of high-quality public cultural services.

Looking ahead, the museum will further expand international cultural exchange cooperation to present the charm and value of China's ancient imperial examination system to global audiences. It will dig deeper into the educational connotations of imperial examination culture, developing diversified courses and activities suitable for people of all ages and backgrounds to inherit fine traditional Chinese culture and elevate national cultural literacy. Meanwhile, it will embrace digital and intelligent technologies to innovate exhibition forms and visitor service models, delivering more immersive, diverse and convenient visiting experiences. On the journey of boosting cultural prosperity and building a culturally powerful nation, the museum will strive to write a brand-new chapter of high-quality museum development.

SUPPORTING NATIONWIDE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



HERITAGE OPEN DAYS: 30 YEARS OF ENGLAND'S LARGEST FESTIVAL OF HISTORY AND CULTURE

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM

MUSEUMS + HERITAGE AWARDS 2025 / SECTOR IMPACT AWARD

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Heritage Open Days is England's largest festival of history and culture. Known for its unique grass roots led approach, a small national team support a country wide network of thousands of volunteers and organisations. Welcoming a wide range of people, from private individuals to council officers and museum professionals, allows for diverse voices to share all types of heritage in different ways. Together they deliver an annual showcase every September where stories are told, traditions explored and histories brought to life through thousands of free events – from tours of mandirs, mills or mansions, to archaeology talks, garden walks, and zine making workshops.

The festival is England's contribution to European Heritage Days a joint initiative from the Council of Europe and the European Union. Aiming to engage more people with heritage, it is presented in England by the National Trust with support from Postcode Lottery players.

Award winning impact

In 2025, after celebrating its 30th anniversary, the programme won the coveted Museum + Heritage Awards sector impact award. This was given in recognition of the 'transformative' effect of the festival's community-led work, leading to measurable improvements across the sector. This includes driving footfall, increasing visitor spend and reaching new audiences for whom the festival may be their only heritage visit.

How it works – 'structured but highly individual'

Core to the programme's operation, and key to its success, is the offer of structured support and national visibility whilst encouraging individual flair.

The festival operates on an annual cycle with set deadlines – regular reminders of things to think about and resources available are sent to the community and highlighted on the website. All the support is free, including resources (over 10,000 downloads), valuable materials (including 22 km of bunting and 17,500 kids castle colouring sheets), networking opportunities and training sessions. The brand itself is also important – nationally recognised the pink bunting attracts passers-by to events. While the event directory is regularly checked by media outlets as well as visitors.

The heart of the festival though is people's passion for their heritage and the joy of sharing it. In recognition of this Heritage Open Days actively fosters a collaborative community. Combining peer to peer learning with expert guidance from the national team and wider partners builds the confidence and capability of local participants. While highlighting local achievements and feeding back the wider impact of their collective efforts both rewards and encourages further engagement.

Overcoming challenges

The emphasis on local individuality does also cause some challenges though. The festival relies on a large amount of trust and goodwill – use of the brand can only be controlled so far for example. While the support provided can never fully cater for all the requirements of such a diverse community of interests and experience.

In addition, the very success of the festival creates its own challenge around capacity. The more people that participate, the

↗ NEW WAVE - FLEECEFEST - CREDIT JYA RAINE PHOTOGRAPHY



→ NEW WAVE - CREDIT HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

more funding is needed to supply materials to sites, and staff time to answer enquiries. Good communication, and a flexible approach have always been essential to overcome these issues.

Examples of success

Beyond the general impact of the festival in engaging visitors, there are many examples of how it has had lasting impact locally.

> "Taking part in HODs has made a massive difference to myself, the events and venues that I work with, the way I interact with visitors and the way I think about researching heritage in our local area."
> (Oswestry Museum)

A small town in Shropshire established a local museum after testing out interest through their first Heritage Open Days. Each year they continue to use the festival as a platform to share new stories – one in particular proving to have global resonance. In 2017 they highlighted a unique set of local love letters between two gay WWII soldiers for the festival's funded arts project. This inspired nearly 600 letters from around the world to be sent in for the creation of a diamond ring, now on display in the museum. It brought the LGBTQ+ scene to the forefront of modern 'history' and remains as much in demand now as when it was first uncovered. A short film was released in 2021 and this year a BBC radio show broadcast dedicated an episode to the story with a popular music artist reading the letters.

> "The experience has strengthened my confidence as someone new to heritage volunteering, confirming that my work can hold emotional as well as historical value."
> (Independent researcher)

A young independent researcher found Heritage Open Days a valuable platform to share her work and prepare her next steps. Exploring the sensitive story of Princess Irene Duleep Singh — a woman history has often overlooked — she worked collaboratively with a local museum and national charity, the Samaritans, to navigate complex themes



→ FORGOTTEN PRINCESS - CREDIT HERITAGE OPEN DAYS TREVOR RAY HART

of identity, mental health, and heritage. The positive response to her efforts, and the confidence she gained led her to connect with Historic Royal Palaces as they prepared an exhibition the following year highlighting the wider family's stories. She was invited to a special preview and asked to contribute to their social media content.

> "Offering young people not just an event to help them interact with heritage but the experience to work behind the scenes is so important in having voices heard, which I felt incredibly strongly that we were. It also gives really valuable work experience and insight into careers in a way that felt very accessible."
> (Young collaborator)

Since 2020 a youth engagement project has been developed for the festival. 'New Wave' takes a small cohort of local organisers through structured training sessions focused on co creating events with young adults. The combination of webinars providing external expertise, networking sessions and 1:1 support has proven very successful. 58 local organisations have worked with over 450 young people through the programme – 64% reporting they were now considering a career in heritage. All the organisers reported they gained new skills and wanted to continue collaborative work, several gained new jobs from it, and two are now part of the European Heritage Days youth council themselves.

Learnings for the future

Following over 30 years of successful growth, Heritage Open Days is working on the next chapter in its evolution. Whilst details may change, the essential ingredients to that success will always remain true:

- → The journey is a spiral not a straight line – it will only grow well if you feed evaluation back into future planning.
- → Be open to collaboration, work in partnership and be ready to compromise while holding true to your core values – we can do more together.



ONE POT, MANY STORIES: HERITAGE COOKING AS COMMUNITY CARE

MILLET AND DISTRICT MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES

MILLET, CANADA

AMA'S ROBERT R. JANES AWARD FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY 2025

Tracey Leavitt

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/CURATOR

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The Millet and District Museum and Archives is located in Millet, Alberta, in what is now called Canada, on Treaty 6 Territory and Métis Region IV. Our board, staff, volunteers, and members acknowledge that we are privileged to live and work on this land, which has been and continues to be a gathering place for the Maskwacis Nēhiyaw (Bear Hills Cree), Niitsítapi (Blackfoot), Nakoda (Stony), Dene (Athabaskan), Métis, and many other distinct Indigenous Peoples. We respect the histories, languages, and cultures of the Indigenous Peoples of what is now known as Canada.

While the land Millet now occupies has been a travelling ground for Indigenous peoples since time immemorial, the first documented settler of Millet was Ben Slaughter, a fur trader who built a trading post and post office along the railway in 1891. The community grew around the railway, becoming a village in 1903, two years before the Province of Alberta was formed. Millet was named by the Roman Catholic missionary, Father Lacombe, after his guide and canoe man, August Millet. Millet grew significantly in size in the period between and after the World Wars, with widespread immigration, becoming a town in 1983. Our small community leans into its rural heritage, with a strong sense of community and volunteerism.

The Millet and District Historical Society (MDHS) was incorporated on February 25, 1977, to write Tales and Trails of Millet, a two-volume local history book which tells the stories of the residents of Millet and the twelve rural school districts surrounding it. Following its publication, MDHS began fundraising to build the Millet and District Museum, which opened in 1985. We became an Alberta Museums Association (AMA) accredited museum in 1988, then added an Archives Society of Alberta accredited archive in 1999. Over our forty-year history, we have received 40 awards for our efforts to preserve local history and build up our community, including the AMA's Leadership Award for Programming (2023) and the Robert R. Janes Award for Social Responsibility (2025). The Robert R. Janes Award for Social Responsibility is awarded not by application, but after an intensive environmental scan of the museum's work over time. The institutions who receive it demonstrate intentional work towards real social impact that makes them key contributors to the health and well-being of their community. Our current mission is to facilitate storytelling and enable experiential learning, building a sense of community and sharing the authentic and compelling stories of Millet.

We strive to be a social and cultural hub for our community through close collaboration with other community groups, partnering with them for developing exhibits and programming. Since 2021, we have partnered with the Millet Support Mental Illness Lives Everyday Society (SMILES) on projects like our permanent, community-developed Millet Mental Health Legacy exhibit; a collection of posters made by local children and mental health resources aimed at destigmatizing talking about mental wellbeing and seeking help when needed.

We believe in responding directly to community needs, while integrating heritage and cultural exploration. Since 2020, we have run almost weekly seniors' art, exercise, and technology courses, in response to requests from the Millet Seniors Club for help using their smartphones and tablets and for places to connect socially. In the last number of years, we have budgeted for snacks for each of our seniors' and children's programs, as a means of helping address food scarcity due to rising food costs. We are in our fourth year hosting a weekly heritage cooking program, where children learn to cook a meal, eat it together, and learn the clean-up meth-

↗ SUMMER STAFF & VEGETABLE GARDEN_PHOTO: MILLET AND DISTRICT MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES, TRACEY LEAVITT



→ MP TEA – ANNUAL RECOGNITION TEA_PHOTO: MP MIKE LAKE OFFICE

ods. This provides the participants with one lunch a week, while the leftovers are used for a pre-program lunch for our seniors' programs. We started off making prairie settler meals like borscht and biscuits, but over time, our diverse staff have taught us how to make meals from Korea, India, Nigeria, Ukraine, Germany, France, and Italy.

We believe that museums can acts as hubs for inclusive storytelling, connection, and environmental awareness, all while being engaging and interactive. In 2024, we were honoured to host the Canadian Languages Museum's travelling Cree: The Peoples' Language exhibit, and even more honoured to partner with the Samson Cree Nation Museum and Archives to explore Cree language and culture within our own region. We believe museums have a unique ability to highlight the local relevance of global issues. Our current permanent display, the Century Farm, explores the stories of families who have farmed in our region for a hundred years or more. We were excited to be chosen to host the Canadian Cattle Association's Guardians of the Grasslands video game and display, which highlights the role of cattle farming in stewarding Alberta's unique prairie grasslands.

Although Millet is a small community, the Millet and District Museum and Archives draws strength from strong local connections and relationships across Alberta's heritage sector. We believe local heritage and tourism are stronger through collaboration, and we participate in initiatives such as the Central Alberta Regional Museums Network, peer mentorship opportunities, and advocating for emerging museum professionals. Through programs including Young Canada



Works and Canada Summer Jobs, we are able to provide valuable employment opportunities for local youth while fostering interest and skills in heritage and cultural work.

We believe that museums of any size can lead transformative work within their communities. By listening to local needs and building on our unique strengths, the Millet and District Museum and Archives delivers programs that combine education, hands-on learning, and community connection for participants of all ages. From environmental and cultural initiatives to skill-building activities, we create accessible experiences that inspire learning and participation. Museums have a unique hold on public trust, and a unique ability to be both fun and educational.

Community engagement is at the heart of our work. Through ongoing partnerships with local organizations, schools, and community groups, our exhibits, programs, and events are developed to reflect the Millet community's priorities. These strong community relationships enable us to respond to local needs while fostering connection, well-being, quality of life, and a strong sense of place for residents and visitors alike.

"The Millet and District Museum demonstrates the powerful role that small local museums can play in fostering community connection and well-being," said Jennifer Forsyth, Executive Director / CEO of the Alberta Museums Association. "Their work is a testament to how deep community engagement supports both museum sustainability and long-term relevance."

→ FRONT ENTRANCE_PHOTO: MILLET AND DISTRICT MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES, TRACEY LEAVITT

MUZOO: A PLACE TO SLOW DOWN WITH THE LIVING WORLD – AND LIVE BY IT



MUZOO

LA CHAUX-DE-FONDS, SWITZERLAND

EMF'S MEYVAERT MUSEUM PRIZE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY 2025

Xavier Huther
DIRECTOR

Nicolas Margraf
CURATOR & HEAD OF THE MUSEUM DEPARTMENT

Yasmine Ponnampalam
HEAD OF THE ZOOLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

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In the heart of La Chaux-de-Fonds, a UNESCO World Heritage city known for watchmaking, MUZOO brings a zoo and a natural history museum together on a single site. It asks every visitor one question: what is our relationship with Nature? Visitors of all ages discover what is being done and what can still be done to halt biodiversity loss, in a way meant to prevent eco-anxiety rather than feed it. Treating sustainability as something to practise, not just display, is what ultimately earned MUZOO the Meyvaert Museum Prize for Environmental Sustainability.

A shared site, two decades in the making

The institution's roots go back to 1845, to a school collection later enriched by naturalists such as Abraham Gagnebin and Albert Monard. Built through exchanges with international researchers and local collectors, it has made a significant contribution to the study of biodiversity.

The park that now houses MUZOO was donated to the city in the late nineteenth century. It became a professional zoo in 1974 and was joined fifteen years later by a formerly private vivarium. In 1998, these institutions came under a single administration, planting the idea of a fully shared site.

The museum was leasing its premises. To avoid a breach of lease and for financial reasons, it had to find a new home, but no relocation proposal secured funding. Preparing for a move that kept stalling, the museum closed to the public in 2014.

As time passed without a solution, municipal authorities began to question whether the museum should exist at all. When the curator's position fell vacant, Xavier Huther was appointed interim director, with the task of dismantling the collections.

Instead, his foresight and conviction opened the way to other solutions. In 2018, a final project was approved: renovating a municipal building on the zoo's site to house the museum. Rather than closing one institution, this created savings and synergies. The site reopened in 2022 as MUZOO, a project born of necessity that became a shared mission.

It would not have come this far without the dozens of people and organisations across the community who joined along the way. Their engagement was as central as that of the staff and it continues today in the everyday work of protecting wildlife.

MUZOO is guided by a mantra: to be a welcoming third place where people can slow down with the living world, to study, preserve, marvel, grow and set off again with a new perspective.

Practice what you preach

The principle is simple: “coherence between what an institution says and how it operates, not as a finite state, but a discipline.”

It begins with daily operations. Rainwater is recycled, solar panels supply power and nesting boxes for swifts and bats are installed on the building. Exhibitions use as little technology and material as possible. The same criteria apply to the café and shop, which offer almost exclusively local, organic food and products chosen for their social and environmental credentials.

The principle also shapes how MUZOO cares for animals. The team has chosen to present fewer species so that each has more space. MUZOO takes part in European programs

↗ © MUZOO, LA CHAUX-DE-FONDS



→ © MUZOO, LA CHAUX-DE-FONDS

that safeguard the genetic diversity of captive populations and its wildlife care station treats several hundred injured animals each year. Partly run by volunteers, the station turns conservation from a message into something residents can take part in.

Outreach links these practices to the public. Through tours, workshops, research and exhibitions, MUZOO's outreach specialists make complex science accessible, grounding what visitors learn in what they see the institution doing.

This consistency was recognised in 2023, when the Swiss Academy of Natural Sciences awarded MUZOO the "Prix Expo 23" for Plan B, its main exhibition on the biodiversity crisis. Two years later came European recognition.

One roof, one narrative

Bringing a zoo and a natural history museum together could have meant little more than sharing a building. At MUZOO, it has become a way of telling one story: indoors and outdoors, the living and the preserved, collections and conservation, science and personal experience.

This matters because each half offers what the other cannot. A living animal creates curiosity and attachment; a stuffed specimen allows close observation, comparison and a sense of time. Seen together, they show biodiversity as something to marvel at today and something whose future is at stake.

In the exhibitions, visual, hands-on modules take precedence over long texts and traditional dioramas give way to immersive environments that place visitors inside the subject rather than in front of it.

The same narrative extends to the community. MUZOO also works as a third place, somewhere people come not only to visit, but to work, share a coffee, celebrate a birthday or simply spend time outdoors. Local biodiversity associations use its facilities, making the site a meeting point for professionals and amateurs alike.

Not without difficulties

The project depended on close collaboration between the zoo, the museum, city services and external partners. The collaboration was rewarding, but it demanded a level of commitment few had anticipated. The political process alone took years. Alongside it came a daunting practical task: relocating



hundreds of thousands of collection items, which kept the museum closed for eight years.

Then, in 2023, an unprecedented storm tore through La Chaux-de-Fonds. Gusts exceeding 217 km/h devastated MUZOO's park, a close-to-home reminder of the climate crisis the institution works to explain. No animal – human or otherwise – was injured, but the infrastructure was badly damaged and recovery demanded solidarity and creativity from the whole team. A replanting campaign has since restored the habitat with native trees and species more likely to withstand future climatic conditions.

Yet one thing came easily: the choice to go beyond a message about biodiversity and live by it. It was so obvious that it barely felt like a choice at all.

Looking ahead

The first lesson concerns planning. Looking back, the team would give more time and resources to planning and decision-making. The project required more anticipation than the timeline allowed and many issues had to be solved after opening rather than anticipated and tested beforehand. Some solutions could only be assessed once staff and visitors began using the new spaces.

The second lesson concerns people. The zoo and the museum brought together two teams with different professional cultures. Uniting them took time, trust and effort and that work did not stop when the doors reopened. The opening was not the end of the project but the start of a new phase. The teams had to learn to work as one institution.

The third lesson concerns resources. Early estimates of the staff and funding needed were deliberately kept low to secure political approval. The effects of that choice are still felt today, in budget and staffing. The caution for others is simple: an estimate that makes a project easier to approve can make it harder to run.

MUZOO, as the team is the first to admit, is still some way from where it wants to be. Its transformation did not end with a renovated building; it continues in daily practice, in the relationships between teams and in each adjustment made when something does not work as planned. For other institutions, the lesson is that this kind of change is collective and ongoing and that the experiences lived along the way matter as much as the project itself.

→ © MUZOO, LA CHAUX-DE-FONDS



WHERE EVERYONE BELONGS: CARE, IMAGINATION AND INCLUSION AT MANCHESTER MUSEUM

MANCHESTER MUSEUM

MANCHESTER, UNITED KINGDOM

EUROPEAN MUSEUM OF THE YEAR AWARD 2025

Ciaron Wilkinson

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More than the bricks and mortar

Manchester Museum is part of The University of Manchester and cares for around 4.5 million objects spanning natural sciences and human cultures. The Museum has been part of civic life in the city for more than 130 years, but like many museums of its era, its history is also deeply entwined with empire. Our collections connect Manchester to the world, but they also carry histories of extraction, unequal power and violence. Our mission is to build understanding between cultures and a more just, sustainable world, guided by the values of care, imagination and inclusion.

Following a £15 million transformation titled Hello Future, the Museum reopened in February 2023 and has welcomed over two and half million visitors since. The project created a new extension, improved accessibility and added major new galleries and public spaces. Yet the ambition was never simply to improve the building. We wanted to change who the Museum was for, who got to shape it and how it could interact and overlap with the lives of the people it encountered.

Redistributing authority

The most important shift was from working for communities to working with them. Co-creation was not treated as a consultation exercise at the end of a curatorial process or an add-on, but as a way of redistributing authority from the beginning. The South Asia Gallery, the first permanent gallery in the United Kingdom dedicated to the South Asian contribution and a partnership with the British Museum, was developed with a collective of around 30 co-curators. Their lived experience, family histories, creative practices and sometimes disagreements were not supplementary; they shaped everything from the gallery's design to the objects and stories and most importantly the narrative.

The ethos of the South Asia Gallery can be seen right across the museum. Our Chinese Culture and Belonging Galleries were built through relationships with local and international communities. Manchester Museum Celebrates, our flagship year-round programme of religious and cultural events, brings thousands of people together for celebrations including Lunar New Year, Eid, Vaisakhi, Vesak, Africa Day, Diwali and Mid-Autumn Festival. These occasions are about bringing people together through friendship and joy, but their real value lies in shared ownership: community partners determine how cultures and faiths are represented, while visitors encounter the celebrations through conversation, food, music, creativity and performance.

Care made structural

Care and inclusion are visible in the use of space across the Museum. Pinc College, a specialist college for neurodivergent young people, has a permanent home within the Museum. Our Top Floor is not another gallery but a hub for environmental action and social justice, shared with a growing network of community groups, artists, charities and activists. We are a Museum of Sanctuary, which is a commitment that shapes how we welcome people from all over the world seeking to make Manchester their home, while our quiet space, prayer room and improved accessible facilities send a message that everyone belongs in our Museum.

There is a well-known saying in the UK "nothing about us without us" which is a belief that underpins decision making across our work. We did not want communities to appear only

↗ MCRMUSEUM AFRICADAY MAY2024_@JODYHARTLEY



in interpretation panels while the institution continued unchanged behind the scenes. Partnerships, co-curation, shared programming and inclusive spaces bring different people into the daily life of the Museum and we are richer for it.

Collections as instruments of change

Our redevelopment asked how our collections could become more active in the present. In 2023, 174 cultural heritage items were returned to the Anindilyakwa people of Australia. Repatriation is part of a broader commitment to transparency about how collections were formed and to building relationships based on respect rather than possession. In our galleries, multiple perspectives challenge the idea that museums speak with a single, neutral voice.

The same principle connects climate justice with environmental action. The Museum combines research with practical conservation, including the work of our Vivarium where we are one of the only places outside of Panama where you can find the variable harlequin toad. Visitors encounter biodiversity not as a distant scientific subject but as a shared responsibility. This is where being a university museum is distinctive: globally significant research is brought into dialogue with public engagement and civic action.

The recognition

The EMYA jury recognised that Manchester Museum's transformation went far beyond the redevelopment of its building. It represented a fundamental rethinking of what a museum can be: not simply a place that holds and interprets collections, but a civic space where knowledge is created with others, difficult histories are addressed openly and people can encounter different cultures, perspectives and experiences.

This approach is visible throughout the Museum - from the communities shaping galleries and programmes to the partners occupying and animating our spaces. The jury praised this as "thoughtful, informed and impactful community engagement" and highlighted our commitment to creating a museum where people of all identities and backgrounds can see themselves reflected and represented.

Perhaps most importantly, the award recognised the consistency between our values and our practice. Care, inclusion and social responsibility are not confined to individ-

→ DINO SLUMBER PARTY_MANCHESTER MUSEUM



ual projects; they influence how we interpret collections, form partnerships, use our building and make decisions.

Lessons from the process

The transformation was led by our Director, Esme Ward, and made possible by staff, volunteers, designers, funders and hundreds of partners. Above all, it was built on relationships sustained over many years. Behind every gallery or celebration lies the difficult work of sharing authority, building trust and accepting that collaboration can challenge established plans.

We did not get every decision right and sometimes caused harm. Acknowledging this is essential to working with honesty and care. Participation is not equitable simply because people are invited. Payment, accessibility, language, confidence, support and the freedom to disagree determine who participates and whose voice is heard.

Co-creation takes time, flexibility and a willingness to act on what people say, even when it is difficult. Institutional expertise are important but they must sit alongside lived experience, Indigenous knowledges and the understanding that there are multiple ways of knowing.

Just getting started

Our advice to others is simply to begin the work. Start with purpose rather than waiting for a major redevelopment, a new strategy or the perfect conditions. Be clear about the change you want to create and who needs the power to shape it. Invest in relationships before you need a particular outcome, and allow your values to influence budgets, recruitment, spaces and decisions, not just the language used in exhibitions. Most importantly, expect co-creation to change the institution itself. If only the exhibition or the event changes, authority has not truly been shared.

Being named European Museum of the Year was an incredible honour, but it did not tell us that our work was complete. It gave us confidence that we were moving in the right direction, and a responsibility to keep going. The Museum continues to be shaped by its collections and staff, but also by the communities and partners who give it meaning, challenge its assumptions and imagine what it might become next. In many ways, we are only just getting started.

→ NEW SAG

FROM POWER PLANT TO PUBLIC PLACE

EC1 ŁÓDŹ – CITY OF CULTURE COMPLEX

ŁÓDŹ, POLAND

EUROPEAN HERITAGE AWARD / EUROPA NOSTRA AWARD 2025 IN CATEGORY CONSERVATION AND ADAPTIVE REUSE

Błażej Moder

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A power plant is built around a public need. At EC1 in Łódź, that need has changed, but the relationship with the city remains. Where electricity once entered the urban network, visitors now encounter science, cinema, comics and the machinery that powered the city's industrial growth. The challenge was to decide what to protect, what to transform and how to give industrial heritage a new public purpose without erasing its former life.

The European Heritage Award / Europa Nostra Award 2025, in Conservation & Adaptive Reuse, recognised this transformation: conserving a place, building a public institution and using heritage as part of urban regeneration.

Building an institution in stages

Łódź's first municipal power plant began operating at Targowa Street in 1907. For almost a century it supplied factories, homes and city infrastructure. Its expansion left distinct architectural layers, including the Art Nouveau Machine Hall and the modernist western complex. When production stopped in 2000, the complex lost the purpose for which it had been built.

Saving EC1 was not an obvious choice. The buildings were in poor condition, restoration was complex and expensive, and some machinery had already disappeared. The city could have demolished the site or preserved only a fragment. Instead, Łódź chose adaptive reuse.

The decision became part of a larger urban vision. In 2007, the New Centre of Łódź programme placed the former power plant at the heart of a new district; in 2008, the City established EC1 Łódź – City of Culture. The award-winning transformation was delivered in stages between 2010 and 2023 through six EU co-financed projects. Maintaining one coherent purpose across separate investments and opening dates became a central challenge.

Letting the building explain itself

The former power plant had been designed for coal, steam, turbines and heavy industrial work, not for visitors. Conservation, fire safety, technical standards, accessibility and exhibition needs therefore had to be solved together. The task was not to choose between heritage and contemporary use, but to make them work in the same spaces.

Authenticity meant keeping evidence. Historic façades, woodwork, tiles, metalwork, pipes, steel structures and machinery were retained wherever possible. Visitors should feel they are inside a real power plant, not a new museum decorated in an industrial style.

The boiler house in EC1 West shows this approach particularly clearly. Several original boilers survived. Removing them would have created a large, simple exhibition hall, but would also have removed the strongest evidence of how the building once worked. Instead, the Science and Technology Centre was designed around them. Visitors move between the boilers and learn how electricity was generated through the actual spaces and equipment of the former plant. At the same time, preservation was not treated as an absolute rule: one boiler was removed to create an auditorium, while another was cut open so visitors could look inside and understand its construction. In one space, EC1 preserved, adapted and interpreted industrial heritage at the same time.



The same applies to pumps, the turbine generator and the overhead crane: they did not become scenery; they became content. In EC1 East, the Machine Hall survived without its machinery. Rather than recreate an artificial display, it became a flexible venue for concerts, congresses, premieres, festivals and exhibitions. Where machinery survived, education was built around it; where interiors were empty, new cultural uses were introduced.

Where an original building no longer existed, the response was different. The missing boiler-house volume in EC1 East was reintroduced in a contemporary form that respects the historic ensemble while remaining clearly new. The meeting of brick architecture and contemporary intervention has become one of EC1's most recognisable images. Sometimes respecting history means showing where the old ends and the new begins.

A shared place for different audiences

Today, EC1 brings together the Centre for Science and Technology, Planetarium, Street of the Elements, National Centre for Film Culture and Centre for Comics and Interactive Narratives. Exhibitions, cinemas, workshops, festivals and public events give people many reasons to return. They come not only to admire a restored monument, but to learn, watch a film or take part in city life.

This breadth depends on people as much as buildings. A team of more than 250 sustains EC1's cultural, educational and technical work. Future operators, curators, engineers, conservators and accessibility specialists all need to understand the project together. Professional excellence was not one architectural gesture, but the cumulative quality of decisions made over many years.

Access requires continuing attention

Public use creates responsibilities beyond opening day. Accessibility is addressed through architecture, information, digital communication, staff training and review. Measures include lifts and ramps, acoustic navigation markers, online Polish Sign Language interpretation at ticket desks, audio description and plain-language audio content.

Access should be examined as a complete visitor journey: finding an entrance, communicating with staff, moving through a building and understanding its content. Like conservation, accessibility is not completed through one intervention.



Heritage as an urban anchor

EC1 was the first major completed project within the nearly 100-hectare New Centre of Łódź, next to the Łódź Fabryczna transport hub. Much of the district was still developing when EC1 opened. Culture and heritage were not added after commercial development had defined the area; they were among the first visible signs of change and helped give the emerging district identity.

This sequence matters. Heritage did not wait for urban regeneration; it helped to start it. By 2026, EC1 had reached three million admissions, with more than 200 public events and over 50 educational programmes for schools annually. The transformation continued after construction ended: new use made conservation sustainable because the buildings became valued, needed and regularly used.

What we would do differently

No project delivered over more than a decade is perfect. Looking back, EC1 would not preserve less, but it would integrate disciplines earlier. It is tempting to think sequentially: conservation, construction, exhibitions, operations. In practice, a late decision in one area affects another. Today, future operators, curators, accessibility specialists and maintenance teams would be involved before key solutions became fixed, with shared standards for visitor routes, wayfinding and technical systems established earlier.

Advice for the next transformation

EC1 suggests three lessons. Do not confuse poor condition with lost value: a derelict building can still hold identity and possibilities that demolition would erase. Develop conservation, safety, accessibility and content together rather than adding a new function at the end. Keep the purpose and values stable while allowing solutions to evolve as audiences and needs change.

The most useful question may be simple: what can this place contribute that a new building could not? At EC1, the answer lies in authentic architecture, surviving machinery, public use and urban memory. More than a century ago, the power plant supported Łódź by producing electricity. Today, the same place serves the city through knowledge, culture and encounter.

→ EC1 CENTRE FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, PHOTO.: EC1 ŁÓD ARCHIVE

ADAPTIVE REUSE AND LIVING HERITAGE AT IWAMI GINZAN

IWAMI GINZAN LIBRARY CONSERVATION PROJECT

ŌDA, SHIMANE PREFECTURE, JAPAN

2025 UNESCO ASIA-PACIFIC AWARD OF DISTINCTION FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION

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Background

The Iwami Ginzan Library is the conversion of a large late-Edo-period merchant house in Omori Town, Oda City, Shimane Prefecture, into a satellite campus of the University of Shimane. Opened in April 2023, it serves as a library, café and co-working space shared by residents, students and visitors. Omori Town is a component of the World Heritage Site "Iwami Ginzan Silver Mine and its Cultural Landscape" (inscribed 2007). The project shows how a privately funded adaptive reuse can keep a historic building alive while strengthening the community that sustains a "living" heritage site.

Iwami Ginzan is a cultural landscape of mines, smelters, transport routes and mining settlements that operated from the 16th to the 20th centuries. Omori Town was the settlement where the samurai officials and merchants connected with the mine lived. Its mixture of samurai residences and townhouses, built from the 17th to the 20th centuries, was selected in 1987 as a national Important Preservation District for Groups of Historic Buildings, covering 162.7 ha. Unlike many mining sites, Omori has remained a residential community after the end of mining. Its residents adopted their own charter in 2007, beginning with the words "This town is a place of life."

The library occupies the former Matsubara family house, believed to have been built shortly after the Omori Fire of 1800, which destroyed most of the town. It is an unusually large private house for the district and has a plaster finish that is rare in the region. Until the early Showa period the family brewed and sold vinegar here; the house later served as a residence and briefly as a souvenir shop. It stood vacant for long periods. The main house was repaired around 1990 and the two storehouses in 2017, but by the time of the project the pillars had suffered termite damage and the whole building had settled by up to 20 cm. Public funding for further repair was not available.

Partnership

The owner and sole founder is Nakamura Brace Co., Ltd., a prosthetics and orthotics manufacturer founded in Omori in 1974. As part of its corporate social responsibility, the company has restored more than 60 vacant buildings in the area without government or bank support. Around 20 of these now house about 70 employees and their families, helping to halt population decline. The company bought the Matsubara house in 2016. Its chairman, Toshiro Nakamura, then proposed to the University of Shimane that the building be used as a place for students to learn. A partnership agreement followed in 2019, and the author began the design in 2020. Construction ran from August 2021 to January 2023. The total cost, over 200 million yen (about USD 1.4 million), was borne entirely by the company.

Conservation

The work followed the conservation standards of the preservation district, the comprehensive management plan for the World Heritage Site, and the Oda City preservation ordinance. Change-of-state applications were approved by the city. Internationally, the project draws on the Washington Charter's call for historic towns to adapt to modern life with residents' participation, and on the Nara Document's broad understanding of authenticity. The street façade was repaired to district standards, and the basic plan and structure were kept. Although district rules mainly control exteriors, the project chose to retain the interior structure



as well, and about 80 percent of the original materials were reused.

To correct the settlement, the whole house was jacked up, the foundation stones were reset level on a new foundation, and decayed pillar bases were repaired with traditional splice joints before the house was lowered back. The underfloor was reinforced to carry public use. Original clay walls were stripped, returned to mud and reused, and reclaimed alcove boards became the step from the earthen floor. A local contractor experienced in historic buildings carried out the work. Local plasterers renewed the earthen and plaster walls, local woodworkers made new screens in kumiko lattice without nails, and the roof uses the reddish-brown Sekishu tiles that unify the townscape.

Use and Operation

The building now holds a Japanese-style reading room, a children's picture-book room, a café, a paid co-working space, a gallery in a storehouse, and an outdoor play area with a shallow pool. The "Picture Book Cave" is shaped like a mabu, the tunnels of the silver mine. In the tatami room facing the main street stand bookshelves shaped like andon lanterns. They are surfaced with bamboo cut on the World Heritage property itself, where bamboo spreading from unused forests now obscures the landscape. This choice turns an environmental problem into visible material. The books on the shelves were chosen by actors, writers, designers and others connected with Iwami Ginzan as "books that influenced my life."

University students have taken part since the planning stage, staying in the town to listen to residents. They now run the facility and the café, which uses local ingredi-



ents. Operations are entrusted to Yorishiro, a general incorporated association set up in 2022 by university staff. The university pays rent to the owner and covers utilities, while Yorishiro pays student wages from café and co-working income. Annual café sales of about USD 27,600, with a university subsidy of about USD 10,300, keep the operation in surplus, and the aim is full self-sufficiency. The library opens four days a week from April to November and on Saturdays in winter, and the ground floor is free.

Impact and Significance

The library is the only place in the area where children can read picture books, and local families use the pool in summer. Students publish a free paper reporting their research and interviews with residents, and organise festivals and exhibitions such as the "Omori Town Streetscape Album 2024." Elderly residents walk there on opening days, and the café works together with neighbouring shops. The project received the Good Design Award (2023), the Grand Prize of the Shimane Architecture and Housing Competition, and the Excellence Award of the Shimane Landscape Awards, and it has been visited by the prefectural governor, the Agency for Cultural Affairs and Japan ICOMOS.

The Iwami Ginzan Library is, as far as the project team knows, the first university satellite campus created by converting a historic building within a World Heritage Site to an entirely new use. It shows that a local company, a university and residents can share the work of conservation, funding, operation and interpretation without depending on public subsidy. Within a mining heritage site, it offers a model in which a historic house becomes a place for learning at the site and about the site, connecting the memory of the mine with the everyday life of the town today.



‘A NEW BOX OF DELIGHTS’ – GLASGOW’S BURRELL COLLECTION

THE BURRELL COLLECTION

GLASGOW, SCOTLAND, UNITED KINGDOM

FAMILY FRIENDLY MUSEUM AWARD 2025 AS BEST LARGE MUSEUM

Jane Rowlands

DIRECTOR, HEAD OF MUSEUMS AND COLLECTIONS, GLASGOW LIFE

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The Burrell Collection, which houses 9,000 objects, is one of nine free-to-enter museums run by Glasgow Life, the trading name of the charity Culture and Sport Glasgow. Situated in Glasgow's Pollok Country Park and opened in 1983, the collection was formed by Sir William and Constance, Lady Burrell and gifted to the city of Glasgow in 1944. It is varied and of exceptionally high quality, spanning 6000 years of history from across the world.

The museum recently underwent a multimillion-pound redevelopment, enabling us to focus on access, inclusion and sustainability, alongside enhancing collections care and display space. Before the redevelopment, visiting families reported finding the museum inaccessible and difficult to navigate, and we knew that displays no longer reflected modern museum practice. One visitor commented: "It just doesn't feel like a family-friendly museum, so it's not one of our favourites to visit."

This was reflected in the demographic of visitors. A report commissioned by Glasgow Life showed that 1% of visitors classified themselves as being in 'lower supervisory and technical occupations' compared with 12% of Scotland's overall population; 41% of visitors classified themselves as being in managerial positions compared to 19% in Scotland's census. Visitors did not reflect the diversity of Glasgow's ethnicities and cultures, and certainly not the population local to the museum. For example, <0.5% of visitors identified themselves as Pakistani, compared with 4% of Glasgow's population. In addition, only 4% of visitors identified as having a disability or long-term illness compared with 22.7% of Glasgow's population.

Feedback from our teachers' panel was: "It's a very clean, 'very white' museum. Everything is 'too precious' to let children run about. We want to look, touch and play!"

As part of redevelopment, 50% of displays were redesigned for a family audience, with a further 20% aimed at early years visitors. We achieved this through multisensory interactive displays, clear, easy-to-read labelling, and by prioritising access needs in the design of the museum.

The design approach was inclusive; we consulted over 15,000 members of the public, building accessibility and representation into every gallery. Fifteen displays were co-curated with community partners, and we asked for feedback from groups representing all ages, from pre-5s at Pollok Children's Nursery to older adults from Wing Hong Chinese Elderly Centre. Pollok Children's Centre and Thornwood Nursery advised us on the outdoor play space.

At the Burrell we now welcome a high proportion of diverse families participating in hands-on programmes, as well as many children on educational visits. Visitor numbers have grown by nearly 300%, reaching 494,000 in the first 9 months of reopening, and 555,017 in 2024, with 97% satisfaction levels, and 78% of visitors saying they intend to return. 50% of local visitors now come from the city's most deprived areas, with 82% of visitors saying they felt a greater connection to Glasgow after visiting.

This focus on access and inclusion has reshaped the culture and mission of the museum and continues through ongoing family and community programmes. In October 2025, the Burrell Collection won Best Large Museum in the Kids in Museums Family Friendly Museum Awards. Run by charity Kids in Museums, the Award is a benchmark for excellence in the heritage sector. Each year hundreds of public nominations of cul-

↗ BURRELL COLLECTION MEDIEVAL DAY 2025



tural or heritage visitor attractions loved by families are received, which are shortlisted by an expert panel. The final say goes to families, who pay undercover visits to each shortlisted museum and rate the museums on how well they meet the Kids in Museums Manifesto, a set of guidelines on what makes a great museum visit for all ages.

We met the manifesto standard 'Be Welcoming' by providing a training programme of audience awareness, ensuring staff give a warm welcome to all. Family judges commented that representation in displays made them feel seen and included, and they enjoyed the many digital and hands-on interactives that explore objects through play, including 28 tactile models encouraging touch.

Our provision of a quiet space and sensory backpacks, with regular quiet hours for neurodivergent visitors, and sensory mapping in advance of visits available on the Burrell Collection website, met the 'Be Accessible' standard. We have nine accessible toilets, four gender-neutral toilets, gendered facilities, and two Changing Places, providing a variety of choice. The museum has step-free access and lifts to every gallery, and visitors can borrow wheelchairs. A free wheelchair-accessible shuttle bus helps visitors to reach the museum through the park.

Four of the most popular family museum trails have been translated into 8 community languages (including Arabic, Polish, Scots Gaelic, and Mandarin). Displays all exceed guidelines for wheelchair users and interactives are developed to ensure accessibility for children in large buggies or wheelchairs. Text is written to the social model of disability. Entry is free to all, and there are four picnic spaces so families can bring their own food, alleviating the expense of a family day out. Catering partner Benugo has separately been awarded a Kids in Museums Family Friendly award for catering for diverse requirements and making the restaurant an informal, friendly space.

Breastfeeding is welcomed, and we have buggy storage. A variety of seating, suggested by the access panel, is available through-



out the gallery, and aligns with our ethos that everyone should have a pleasant and comfortable visit, no matter who they are.

Our marketing team uses a variety of family structures and ethnicities in materials, and all promotional language refers to 'parent or guardian' to reflect differing care arrangements, meeting the 'remember families come in all shapes and sizes' standard. Each year we run free, large-scale, community-focused events designed to engage with local families, such as Pride, Lunar New Year and Medieval Day. These celebrate the diverse families that make up our local community – in 2024, 71% of Pride attendees were families of various makeups. This commitment to inclusivity impressed families, with the LGBTQ+ and colonial histories trails introducing these topics in a way that is accessible for all ages.

One family judge said: "Walking into each gallery felt like opening up a new box of delights – something different around every corner. It was abundantly clear so much thought and effort had gone into making the collection as accessible as possible to as many people as possible, and for that, they should be commended. One of the best museums we have ever visited."

The award win was a team effort, but had personal resonance for Caroline Currie, Learning and Access Curator, who grew up locally and has championed inclusion for families and children throughout her career. Caroline commented:

"It feels great to win this award. We've worked hard to make The Burrell a fun day out whilst still being a place to learn, get inspired and spend time together. What means the most is that families who visited had a great time – and they were the ones who judged us! We've designed the museum with families in mind, from hands-on displays and sensory kits to quiet spaces and picnic areas." Caroline added, "We also run regular events for all ages. We'll keep listening to our visitors and making The Burrell even more welcoming."

→ BURRELL KNIGHTS BATTLE IN THE ATRIUM 2025



GLACIER ARCHAEOLOGY PROGRAMME – SECRETS OF THE ICE,

OSLO, NORWAY

EUROPEAN HERITAGE AWARD / EUROPA NOSTRA GRAND PRIX 2025 IN CATEGORY RESEARCH

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SECRETS OF THE ICE

The **Glacier Archaeology Programme**, widely known through its public initiative **Secrets of the Ice**, is a pioneering collaboration between the **Museum of Cultural History** at the **University of Oslo** and **Innlandet County Municipality** in Norway. Since its establishment in 2006, the programme has become an international leader in glacial archaeology, combining rescue archaeology, scientific research, collection management, exhibitions, and public outreach. Permanent funding was secured in 2011, enabling long-term work focused on recovering archaeological artefacts emerging from melting mountain ice before they are lost forever.

The programme operates at the intersection of archaeology and climate change. As rising temperatures accelerate the retreat of glaciers and ice patches in Norway's high mountains, ancient objects that have remained frozen and preserved for thousands of years are being exposed. Recognising both the opportunity and the urgency created by this process, the Glacier Archaeology Programme has worked systematically to locate, document, recover, conserve, and study these finds. The Department of Cultural Heritage at Innlandet County Municipality leads fieldwork, rescue operations, and public communication, while the Museum of Cultural History curates the collection, supports research, and makes the artefacts available for exhibitions. Research is conducted in close cooperation between the two institutions.

Over the course of two decades, the programme has transformed our understanding of human activity in Europe's high mountain regions. As of spring 2026, more than 4,700 artefacts from 72 sites have been documented in Innlandet County. The collection includes objects dating back as far as 6,000 years and represents more than half of all glacial archaeological finds discovered worldwide. These extraordinary discoveries range from prehistoric hunting equipment and rare clothing fragments to exceptionally well-preserved skis and transportation equipment. Together, they provide an unprecedented record of human adaptation, travel, hunting, trade, and everyday life in mountain environments over millennia.

A new source material for archaeology.

The origins of the programme can be traced to a chance discovery. A local mountain walker found a remarkably well-preserved artefact emerging from melting ice, highlighting both the archaeological potential of the region and the urgent need for systematic monitoring. The incident also demonstrated the important role that local communities play in identifying new sites and contributing to heritage preservation. What began as a response to isolated discoveries has since developed into one of the world's most successful and influential glacial archaeology initiatives.

The programme is built upon several interconnected pillars: scientific research, collection management, exhibitions, outreach, and education. When the work began, there were few established methods for locating and documenting archaeological sites in ice-covered environments. Researchers therefore had to adapt traditional archaeological survey techniques to the unique challenges of the periglacial landscape. Over time, the programme developed innovative methodologies that combine archaeological expertise with modern technology, including satellite imagery, digital terrain models, drone surveys, remote sensing, and high-precision GPS mapping. These approaches have significantly improved the ability to identify promising locations and record finds accurately under demanding field conditions.

↗ MOUNTING OF MEDIEVAL DOG IN EXHIBITION FROZEN IN TIME AT THE NORWEGIAN MOUNTAIN CENTER. PHOTO LIVE SULHEIM, NORWEGIAN MOUNTAIN CENTER



→ SURVEYING A HUNTING SITE IN THE HIGH MOUNTAINS OF SOUTHERN NORWAY. THE ICE IN THE FOREGROUND CONTAINED HUNDREDS OF ARTEFACTS. PHOTO ANDREAS NILSSON

Fieldwork takes place during a brief and highly intensive summer season. Teams work within a narrow window when snow has melted sufficiently to expose artefacts but before changing conditions threaten their preservation. The work is conducted according to strict environmental stewardship principles designed to minimise impacts on sensitive mountain ecosystems. Every recovered object is carefully documented, catalogued, conserved, and stored for future research. The resulting collection, curated at the Museum of Cultural History in Oslo, provides scholars with an unparalleled source of information on the long-term use of mountain landscapes.

The exceptional preservation of these artefacts is directly linked to the nature of the ice itself. Not all glaciers preserve archaeological material. Large, moving glaciers gradually crush and destroy objects trapped within them, eventually depositing fragmented remains at their edges. In contrast, many of the programme's discoveries come from relatively stable ice patches and non-moving ice fields frozen to the ground. These environments can preserve artefacts for thousands of years, effectively functioning as natural deep-freeze archives. By studying aerial photographs and computer-generated terrain models, researchers have learned to identify these stable ice formations and focus their efforts where preservation conditions are most favourable. Given limited resources and vast mountain areas, this targeted approach is essential for achieving successful results.

Excellence in research.

A key factor behind the concentration of finds in Innlandet is the long-standing relationship between people, reindeer, and mountain ice. Reindeer are highly adapted to cold climates and migrate to high-elevation areas during summer, seeking snow and ice to escape heat and insect harassment. Mountain regions of south central Norway provide ideal summer pastures. For thousands of years, hunters understood this behaviour and used it to their advantage, positioning themselves near snow and ice where reindeer gathered. This practice, which dates back to the Stone Age, has left behind an extraordinary archaeological record of hunting activity preserved in the ice.

The finds have generated major new insights into the history of Norway and the broader North Atlantic region. Some discoveries are immediately striking, including Norway's oldest known shoe, the country's oldest clothing, and what is considered the best-preserved prehistoric ski pair in the world. Other discoveries reveal their significance only through detailed scientific anal-



ysis, including radiocarbon dating, material studies, and investigations of the archaeological context. This ongoing research continues to produce new knowledge about past societies and their interactions with challenging mountain environments.

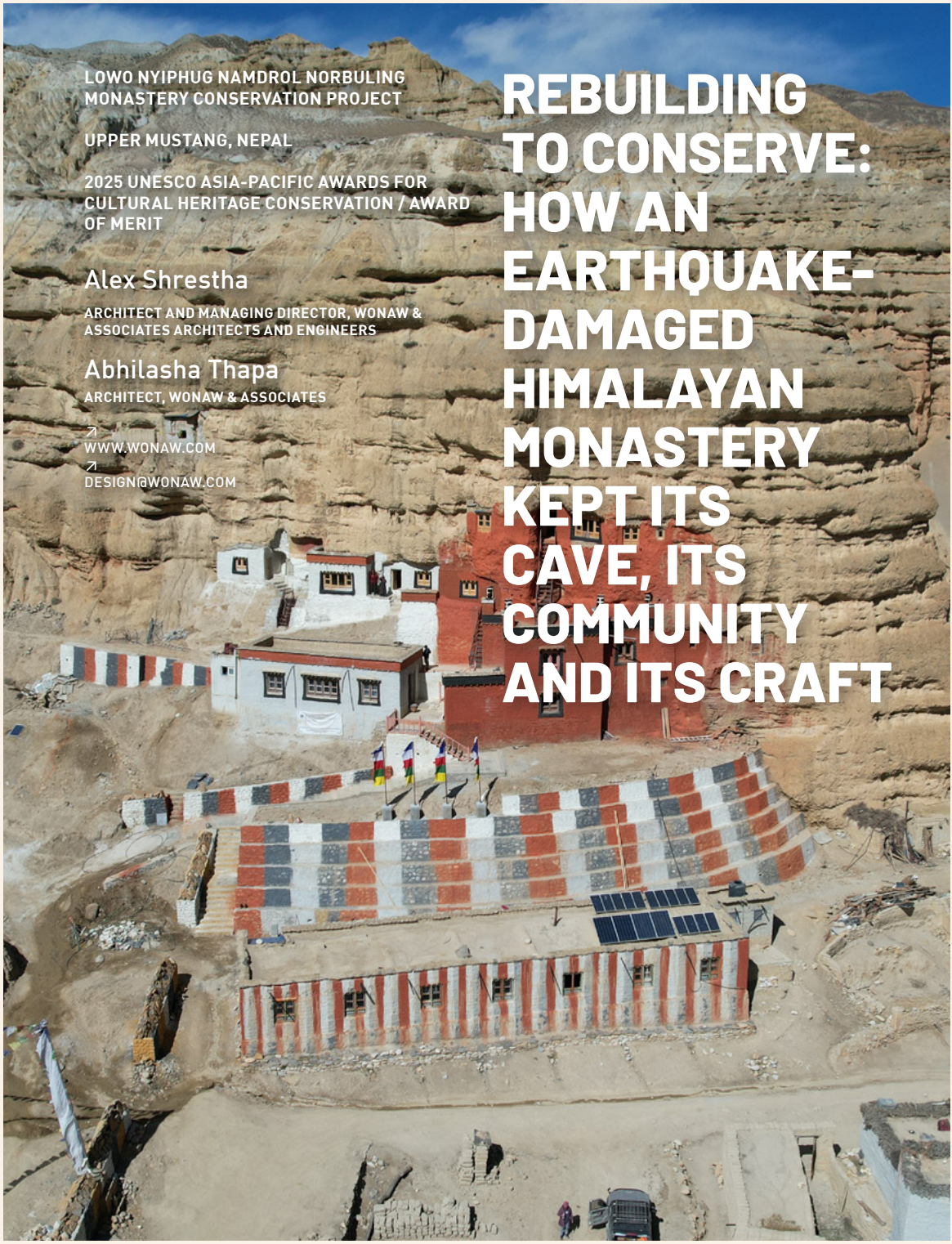
Perhaps most importantly, the artefacts demonstrate that people used the high mountains far more intensively than previously believed. Evidence from the lost mountain pass of Lendbreen, for example, reveals substantial traffic across the mountains approximately 1,000 years ago. The route connected inland communities with Norway's western fjord regions and formed part of broader networks of movement, exchange, and communication. These discoveries challenge older assumptions about the remoteness of mountain areas and show that Innlandet was closely connected to wider economic and cultural networks.

Among the most remarkable finds are more than 200 arrows recovered from the ice. Many retain organic components such as fletching, sinew bindings, and arrow shafts—materials that rarely survive at archaeological sites elsewhere. Their exceptional preservation has attracted significant international interest and provides researchers with unique opportunities to study ancient hunting technologies in extraordinary detail. The programme's broader methodological innovations have also gained international recognition. Researchers have published their approaches in the Journal of Field Archaeology, helping establish standards that can benefit glacial archaeology projects around the world.

Public outreach has been a central part of the programme's success. In 2016, the team launched the **Secrets of the Ice** initiative, creating a strong online presence that has attracted a large international audience. The combination of spectacular discoveries, climate change, and adventure-driven fieldwork generated widespread public interest, with the programme continuously featuring in international news and social media. Regular updates from field seasons are shared through social media and are frequently picked up by national and international news outlets.

Ultimately, the artefacts emerging from Innlandet's ice represent a shared European and global heritage. They reveal how past communities adapted to environmental change, participated in long-distance trade, and interacted across vast landscapes. Through research, exhibitions, and public engagement, the Glacier Archaeology Programme demonstrates both the value of these discoveries and the urgent need to document them before continuing climate change causes this irreplaceable heritage to disappear forever.

→ ONE OF THE BEST PRESERVED SKIS FROM PREHISTORY. DATING TO JUST PRIOR TO THE VIKING AGE, 1300 YEARS OLD. PHOTO ANDREAS NILSSON, SECRETS OF THE ICE



LOWO NYIPHUG NAMDROL NORBULING MONASTERY CONSERVATION PROJECT

UPPER MUSTANG, NEPAL

2025 UNESCO ASIA-PACIFIC AWARDS FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION / AWARD OF MERIT

REBUILDING TO CONSERVE: HOW AN EARTHQUAKE-DAMAGED HIMALAYAN MONASTERY KEPT ITS CAVE, ITS COMMUNITY AND ITS CRAFT

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Lowo Nyiphug Namdrol Norbuling Monastery (Nyiphug) in Upper Mustang, Nepal, received a 2025 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Award of Merit with Special Recognition for Sustainable Development. The jury recognised an approach that placed traditional builders and community stewardship at its centre while integrating seismic resistance.

A monastery built around a cave

Wonaw & Associates is an award-winning Nepali architecture and engineering firm founded in 1999, known for sustainable design and hospitality projects across Nepal. The conservation of Nyiphug was one of our corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, through which we help communities identify vulnerable heritage, document its condition and formulate conservation projects.

Located in Chhoser, Upper Mustang, at nearly 4,000 metres, Nyiphug is a fifteenth-century monastery developed around a natural cave associated with Lo Khenchen Sonam Lhundup, a scholar and teacher and the son of the second King of Mustang. The complex grew as monks and local people added spaces of mud, stone and timber against the cliff, creating a distinctive relationship between the cave and its built enclosure.

Worship, meditation and teaching continue at the monastery, which also supports a monastic school offering education up to Grade 8.

Why repair was not enough

The 2015 Gorkha earthquake weakened the foundations, cracked structural joints and loosened timber beams and columns. Unusually heavy rainfall, against the background of changing climatic conditions in the region, compounded the deterioration. Over time, the foundation progressively failed and the built structure began to separate from the cliff, leaving a gap that continued to widen.

Nyiphug's character depends on the close relationship between the natural cave and its enclosure. That relationship was coming apart. Cracks and loose timbers were symptoms of a deeper structural failure; patching them would not have restored the foundation or secured the connection to the rock.

The decision came from the monastery and its community. Following technical inspections and consultations with local builders, they chose to dismantle the affected structure, including its foundation, and rebuild it on the same footprint. This was a response to the observed condition of the building, rather than a preference for replacement.

Who made it possible

The project was a CSR initiative of Wonaw & Associates, which undertook the design, project formulation and supervision. Construction was funded by the German Embassy in Kathmandu under the German Cultural Preservation Programme of the Federal Foreign Office. Ven. Khenpo Jamyang Tenzin from the monastery and Alex Shrestha, the project architect, were among those responsible for the project.

What we did

Because dismantling is irreversible, documentation was an essential first step. Photographs and drawings recorded the building's condition, the relationship between the cave and its enclosure, and the sequence of works. We identified the heritage attributes



→ COMPLETED NYIPHUG MONASTERY

to safeguard: the natural cave, its prayer halls and ancient wall paintings, the setting, the architectural character, the relationship between cave and building, and the monastery's continuing religious and educational use.

The failed structure was dismantled while the cave was retained. Material recovery became central to the reconstruction. Earth from the old sun-dried bricks, locally called pop, was mixed with fresh soil and formed into new bricks. Recovered boulders were used in the new foundation. Timber was reused wherever its condition allowed, including columns, beams, door and window frames, and floor planks.

Reconstruction proceeded from the foundation upwards. The walls were built of stone and sun-dried earth brick and finished with mud plaster. Floors were mainly rammed earth carried on timber, while timber beams provided anchorage within the rooms. To address the separation from the cliff, the structure was re-anchored using wooden band tie-ins. Seismic-resistance measures included through-stones spanning the full thickness of the walls, continuous timber bands at floor, sill and lintel levels, and external reinforced timber strip bands around wall corners, plastered over with a stronger mortar.

Additional windows improved natural light and ventilation, while an external staircase provided access to the upper meditation caves.

What impressed the jury

The UNESCO jury highlighted the safeguarding of a vulnerable earthen architectural typology characteristic of the Tibetan Plateau, increasingly threatened by climate-driven precipitation. It also recognised the involvement of practitioner-builders from the local monastic community, whose traditional construction knowledge was central to the work, and the integration of modern seismic-resistance techniques within a framework respectful of the monastery's spiritual significance.

What makes it different

The project's distinction lies in its honesty about loss. It would be easy to call Nyiphug a restoration, but that would not accurately describe the intervention. A substantial amount of original structural fabric had to be

dismantled to safeguard the monastery and sustain its use.

The reconstructed portions cannot claim full continuity of original material fabric. Yet the monastery's heritage significance continues through the natural cave, its relationship with the built enclosure, the traditional material language, the setting and its living religious and educational functions.

We describe this as conservation-led reconstruction: reconstruction was the necessary treatment, not the ultimate objective. The reuse of historic mud, stone and timber provides one strand of material continuity, but it does not, by itself, establish material authenticity.

People, community and difficulties

Around 20 to 30 local builders worked on the project. The monks' understanding of how the monastery is used informed decisions about lighting, circulation and access. At a living heritage site, participation was essential from conceptual design through construction, and the local ward's recommendation and support were secured before work began.

The site is remote, situated in difficult terrain at high altitude, with limited resources and a short construction season. Landslides and downstream flooding can block roads, while harsh winters lead villagers to leave temporarily.

The reconstruction was completed in 2023. Following the recent magnitude 5.3 earthquake that struck Mustang in September 2026, the monks confirmed that no damage to the monastery had been observed. This is encouraging, but it does not constitute proof of the building's seismic performance.

What we would do next time

The long interval between the 2015 earthquake and completion in 2023 underlined the importance of securing support early, while a damaged structure continues to deteriorate. In future projects, we would approach a wider range of potential funders alongside the initial condition assessment.

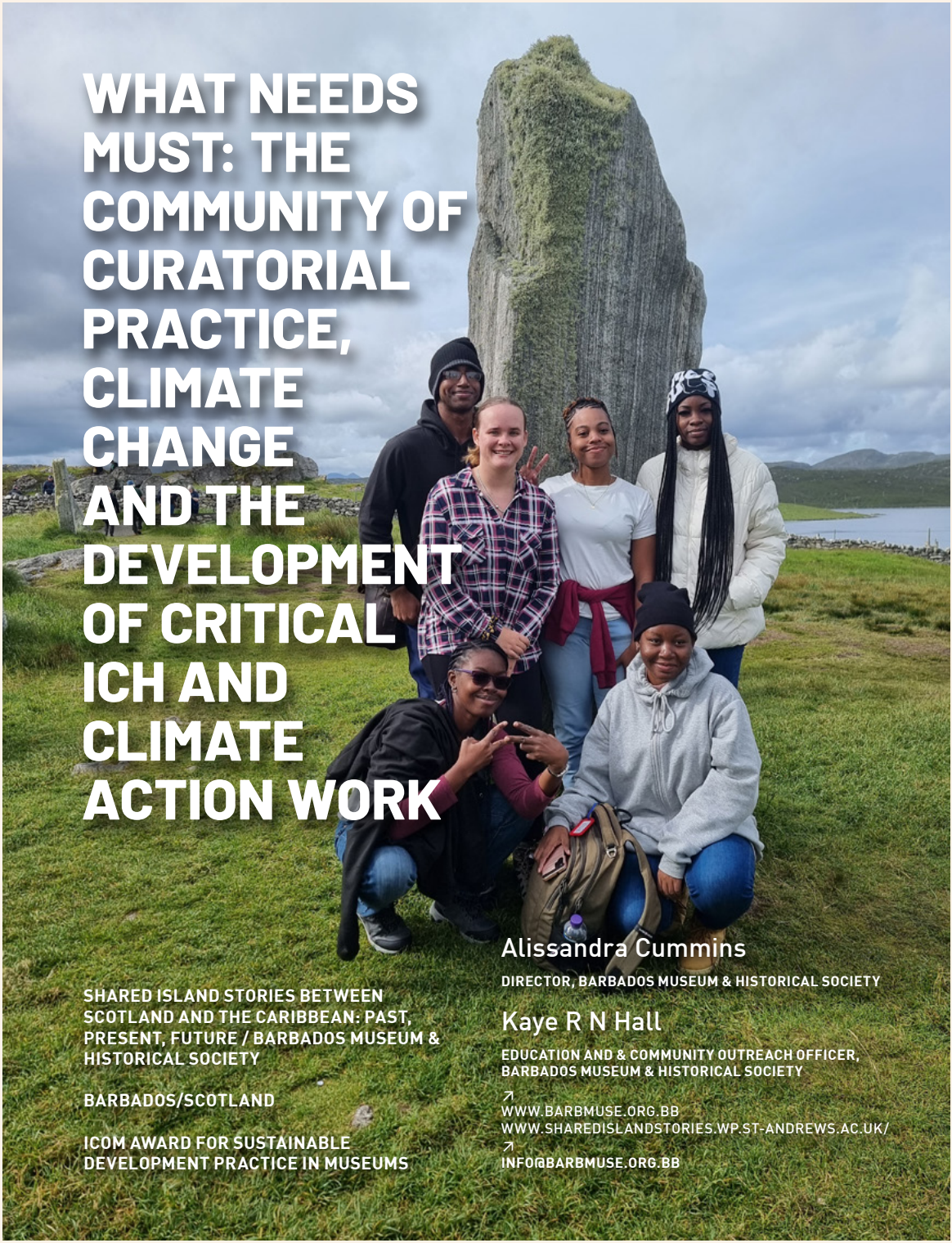
We would also plan material recovery before dismantling, identify the heritage attributes to be conserved before intervention, and establish long-term monitoring from the outset. This should include checking for foundation settlement, renewed separation at the cliff junction, moisture damage to mud walls, and deterioration or loosening of timber. Temporary support can buy time, but it cannot substitute for resolving the underlying structural problem.

Excellence and advice

Professional excellence is not simply about producing a finished building. It is about following a sound process: diagnosing causes rather than symptoms, making decisions based on evidence, working with the community that cares for the place, reusing recoverable materials and reporting losses openly.

Our advice is to avoid treating visible damage in isolation. Foundations, walls, timber and natural features act as one system. Treat living use as part of heritage significance, and be transparent about what is retained, altered and lost. Most importantly, involve the people who will sustain the place long after the project team has gone. Resilience is physical, cultural and institutional at once.

WHAT NEEDS MUST: THE COMMUNITY OF CURATORIAL PRACTICE, CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL ICH AND CLIMATE ACTION WORK



Alissandra Cummins

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SHARED ISLAND STORIES BETWEEN SCOTLAND AND THE CARIBBEAN: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE / BARBADOS MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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ICOM AWARD FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE IN MUSEUMS

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"On islands we feel alternately landed and adrift, magnified and reduced, fulfilled and voided, at home and in exile...."
— ISLANDS, LOVERS, AND OTHERS - DAVID LOWENTHAL, 2007

The Barbados Museum & Historical Society (BMHS) is a 90-year-old organisation with a dedicated history of community practice spanning the last 20 years. As a de facto national museum, the Museum underwent a strategic restructuring in the 1980s, tailoring its operations and programming to fall in line with governmental commitments. These include the UNESCO Conventions, to which Barbados is a signatory state party, and the SDGs, which are integrated into the Museum's operational frameworks as an agent of change. Furthermore, the Museum formalised its programming structure around the Community of Curatorial Practice, articulated by BMHS Curator Dr. Natalie McGuire in 2015 and operationalised by Education and Community Outreach Officer Kaye Hall. This has been a mission-critical part of the Museum's programming since the award-winning EULAC Museums Project, where Director Alissandra Cummins served as a principal investigator.

The Shared Island Stories partnership, which resulted in the BMHS winning the inaugural ICOM Award for Sustainable Development Practice in Museums, was a second collaboration with the University of St Andrews. It sought to broaden the programming started in the first project to better incorporate capacity building in young people, positioning them to respond to a world where they face the particular challenges of living on islands subject to climate change and post-colonial angst.

Shared Island Stories was specifically designed as a multidisciplinary approach using the SDG framework to address key driving questions: Which island collections tell unfinished stories of Empire? What is the role of heritage communities in sustainable development? How can island community museums partner with NGOs, policymakers, and local businesses for climate action? How can health and well-being be understood in relation to community heritage, traditional ecological knowledge, and island life? Finally, what does this new knowledge bring to debates on climate justice, especially regarding the role of youth?

To better meet the needs of our young people, the project adopted a constructive learning pedagogy geared towards unfettered exploration and capacity building for activism. Emphasizing guidance over a heavily structured approach, the programme was linked to specific SDGs across five core modules: **Landscape and Environment** (exploring how climate vulnerability links to land use and sustainable practice), **Under the Sea: Coasts and Communities** (examining the symbiosis between coastal communities and the sea), **The Real HBG: Historic Bridgetown and Its Garrison Unmasked** (exploring ethical practice and the realities of managing a world heritage property), **The Industrial Heritage of Barbados: The Story of Sugar and Rum** (assessing the ongoing impacts of the triangular trade in modern SIDS), and **One Love: Shared Future** (analysing the benefits of regional co-operation for long-term sustainable development).

Analysis factored in Barbados as a key player in regional history and internal policies driven by UNESCO conventions and SDG attainment. Each module featured a voluntary activity to enable focused examination of the content, introducing a variety of media to provide equitable means of engagement and expression. Students were encouraged to exchange ideas, engage critically with learning materials, and take intellectual



chances by developing unique approaches rather than conforming strictly to provided frameworks. This proved vital for developing creative problem-solving skills. Beyond the programme, students were encouraged to participate in real-world climate action exercises, facilitated by public awareness and research assistance.

The programme rapidly grew beyond its original scope. We realised that given the opportunity, tools, and support to achieve meaningful contributions to national projects and worldwide policy, youth do so willingly. We merely needed to point them in the right direction and stand out of their way. The initiative yielded several major positive outcomes, starting with the establishment of a **Climate Action Hub at the Museum**. Built on a flexible model of constructive learning, this Hub proved the necessity of providing a safe space for activism and sustained idea generation. Students exhibit ongoing creativity in their solutions, viewing challenges not as failed efforts but as an ongoing work of strategy and learning.

We also saw **Improved Partner Relationships**. Inspired by the engagement of our youth, partners have been more willing to collaborate. For example, a UNESCO Geo-Heritage Survey was extended to allow students to participate in the geotagging of potential green areas within Barbados in March 2023, providing critical national data that had previously been absent. Our young people led the way in promoting climate husbandry. Additionally, between August 2024 and August 2026, students associated with the programme contributed 19 submissions to the Barbados National Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage, taking a critical first step to ensure heritage survival in the face of global pressures.



Ultimately, there has been **Measurable Capacity Building in Our Project-Associated Youth**. As they have become confident and competent at representing their interests as responsible citizens of climate-vulnerable SIDS, the programme has nurtured their strengths and encouraged career paths in food security, climate action, and sustainable living. Post-programme, students have registered for university programmes directly impacting climate resilience. They are undertaking research projects to utilise polluting sargassum seaweed waste, participating in national conservation groups like the Barbados Sea Turtle Project, the Crochet for a Cause: Ridge to Reef project, and Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary, and developing independent projects aimed at improving national resilience and community self-reliance.

Through it all, our young people have been at the core of the work, initiating action and driving decision-making. ICOM has stated that the award aims to "demonstrate the various ways in which the museum sector contributes to sustainable development, and inspire museums and museum professionals everywhere in the world to begin or strengthen their efforts." We truly believe that through their continuing engagement and work with the Museum, the young participants in this project have done just that.

OCCUPYING HITLER'S HOME

OBERSALZBERG DOCUMENTATION CENTER

BERCHTESGADEN, GERMANY

EUROPEAN MUSEUM ACADEMY / LUIGI MICHELETTI AWARD 2025

Sven Keller
DIRECTOR, OBERSALZBERG DOCUMENTATION CENTER

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The Obersalzberg Documentation Center is surrounded by the stunningly beautiful landscape of the Bavarian Alps. Ninety years ago, however, the whole area was fenced off, closely guarded and inaccessible to the general public. Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler chose Obersalzberg, located above Berchtesgaden, as his adopted home and spent more than a quarter of his time in office (1933–1945) there.

At Obersalzberg, Hitler gathered an inner circle of loyal, trusted confidants, with his secret partner, Eva Braun, at the center, as a quasi substitute family. Yet his residence, the *Berghof*, was much more than just a private mountain retreat. It quickly became a second seat of government, where absolute power was wielded in the semi-private setting of the dictator's mountain court. Here, important political decisions were taken, persecution and genocide planned, wars prepared and waged. Every mass crime committed by the Nazis is linked to Obersalzberg.

The close connection between stunning scenery and heinous crimes is what defines Obersalzberg as a historical site, and this seeming discrepancy forms the narrative thread of our new permanent exhibition: *Idyll und Verbrechen* (Idyll and Atrocity), which opened in 2023. The link between the mass crimes perpetrated all over Europe and the place where those responsible conceived them is the exhibition's central focus.

In the surrounding area, we acquaint our visitors with a historical topography that underwent several drastic transformations during the twentieth century. Based on local and regional examples, we illuminate the mechanisms of Nazi rule and the racist society that it promoted. Everyday places like mountain huts, hotels or local pubs were ideologically appropriated by the Nazis, turning them into toxic, out-of-bounds locations for those not deemed suitable to join the racist national and ethnic community of the *Volk.* Many of those excluded or persecuted did not survive. As we tell their stories, our audience comes to realize that mass murder did not start somewhere "in the east", but locally, with next-door neighbours becoming its agents and profiteers. This is one of the powerful messages that prompt our visitors to reflect not only on the not-so-distant past, but also on our present.

The magnificent mountain scenery not only formed the backdrop for plotting and persecution, but also for Adolf Hitler's *Führer* propaganda. Obersalzberg was one of the most important places where imagery depicting Hitler as a tireless leader in a seemingly private setting was created. It offered his followers homestories of an allegedly approachable politician who was kind to his neighbours, loved animals and was fond of children. These well-orchestrated propaganda photos set in an idyllic landscape were widely disseminated and are still well known.

One of our most important challenges was not to reproduce and re-aestheticize these images, but to address them critically, providing our visitors with tools to deconstruct and analyze them. In the same sensitive spirit, our exhibition designers at *ramićsoenario*, Berlin, developed a restrained, yet characteristic visual language.

According to the jury of the European Museum Academy's Luigi Micheletti Award, we have succeeded in mastering "a very difficult storytelling, focusing on the grotesque story of the Nazi regime leadership enjoying the amazing landscape of Obersalzberg while at the same time deciding the grim destiny of millions of people in Europe. This is done with respect, empathy and curiosity, succeeding in using local and regional cases while telling many different sub-stories."

↗ OBERSALZBERG DOCUMENTATION CENTER_CREDITS_BPFI AINRING



→OBERSALZBERG DOCUMENTATION_CENTER_CREDITS_ANETTE KRADISCH

The professional recognition conferred on us by the Luigi Micheletti Award makes us immensely proud. We are even more humbled, however, by the enormous number of visitors we welcome every year: more than 213,000 in 2025 alone – an order of magnitude that no one even remotely expected when the Obersalzberg Documentation Center first opened in 1999. Back then, it featured a permanent exhibition in a rather small building, but nothing else. Over the years, it grew to be a vibrant and lively place of learning and remembrance. Our extensive educational and events program targets school students and adults equally. In 2023, we opened our new exhibition building together with our new permanent exhibition. Both were funded by the State of Bavaria. Historical accuracy continues to be guaranteed by our institutional ties with the renowned Leibniz Institute for Contemporary History Munich – Berlin.

Initially met with local scepticism and dubbed a risk in a region that depends on tourism, over the course of two and a half decades our work has become widely accepted. We have close links with civil society and have become a major destination in our own right, a point of interest for cultural tourism, where visitors combine a visit to Obersalzberg with hiking, cruising on Lake Königssee or touring the salt mines. While many of our visitors come as tourists, their motivations are diverse and often complex. Generally, we do not judge: Only if people approach us do we have a chance to engage them with history in a meaningful way. We have successfully curbed the highly problematic practices that dominated the scene for decades, with local entrepreneurs cashing in on the location's past by producing souvenirs and tabloid-style brochures that trivialized Hitler and depoliticized the historical site.

We strive to be a welcoming place for everyone. As a historical site closely connected to



→ OBERSALZBERG DOCUMENTATION CENTER_CREDITS_KARIN WABRO

the Nazi mass murder of the ill and the disabled, we feel a special obligation. Our building and exhibition are barrier free and accessible, and we also cater to special needs groups. In addition, our free multimedia guide is available in twelve languages.

We draw a strict line, however, for visitors who openly show radical right-wing and Nazi sympathies – be it symbolically or in word and deed. While they are not welcome at the museum, they are clandestinely present at a place that is so ideologically resonant as Obersalzberg. Keeping the historical site as unattractive as possible for this clientele is part of our mission.

To do this takes an immensely dedicated and courageous team of historians, educators, museum professionals and support staff. The Luigi Micheletti Award has not only strengthened our motivation; it has also acknowledged that it is, in fact, possible and necessary to responsibly translate a difficult heritage into an informative and attractive exhibition. We are not a "Hitler Museum", banking on sensationalism or the long-lasting attraction of the dark celebrity. People can become interested in the complexity that a difficult heritage often entails if they are provided with serious and factual information in an accessible way. We strive to use the historical site entrusted to us and the curiosity of our visitors as catalysts to counter simplification, revisionism and falsification of the past. In doing so, we seek to provoke thought about the present challenges and perils facing our humane, free and democratic societies – first and foremost the rise of radical right-wing movements embracing ideas and ideals all too close to the ideologies that once emanated from Obersalzberg.

UNIVERSITY OF NAVARRA MUSEUM (MUN) | ARTS AND LIFE

NAVARRA, SPAIN

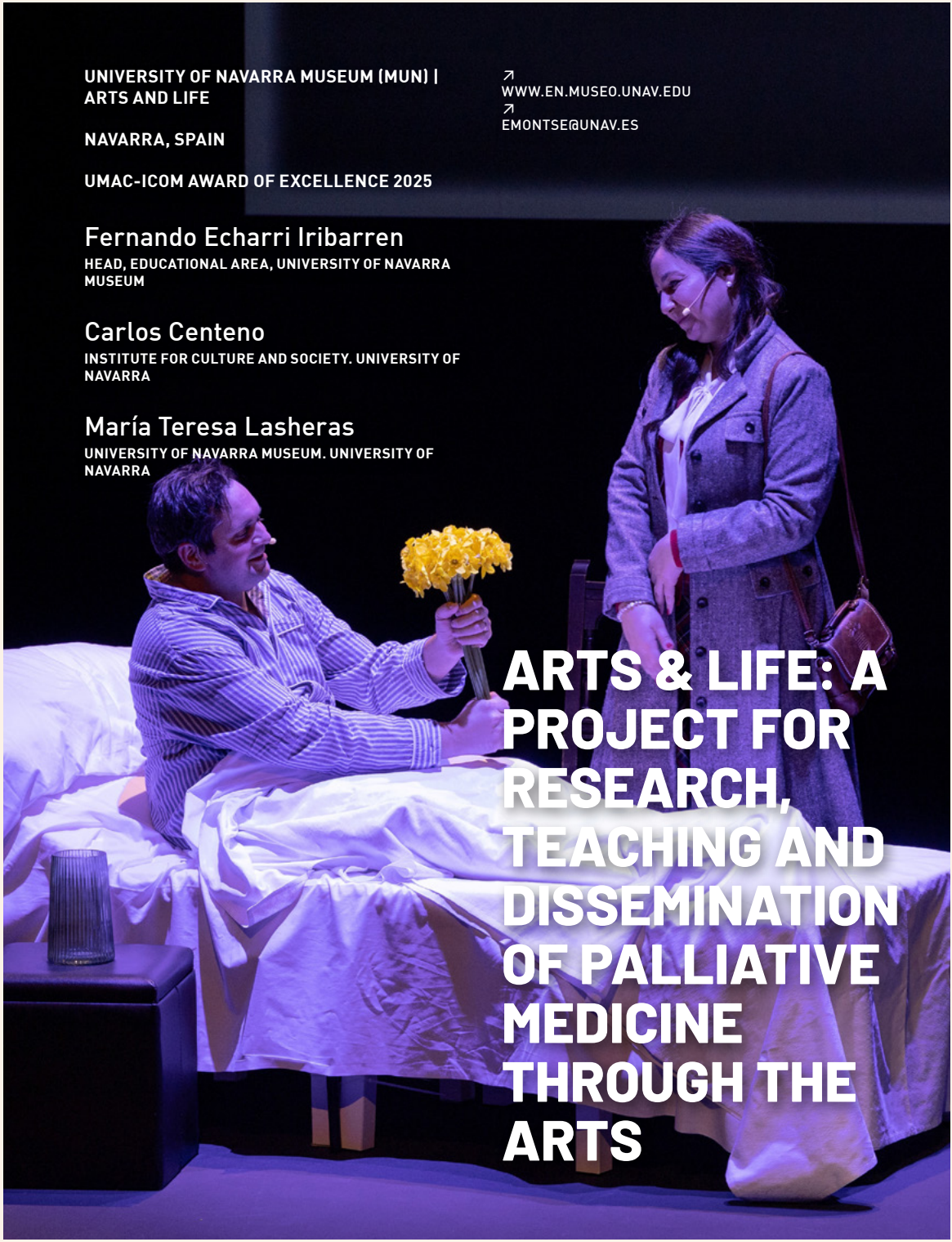
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María Teresa Lasheras
UNIVERSITY OF NAVARRA MUSEUM. UNIVERSITY OF NAVARRA



ARTS & LIFE: A PROJECT FOR RESEARCH, TEACHING AND DISSEMINATION OF PALLIATIVE MEDICINE THROUGH THE ARTS

How can a museum help future clinicians learn to care, and help society talk about suffering, serious illness and the end of life? Arts & Life grew from this question. Since the University of Navarra Museum (MUN) opened in Pamplona in 2015, its collaboration with the ATLANTES Global Observatory of Palliative Care has connected works of art, artistic creation and public programming with research and education in palliative care. The project received the 2025 UMAC-ICOM Award of Excellence. Its achievement lies not in a single event, but in a sustained partnership that treats art as a way of exploring and communicating the values of care.

A museum as an active partner

The MUN is a university museum open to the public, combining collections, exhibitions, performance and education. For Arts & Life it is not simply a venue for medical activities. Museum educators, curators, performing-arts and communication teams work alongside ATLANTES researchers at the University of Navarra's Institute for Culture and Society, which hosts a World Health Organization Collaborating Centre, as well as university teachers and healthcare professionals. Together they identify questions, choose artistic resources, develop experiences and bring them to different audiences. The partnership respects the distinct contributions of art and medicine: artistic encounters do not supply clinical answers, but can open space for attention, interpretation and dialogue.

Teaching care through encounters with art

For more than a decade, students have entered the museum's galleries and workshops to reflect on issues that textbooks alone cannot fully address. Courses such as 'Decision Making at the End of Life' and 'Palliative Care', together with workshops on empathy, compassion, communication and professional competence, use artworks, guided observation, discussion and personal reflection. A painting by Mark Rothko, for example, becomes an invitation to consider mortality, uncertainty and the presence a doctor offers to a person who is suffering. Artworks by Picasso, Tàpies, Oteiza and other artists also provide starting points for different conversations.

The activities engage students of Medicine and Nursing, with connections to Psychology, Theology and other university disciplines. They aim to deepen observation and self-awareness while helping students recognise each patient as a person with a singular story, values and relationships. Nursing initiatives have combined looking at art with reflection and creative activity. Beyond initial education, a museum-based art-therapy and self-care workshop has engaged palliative care professionals, and an international summer school has brought professionals from different countries to the MUN. The objective is not to teach a prescribed response to a painting, but to learn to listen, attend to another person's perspective and think carefully about what good care requires.

From the galleries to the stage

The most visible expression of Arts & Life is Cicely and David, a play written by the historian David Clark about the origins of modern palliative care. It portrays the encounter between Cicely Saunders and David Tasma, whose relationship helped shape the hospice movement. The text was adapted into Spanish and performed by a cast of doctors, nurses, psychologists and researchers rather than professional actors. Supported by

↗ MOMENT OF THE THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION OF THE PLAY CICELY & DAVID.. PHOTO: MANUEL CASTELLS



→ UNIVERSITY OF NAVARRA MUSEUM. PHOTO: MANUEL CASTELLS

theatre specialists and the museum's performing-arts expertise, they spent months preparing to embody a story closely related to their own work.

The play premiered in Pamplona in March 2024, was performed at the MUN in October 2024 and travelled to the national palliative care congress in Málaga. These performances reached more than 1,200 people, including students, professionals and members of the public. A professional recording of the museum performance, with English subtitles, enables its use beyond the live stage. Its presentation in connection with the 2025 European palliative care congress in Helsinki broadened the dialogue internationally. The Pía Aguirreche Foundation provided essential support for the production.

Research as part of the collaboration

Arts & Life also examines what participants learn from artistic encounters. A study published in BMC Medical Education in 2017 evaluated an art-based course on end-of-life decision-making with 20 medical students; participants described reconsidering patient-centred care, their relationships with patients and families, and their future professional role. A study in Palliative Medicine Reports in 2021 explored the immediate experiences of 17 palliative care professionals after an art-therapy workshop; participants reported calm, self-awareness and opportunities for emotional expression.

The theatre project generated further research. A qualitative study published in Palliative Care and Social Practice in 2026 analysed responses from 42 university students after watching Cicely and David. Students described a richer understanding of palliative care and its history, emotional engagement, and reflection on empathy, accompaniment and quality of life. These findings concern reported, mainly immediate experiences; they do not establish lasting behavioural change. This distinction matters: the



museum collaboration combines artistic ambition with inquiry while remaining cautious about what its evaluations can prove.

Public engagement and social value

The project's ambition extends beyond health-professions education. Public performances, encounters with students, and recorded screenings create opportunities to discuss suffering, dignity, compassion and care with audiences who may know little about palliative care. A 2025 video forum brought nearly 100 Medicine and Nursing students into a conversation after viewing the play. Theatre gives form to difficult experiences through characters and emotion, helping participants approach them without reducing palliative care to information about dying. The artistic quality of the experience matters because the message is carried by the work itself, not attached to it as an explanatory slogan.

What other museums can take from Arts & Life

The experience offers a model rather than a formula. Begin with a human question worth exploring; involve curatorial, educational, artistic and academic partners from the start; build activities around the strengths of the collection and the people who work with it; and plan for evaluation and the work's life beyond a single occasion. In this collaboration, a museum's collections become resources for teaching, its theatre becomes a site of public conversation, and artistic practice becomes a subject of research. In turn, healthcare questions bring new visitors, interpretations and social purposes to the museum. Arts & Life suggests that university museums can contribute to the public good not by illustrating knowledge produced elsewhere, but by helping create, question and share it.

→ VISUAL THINKING ACTIVITY WITH ARTWORKS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF NAVARRA MUSEUM.. PHOTO: MANUEL CASTELLS

RESISTING THE CULTURICIDE: REDEFINING MUSEUMS IN THE PALESTINIAN CONTEXT

THE PALESTINIAN MUSEUM

BIRZEIT, PALESTINE

CIMAM AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING MUSEUM PRACTICES 2025

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Museums are often understood as institutions anchored in place, repositories of objects that narrate history through curated and physical encounters, and defined by their collections and audiences, despite decades of critique that have challenged this object-centered model and repositioned the museum as a social and participatory institution. However, in situations marked by displacement, looting, destruction, colonial violence, and restricted mobility, such definitions become insufficient. The Palestinian case is a particularly stark example of this tension.

This essay examines the Palestinian Museum and its effort to "unfold" territory, reframing the museum from a static site into a collective practice.

The essay argues that the Palestinian Museum's developing model, particularly through its DIY exhibition initiatives and open-source approach as exemplified by portable and digital exhibitions like Gaza Remains the Story, represents a critical transformation of the museum from a fixed place into a daily practice. This transformation emerges in response to three interrelated conditions: the systematic looting of Palestinian cultural heritage, the fragmentation and displacement of its audience across the diaspora, and the ongoing destruction of cultural infrastructure.

Looting, Erasure, and the Displacement of Heritage

The Palestinian Museum operates within a historical landscape defined by dispossession not only of land, but also of cultural heritage. The seizure of the Palestine Archaeological Museum in Jerusalem following the Israeli occupation of the city in 1967, and its subsequent incorporation into Israeli museum networks, demonstrates this process of institutional appropriation. Exhibitions were left intact but recontextualized and reoriented through Hebrew labelling, an act of cultural appropriation and erasure.

This moment is part of a broader pattern of cultural looting. During the 1948 war, Palestinian homes, archives, and intellectual centers were systematically raided. Books, artworks, and documents were confiscated, while artefacts removed during subsequent operations are often displayed with obscured or misattributed origins.

The consequence is a profound displacement of Palestinian cultural heritage. Much of Palestinian cultural heritage remains inaccessible, held in private collections, state institutions, or black markets. Even when objects are identifiable, their recovery often requires repurchase, effectively turning cultural restitution into an exhausting process.

The Fragmented Audience: Diaspora and Restricted Mobility

The Nakba of 1948 and the systematic erasure of Palestinian presence resulted in the fragmentation of the Palestinian people. Not only was land and life lost, but so too was material culture. Approximately 80 percent of Palestinians are unable to access physical cultural institutions due to displacement, blockade, and denial of return. Within Palestine, movement is severely obstructed by checkpoints, closures, and restrictions.

This double absence, of both objects and audiences, poses a fundamental question: how can a museum function when neither its collection nor its public can be physically present? The Palestinian Museum's response challenges traditional museological frameworks. Rather than attempting to adapt to

↗ THE PALESTINIAN MUSEUM, 2021_HARETH YOUSEF

these limitations through the replication of conventional models, it creates participatory and liberatory approaches that rethink the relationship between heritage, audience, and place.

Reclaiming Memory: Community as Archive

One strategy has involved reconstructing cultural memory through community engagement. Museum practitioners have turned to Palestinian households and institutions as sites of archival retrieval, collecting photographs, documents, and artworks preserved in private spaces. This approach aligns with broader shifts in critical museology that emphasize participatory and community-driven practices.

At the same time, efforts to recover looted artefacts reveal the painful realities of cultural restitution. Paintings by Palestinian artists have been acquired from descendants of Israeli soldiers who looted them during the Nakba. While such actions restore fragments of heritage, they expose the realities of cultural restitution.

These practices collectively redefine the archive as scattered yet lived, embedded within communities rather than confined to institutional storage.

Destruction and Adaptation: Museums Under Attack

The urgency of this transformation has intensified in the context of ongoing military and settler-colonial violence, particularly in Gaza. Cultural institutions, galleries, museums, and artist studios have been repeatedly targeted and destroyed. Collections have been burned, looted, or rendered inaccessible. In some cases, cultural spaces have been repurposed as shelters for displaced populations.

Collections survive not necessarily through institutional protection but through improvisation, digitization, and the determination of individuals who continue to safeguard cultural memory despite displacement and destruction.

Such conditions render the maintenance of a fixed museum space increasingly untenable. In Palestine, museums and cultural organizations must operate within instability, ambiguity, and absence, requiring flexible and adaptive models of practice. In the Palestinian case, this necessity is immediate rather than theoretical.

The Museum as Method: From Birzeit to the Diaspora and the World

It is within this context that the Palestinian Museum has begun to reconceptualize itself as a method rather than a place.

A defining example emerged following the destruction of exhibition spaces in Gaza. Despite the blockade and the impossibility of transporting artworks or people, artists from Gaza and the museum collectively launched This Is Not an Exhibition. Working through WhatsApp, artists contributed sketches, curatorial instructions, and guidance remotely. Museum staff then located relevant artworks already present in the West Bank, Palestine ‘48, and the diaspora and assembled the exhibition accordingly.

The resulting exhibition was continuously reshaped by visitors, becoming a process defined by participation and adaptability rather than fixed authority.



Similar exhibitions were constructed from dispersed collections held by individuals and institutions outside Palestine. Diaspora, previously understood as a limitation, became a resource, transforming the museum into a collective network of custodians.

Gaza Remains the Story: Where Everyone Becomes a Narrator

The most significant outcome of this model is Gaza Remains the Story, a fully decentralized exhibition format inspired by a do-it-yourself approach. Rather than existing in a single location, it is distributed as a digital package containing curated materials, design templates, and instructions for assembly.

The exhibition narrates aspects of Gaza's social, political, and cultural histories. This "exhibition-in-a-box" model enables individuals and institutions to recreate and adapt the exhibition to local contexts.

Within a year, Gaza Remains the Story was exhibited in more than 48 countries and over 250 locations. Participants translated and adapted the materials to local needs.

This approach reflects forms of networked cultural production in which cultural practices are created, distributed, and activated across diverse networks rather than centralized institutions.

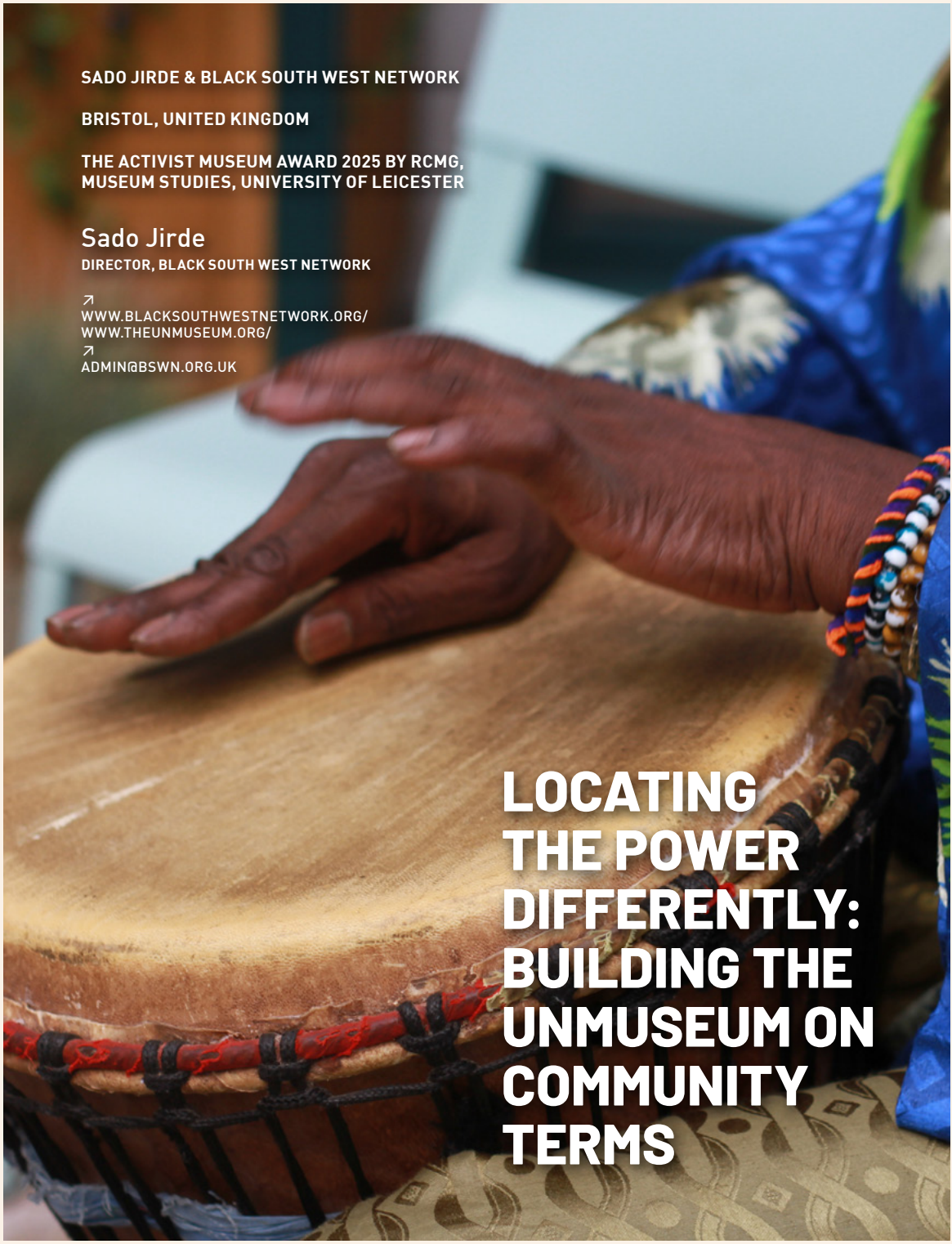
Art as Camouflage: When the Cultural is Political

An additional dimension of this approach is the use of art as a form of camouflage. In contexts where explicit political expression is constrained, cultural exhibitions provide a space for dialogue and solidarity. At a time when speaking about Palestine and Gaza often became politically sensitive, art enabled conversations that might otherwise have been silenced.

Visitors engaged as active participants and narrators, contributing materials and activating exhibitions as sites of collective expression.

The Palestinian Museum's transformation into a collective method represents a significant intervention in contemporary museology. It challenges assumptions about space, ownership, and access, offering an alternative model grounded in mobility, participation, and resilience.

The realities of settler colonialism have compelled Palestinians to unlearn traditional modes of cultural work and production. The hope remains for the return of refugees, the liberation of collections from colonial systems of storage and display, and the possibility for audiences to visit Palestine freely. Only then will it become possible to speak about cultural objects themselves rather than the histories of violence, dispossession, and looting that surround them.



SADO JIRDE & BLACK SOUTH WEST NETWORK

BRISTOL, UNITED KINGDOM

THE ACTIVIST MUSEUM AWARD 2025 BY RCMG, MUSEUM STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

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LOCATING THE POWER DIFFERENTLY: BUILDING THE UNMUSEUM ON COMMUNITY TERMS

Black South West Network (BSWN) is a racial justice charity that has worked across Bristol and the wider South West of England for twenty-five years. What began as small-scale community organising has grown, over the last decade, into a regional infrastructure body: BSWN now runs policy and advocacy work, funding development for Black-led organisations, housing and environmental justice programmes, and a cultural heritage programme that has run for more than a decade.

As a racial justice organisation, BSWN came to cultural heritage from the outside in. Our work puts us in rooms where decisions are made about education, health, policing, local government and recruitment, and in each of them we kept meeting the same underlying story: how Black and Racially Minoritised people are seen and treated is shaped by how our histories have been told, and by whom. We realised we could not speak credibly about racial inequity in any of these spaces without also speaking about cultural heritage, identity and belonging. The colonial gaze that casts Black people as "other" in public life is the same one that has shaped how our heritage has been extracted, appropriated and curated in museums, libraries and archives. Heritage was never a separate strand of our racial justice work. It sat at the root of it.

The UnMuseum grew from more than a decade of heritage work: the oral history project Race Through the Generations, the Somali Cultural Festival and #ThereIsBlackInTheUnionJack, followed by community screenings of The Meaning of Zong, a pop-up exhibition with the Arnolfini, and "I Am Witness", a dialogue on testimony and cultural reparations. That experience led to our Resilience Fund research, which found that established heritage spaces in the region were inaccessible to Black producers and audiences, and that there were no Black-led heritage spaces in the Southwest. A National Lottery Heritage Fund-supported Development Phase then tested this with more than 200 Black and Racially Minoritised people across the region. The findings were stark. 59% of those who had visited mainstream heritage venues were unhappy with how their heritage was represented, while 76% of those who turned to community-curated spaces instead were happy with how it was presented there. 77% wanted to be directly involved in interpreting their own heritage, and 60% held objects such as passports, letters and photographs that reflect their identity and belonging, but would only share them through mechanisms they trusted. That gap between appetite and trust is what the UnMuseum was built to close.

The idea did not emerge from a single moment of inspiration but from years of relationship-building. It was shaped by a working group of Black and Racially Minoritised cultural heritage practitioners - archivists, curators, cultural producers, alongside digital and data governance specialists from the Universities of Exeter and Bristol and the Open Data Institute, and by anchor organisations across the region, from Arts Diverse-City in Gloucester to Black Voices Cornwall in Falmouth. The National Lottery Heritage Fund's Delivery Phase grant, confirmed for 2025–2029, gave the project its financial foundation; BSWN's existing regional relationships gave it its reach.

At the centre of the UnMuseum's philosophy is a redefinition of ownership. Rather than a museum collecting on behalf of communities, the UnMuseum locates the power to identify, interpret, curate and preserve cultural heritage directly with the people who carry that history and produce its contemporary expressions. Practically, this means contributors retain rights over their own



material; a Regional Project Steering Group made up of Black and Racially Minoritized cultural heritage professionals and anchor organisations co-designs activity and holds delegated authority over collecting decisions. It is a decolonial approach in the fullest sense, not simply diversifying whose stories are told, but relocating who gets to decide how they are told, and by whom.

We believe what impressed the Activist Museum Award jury was precisely this refusal to separate the "what" from the "how." Many heritage projects aim to represent marginalised communities more fully within existing institutional structures. The UnMuseum instead asks whether the structure itself — the museum, as a colonial institutional form, is the right vessel at all. Its name is deliberately provocative: this is heritage work that does not aspire to become a conventional museum, but that builds trust, ownership and infrastructure on the community's own terms.

That difference plays out practically. Where most heritage projects distribute grants, the UnMuseum's Impetus Commission Fund pays Black-led cultural producers £5,000–£7,000 to make new work, commissions, not grants, recognising the labour of cultural production rather than treating it as a favour. Where most curation happens behind closed doors, sub-regional mapping and digitisation events are two-day, community-facing gatherings, co-curated with the people bringing their own objects and stories. And where digital archives are often built first and populated later, the UnMuseum's platform is being co-designed through thirteen participatory workshops with the communities who will use it.

Delivering this has meant building a small, specialist Cultural Heritage Team from scratch: a Senior Curator and Programme Development Manager, a Community Curator, a Digital Archivist and a Digital Content Creator, recruited through an inclusive process designed to reach candidates from Black communities, recognising that senior heritage roles of this kind are still rare for Black practitioners in the sector. The team works alongside the Regional Project Steering Group and sub-regional anchor organisations, who provide local trust and legitimacy that a Bristol-based team alone could not.



None of this has been straightforward. Building genuine trust with communities who have good reason to be wary of extractive heritage practice takes time that project timelines don't always accommodate gracefully. Recruiting specialist Black heritage professionals into a sector where such roles have historically been scarce has required a slower, more deliberate process than a conventional hiring round. And translating a philosophy (community ownership, decolonial curation) into consistent day-to-day practice across a digital platform, a commissioning fund and a touring festival has meant constant negotiation between principle and logistics.

If we were starting again, we would build more slack into the early governance and consent processes from day one, rather than refining them as the project scaled, trust-based frameworks are far easier to design well once than to retrofit. We would also invest earlier in the relationships with sub-regional anchor organisations, since the strength of those partnerships has consistently determined how quickly and how deeply communities engage.

For us, professional excellence in this project is not measured primarily by outputs, though the UnMuseum will deliver a digital archive, a regional festival and dozens of new commissions. It is measured by whether Black communities in the South West trust the process enough to bring their most personal objects and stories to it, and whether that trust outlasts the funding period. A festival can be evaluated; trust has to be earned continuously.

Our advice to others considering similar work: resist the temptation to design the "what" before you have genuinely understood the "how" your communities want to be engaged. Spend longer than feels comfortable in consultation and relationship-building before committing to delivery structures. And be honest that decolonial practice is not a checklist, it is a continuous, sometimes uncomfortable renegotiation of where power sits, and who holds it.

Presenters .

... IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE IN THE PROGRAMME



TOMISLAV S. ŠOLA, DIRECTOR, THE BEST IN HERITAGE

Professor Šola is a retired professor of museology at the University of Zagreb. He earned degrees in Art History, English, Journalism, and Museology - studying in Zagreb, Paris (Sorbonne), and completing his PhD in Ljubljana. After curatorial and leadership roles at Zagreb's Museum Documentation Centre, he transitioned to academia (1987–2013), focusing on heritage theory - coining the terms "Heritology" and "Mnemosophy" as frameworks for public memory and a unified heritage profession. In 2002, he founded The Best in Heritage conference.

IMAGINES



ADELAIDE LOPES & JOÃO ESTRADA

ADELAIDE LOPES holds a degree in Art History from the University of Lisbon and has been part of the Education Department at the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga since 1996.

JOÃO ESTRADA is a Portuguese filmmaker. He graduated from the Lisbon Film School in 2016 and directed the film BUNKER (2020). He has collaborated with several Portuguese cultural institutions, including the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, where he produced the documentary series Bringing to Light (2021) and In Our Care (2022–23), among other works.



MARIANNA BERÉNYI, HEAD, COMMUNICATIONS, MUSEUM OF ETHNOGRAPHY

Marianna is Head of the Communications Department at the Museum of Ethnography in Budapest. Her work focuses on museum communication, exhibition strategy, and contemporary approaches to cultural heritage interpretation. During the Covid period, she authored a book on the history and contemporary state of museum digitalisation in Hungary.



FABRIZIO NEVOLA & DAVID ROSENTHAL

Professor Fabrizio Nevola and Dr David Rosenthal co-founded and run HistoryCity apps. **FABRIZIO NEVOLA** is Chair of Art History and Visual Culture at the University of Exeter and specialises in the urban and architectural history of early modern Italy. **DAVID ROSENTHAL** is a research fellow at Exeter and his background is in early modern urban social history. In the arena of mobile storytelling and heritage their publications include Hidden Cities: Urban Space, Geolocated Apps, and Public History (Routledge, 2022); forthcoming is 'Mobile media and urban memory: the HistoryCity project'. in Marinos Ioannides et al (ed.), Digital Heritage and Cultural Tourism Research (Springer, 2026).



MONTSE AGUER TEIXIDOR, DIRECTOR, DALÍ MUSEUMS AND CENTRE FOR DALINIAN STUDIES

Montse has curated numerous international exhibitions on Salvador Dalí, including those at the Centre Pompidou and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. Awarded the Creu de Sant Jordi in 2004, she also served as a board member for the Reina Sofía. She leads the development of the Catalogue Raisonné of Salvador Dalí's Paintings and Sculpture and Three-dimensional Work, and has participated in seminars and published key articles on Dalí's work. Furthermore, she contributes as a screenwriter for biographical documentaries produced by the Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí.



HENDRIK SCHAEFER, CO-FOUNDER, MUSA GUIDE

Hendrik is co-founder of Musa Guide, which builds AI audio guides for museums: visitors ask questions and explore collections in their own language, grounded in the institution's own knowledge. Before Musa, he scaled labour-management software for Amazon warehouses across the world. He holds an MEng in Electronic Engineering from King's College London, where his thesis fine-tuned large language models for language classification, the technical foundation his work at Musa now builds on.



ANETTE BASSO, COMMUNICATIONS ADVISOR, KODE

Anette is a communications advisor at Kode, Norway´s second largest art museum, since 2016. She works with digital mediation and content, mostly directing and producing videos, in addition to podcasts and interviews. She has a Master´s degree in Cultural Studies from the University of Bergen..



EIMAN ELGEWELY, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, SCHOOL OF DESIGN, VIRGINIA TECH UNIVERSITY

Eiman is the Founding Director of the Visualization and Virtual Reality (VVR) Lab and Senior Fellow of the Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology (ICAT). Her interdisciplinary research explores digital cultural heritage, digital repatriation, immersive technologies, museum interpretation, and artificial intelligence to create innovative public engagement experiences. Her recent projects include Roots of Eternity and Reimagining 1001 Arabian Nights, which bring museum collections, historic environments, and cultural narratives to life through immersive storytelling.



AIRÍ DORDAS, LEAD, SYNTHETIC MEMORIES, DOMESTIC DATA STREAMERS

Airí is a designer specialising in communication and social innovation, with over 15 years' experience shifting mindsets and behaviours towards a more equitable society. She leads Synthetic Memories at Domestic Data Streamers, exploring the intersection between data, AI, storytelling, memory, identity and social rights. Previously, she spent six years at The Care Lab designing services and advocating for fairer care systems. She also contributed to Casa Nostra Casa Vostra, a major European refugee rights campaign. Airí is currently pursuing a Master's in Communication and Diversity Research at the University of Barcelona.



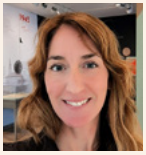
INGER LEEMANS, PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR, NL-LAB, KNAW HUMANITIES CLUSTER

Inger is Professor of Cultural History at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and PI of NL-Lab: an interdisciplinary research group on Dutch culture and identity at the KNAW Humanities Cluster. Leemans' innovative approach in cultural history and heritage has helped to advance research in emotion and sensory studies, embodied learning, and the history of knowledge. She was the PI of the groundbreaking Horizon2020 research and innovation project Odeuropa. As member of the KNAW, the Dutch National Research Panel for Cultural Heritage, and leader of NWO's National Science Agenda, Leemans helps to set the Dutch and European research agendas.



OLLI NORDLING, DIGITAL HERITAGE SPECIALIST, FINNISH POSTAL MUSEUM

Olli is a museum professional with experience in digital culture, education, audience engagement, and cultural heritage communication. His work focuses on the preservation and interpretation of both digitized and born-digital heritage, especially within museums and other GLAM institutions. With a background in museum education and digital content production, Nordling has participated in projects that combine cultural heritage, technology, and community collaboration, including internationally recognized initiatives related to the Finnish demoscene and digital storytelling.



SANDRA VAN GINHOVEN, HEAD, GETTY PROVENANCE INDEX TEAM, GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Sandra heads the Getty Provenance Index (GPI) team and related research projects at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles, where she co-led the GPI remodel project with Lily Pregill. With a background in economics and art history, her research leverages computational approaches to expand archival inquiry and deepen our understanding of provenance, market dynamics, and the circulation of cultural heritage.

Core Programme ...



YULIYA VAGANOVA, DIRECTOR GENERAL, BOHDAN AND VARVARA KHANENKO NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART

Yuliya is guiding a dedicated team through the challenges of wartime. During Russia's full-scale invasion, the museum safeguarded its collection, reopened to the public, and launched bold new programming in an empty building—exhibitions with contemporary Ukrainian artists, opera performances, architectural workshops, and discussions on the role of museums in war. After a Russian missile strike severely damaged the building, the team carried out emergency conservation efforts under her leadership. She previously served as Deputy Director at Mystetskyi Arsenal and the National Art Museum of Ukraine.



SHEENA BARRETT, HEAD OF RESEARCH AND LEARNING, IRISH MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (IMMA)

A curator, producer and strategic leader with more than 20 years' experience in Ireland's cultural sector, Sheena Barrett is recognised for championing emerging artists, socially engaged practice, and art and ecology initiatives. Previously founding Curator of The LAB Gallery for Dublin City Council, she shaped it into a leading platform for contemporary art in Ireland. Her work spans major cultural institutions, research, education and public engagement, connecting artistic innovation, health, audience development, and collaborative learning across diverse communities.



MARÍA EUGENIA CORDERO, CURATOR, FOUNDER, DIRECTOR, MUSEO BARDA DEL DESIERTO

María Eugenia's practice brings together contemporary art, architecture, territory, and digital technologies, developing projects connected to collaborative practices, experimental pedagogies, and socio-environmental approaches. Since 2014, she has led residency programs, exhibitions, and exchange networks among artists, communities, universities, and museums in North Patagonia. Her research focuses on architectures of diffuse boundaries and new forms of cultural institutionality situated in peripheral territories. She has participated in international conferences, publications, and meetings focused on museums, territory, and contemporary practices.



IURDANA ACASUSO ATUTXA, DIRECTOR, EUSKARAREN ETXEA

Iurdana holds a double degree in Sociology and Humanities, and throughout her professional career she has always been involved in projects aimed at promoting the Basque language. Since 2013, she has been director of Euskararen Etxea, the only permanent exhibition space dedicated to the Basque language. In 2023, she led the transformation of the exhibition, resulting in the Council of Europe awarding it the prize for the best museum in Europe in 2025. Her greatest hope is that Euskararen Etxea will become a benchmark for other minority languages in Europe.



FILIPE DUARTE, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, COLLECTION, SERRALVES MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Filipe holds a Master's Degree in Art Conservation from Northumbria University (United Kingdom) and has dedicated his professional career to the preservation of contemporary art. He was a Getty Foundation fellow and an intern at the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona. Throughout his career, he has worked with institutions including Tate Gallery (London), SRAL – The Conservation Institute (Maastricht), Culturgest, and the Modern Art Centre of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Lisbon).



YASMINA LACASSE, ARCHITECT, THE CITY OF QUÉBEC

After several years in private practice, Yasmina Lacasse is a senior architect who has been working for over nine years within the City of Québec's Major Building and Parks Construction Projects Division. With more than 25 years of experience, she led the major renovation and expansion of the Gabrielle-Roy Library throughout this period. A landmark building from the 1980s that had contributed to revitalizing a former working-class neighbourhood, this new project—valued at over $43.3 million—was designed and built to establish the library as a "third place," a democratic space dedicated to knowledge, learning, and shared experience.



ANA ACOSTA & AMILCAR VARGAS

A lawyer with advanced studies in museology, international studies, labour relations and creative writing, and with nearly 20 years of experience at Casa Batlló, **ANA ACOSTA** has transformed her personal journey as the mother of a neurodivergent son into a source of inspiration, helping lead Casa Batlló's pioneering labour inclusion project for neurodivergent individuals. **AMILCAR VARGAS** is an international expert in World Heritage management and holds a PhD from the University of Barcelona. At Casa Batlló, he is responsible for implementing the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, raising awareness of its Outstanding Universal Value, and developing the responsibilities and opportunities linked to its inscription on the UNESCO List.



JILL CARRUTHERS, HEAD OF HERITAGE, SHOWTOWN

Jill has has many years' experience creating exhibitions, interpretation, and interactive visitor content. A qualified project manager, she has delivered over 30 temporary exhibitions, two international festivals, and Showtown's museum displays. She oversees Blackpool's public collections, championing access, preservation, and celebration of local heritage. Jill leads her team to develop engaging programmes, including school activities, and represents Showtown nationally and internationally. Passionate about co-creating with communities, she uncovers hidden stories. Her expertise includes circus, variety, magic, and contemporary photography, shaped by roles across Northern cultural institutions.



SARA SOPIĆ & MIRJANA SLAVKOVIĆ

SARA SOPIĆ is an art historian, museologist, and cultural manager at the Museum of Yugoslavia, where she has worked as a Curator and Educator since 2015. Her work focuses on inclusive and participatory museum practices that engage diverse audiences and expand access to heritage. She co-authored the exhibition Hedgehog's Home with Mirjana Slavković. **MIRJANA SLAVKOVIĆ** holds degrees in ethnology, anthropology, and cultural management. A curator at the Museum of Yugoslavia, she has worked in public relations, international cooperation, and curating. Her work focuses on critical approaches to heritage and on positioning the museum as a space of dialogue and exchange.



GERLINDE ANDRASCHEK & JÖRG EHTREIBER

GERLINDE ANDRASCHEK is a historian and curator specialising in interactive museum work and knowledge mediation. Since joining KIMUS, she has curated exhibitions at FRida & freD Children's Museum, CoSA – Centre of Science Activities, and Salon Stolz. Her practice focuses on accessibility, inclusive design, and the development of exhibition narratives. **JÖRG EHTREIBER** studied physics, chemistry and museum education at the University of Graz before holding curatorial roles at the Technical Museum in Vienna. In 2003, he became Director and CEO of KIMUS, and in 2019 co-opened the CoSA Science Centre. Since 2015, he has served as President of Hands On! International Association of Children in Museums.



TAO YUAN, BILINGUAL GUIDE, CHINESE IMPERIAL EXAMINATION MUSEUM

Yuan is a bilingual guide at the Imperial Examination Museum of China in Nanjing, specializing in cultural heritage interpretation and cross-cultural communication. Since 2017, she has provided thousands of Chinese and English guided tours for official, public and international audiences. She has won multiple awards in English interpretation, joined international live broadcasts and academic conferences, and published research on museum services. Dedicated to promoting imperial examination culture and Jinling heritage, she strives to build bridges between Chinese tradition and the world.



SARAH HOLLOWAY & LIAM MONTGOMERY

SARAH HOLLOWAY is Heritage Open Days Programme Manager at the National Trust, co-leading the national festival. She oversees the operational team and supports the festival's community network, and sits on The Heritage Alliance's Skills, Education & Engagement Advocacy Group and the Wellbeing & Heritage Working Group run by Historic England, NASP and the Council for British Archaeology. **LIAM MONTGOMERY** is Heritage Open Days Marketing & Projects Manager at the National Trust, co-leading the festival with a focus on marketing, profile-raising and impact measurement. He leads New Wave, the youth engagement project supporting 18–25-year-olds to co-create events with local heritage sites, and co-chairs the European Heritage Open Days Coordinators Group.



TRACEY LEAVITT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/CURATOR, MILLET AND DISTRICT MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES

Since 1992, Executive Director/Curator, Tracey Leavitt, has mentored over 100 staff & countless museum professionals. Major projects include the World Wars Veterans' Wall & Pioneer Women display. Tracey has received the Queen's Platinum Jubilee medal. Under her leadership, the Museum has won numerous local, provincial and national awards, including the Alberta Museums Association's Dr. Robert Janes award and the Communities in Bloom National Award for Heritage. Tracey believes it takes a team to succeed; hundreds of volunteers, many summer staff and interns, and former Programmer, Maggie Peterson (2017-2026).



XAVIER HUTHER & NICOLAS MARGRAF

Director of **MUZOO XAVIER HUTHER** holds a Master's degree in Economics. After careers in high-tech, Swiss National Exhibition and LVMH, he became Director of MUZOO in 2016. Reopened in 2022, the institution has since received several international awards, including the Meyvaert Prize. An evolutionary biologist and amateur ornithologist, **NICOLAS MARGRAF** studied birds for several years through field observation, laboratory work, and statistical analysis. This experience later shaped his commitment to museums, where he promotes the communication of scientific and natural history knowledge.



CIARON WILKINSON, HEAD, PARTNERSHIPS AND ENGAGEMENT, MANCHESTER MUSEUM, UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

Ciaron's work spans communications, data, community engagement, and fundraising, all with a focus on building meaningful connections. Before joining the museum, Ciaron worked in local government, at Manchester's tourist board, and with the city's international arts festival, MIF. He also contributes to the UK culture sector more widely as a member of Arts Council England's North Board.



BŁAŻEJ MODER, DIRECTOR, EC1 ŁÓDŹ

Błażej holds an MPA from Harvard University, a degree from the University of Łódź, and has completed executive education at Stanford, Georgetown's Walsh School, and the Leadership Academy for Poland. Since 2014, he has served as Managing Director of EC1 Łódź – City of Culture, transforming it into a multidisciplinary hub of culture, education and business, leading over 250 staff and EU-funded projects. Previously, he headed the Project Management Office at Łódź's Municipal Office, coordinating the New Center of Łódź, one of Central Europe's largest urban revitalisation programmes spanning 100+ hectares.



TOSHIAKI HIRAI, FOUNDER, YORISIRO

Toshiaki graduated from Musashino Art University in 1989. After working at SUPER POTATO, a leading Japanese interior design firm, and serving as Branding Director for Soup Stock Tokyo at Smiles Co., Ltd., he founded AMEAGARU Inc. in 2014, specialising in branding and design direction. In 2018, he established TOMODACHI Inc. and launched "10% I am," a gift food brand based on Japanese fermentation culture. Since 2021, he has been an Associate Professor at The University of Shimane and is also the founder of YORISIRO, which operates the Iwami Ginzan Library.



JANE ROWLANDS, HEAD OF MUSEUMS AND COLLECTIONS, GLASGOW MUSEUMS

Jane was appointed Head of Museums and Collections in November 2024. Jane has worked at Glasgow Museums since 2000, contributing to major projects including Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow Museum Resource Centre, Riverside Museum, Kelvin Hall and Burrell Collection. Jane has led research projects that delivered public programmes across nine city venues, supported collection governance, future exhibitions and international touring exhibitions. Jane also played a key role in the redevelopment of The Burrell Collection, winner of 2023 Art Fund Museum of the Year and currently leads the People's Palace refurbishment.



JULIAN POST-MELBYE, ARCHAEOLOGIST, MUSEUM OF CULTURAL HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Julian is an archaeologist at the Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo. There he has worked with the Secrets of the Ice alongside mountain fieldwork, excavations and museum exhibitions the past 15 years. Specializing in themes such as hunting, extraction of outfield resources and alpine trade networks he has published on a wide range of topics from prehistoric skiing to medieval iron production. The work on artefacts frozen in ice has led to an unprecedented new source material becoming available archaeologists. He is curator of the glacial archaeology collection.



ABHILASHA THAPA, ARCHITECT, WONAW & ASSOCIATES

Abhilasha is an architecture graduate of IE University whose interests centre on heritage conservation, sustainability, and the continuity of building traditions. Her experience includes documenting the Degu Tale temple in Patan Durbar Square with Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust and surveying 15th-century Jampa Monastery in Lo Manthang, Nepal, with Wonaw and Associates. Through measured drawings, site documentation, and community outreach, she has engaged with both the technical and social dimensions of conservation. Her international education informs a thoughtful approach to understanding architecture within its diverse cultural, material, and environmental contexts.



ALISSANDRA CUMMINS & KAYE R. N. HALL

ALISSANDRA CUMMINS, GCM, FMA is a recognised authority on Caribbean heritage, museum development and art. In a 40-year career she has been President of ICOM, Chairperson of UNESCO's ICPRCP and founder President of the Museums Association of the Caribbean, shaping ethical and capacity-building frameworks worldwide. **KAYE R. N. HALL** is Education and Community Outreach Officer at the Barbados Museum & Historical Society, specialising in Intangible Cultural Heritage and youth engagement. She coordinates the Museum's Youth Climate Action Hub and contributes to the ERC-funded Shared Island Stories project, supported by UKRI.



SVEN KELLER, HEAD, OBERSALZBERG DOCUMENTATION CENTER

Sven is head of Obersalzberg Documentation Center and a department head at the Leibniz Institute for Contemporary History Munich-Berlin. As a historian, he did extensive research on National Socialist society, violence and war. Dr Keller has a special interest in the culture of remembrance, sites of troubled heritage, and the tourism associated with it. In 2015 he became a member of the Documentation Center's curatorial team. He enjoys the diversity of museum work and the challenge of translating historical research into accessible and comprehensible exhibitions at a complex site like Obersalzberg.



FERNANDO ECHARRI IRIBARREN, HEAD, EDUCATIONAL AREA, UNIVERSITY OF NAVARRA MUSEUM

Fernando holds a degree in Biological Sciences (University of Navarra, 1989) and a PhD in Museum Education (University of Navarra, 2009). His multidisciplinary background includes work in the education of socially excluded adolescents at the Ilundáin Foundation from 1997 to 2014. Since 2014 he has worked at the University of Navarra Museum, where he is Head of the Educational Area. He was accredited as an Associate Professor in 2026. His research focuses on meaningful and experiential learning, and he has published research articles in journals such as Archivo Español de Arte and the Journal of Museum Education..



DIMA SROUJI, CURATOR, THE PALESTINIAN MUSEUM

Dima is a Palestinian artist based in London. Her research-led practice is grounded in the longue-durée histories of material and immaterial remains from Palestine and the wider Mediterranean. Srouji is Tutor (Research) at the Royal College of Art in London and holds a Master of Architecture from Yale University. In 2022-23 she was the Jameel Fellow at the Victoria & Albert Museum. In addition to her post as curator at the Palestinian Museum, she currently serves on the Executive Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund in London, and Al Ma'amal Foundation in Jerusalem.



SADO JIRDE, DIRECTOR, BLACK SOUTH WEST NETWORK (BSWN)

At BSWN, Sado Jirde leads on policy, research, cultural heritage, and enterprise development to advance racial justice and equity across the South West and nationally. Under her leadership, BSWN has become a key regional and national voice, securing major investment into the sector and pioneering community-led programmes such as the UnMuseum, a decolonial and anti-racist cultural heritage initiative. Sado is widely recognised for her leadership and advocacy, receiving the 2025 Activist Museum Award for her contribution to transforming the cultural sector. She serves on multiple regional and national boards, championing equity, inclusion, and structural change. In 2025, she was also named Transformational Leader of the Year at the South West Business Leadership Awards.

TBIH2026 Programme Moderators / Members of Juries



ANTOINE DOUCET, ERA CHAIR HOLDER IN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE OF DIGITAL HUMANITIES (AI4DH) UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA/FRANCE

Antoine is ERA chair holder at the leading the European centre of excellence in artificial intelligence for digital humanities (AI4DH), and Professor of computer science at the L3i laboratory in La Rochelle Université since 2014, were he served as Vice-Rector for the European University EU-CONEXUS from 2021 to 2025. His main research interests include document analysis, natural language processing and artificial intelligence, in particular applied to cultural heritage and digital humanities. His work is dedicated to be applicable to documents of any type, in any language, from social media content to digitised manuscripts.



HELENSCARLETTO'NEILL,SENIORTRAINING&INNOVATIONPRODUCER,STORYFUTURES/COSTAR NATIONAL LAB, UNITED KINGDOM

Helen is a site-responsive and immersive arts specialist exploring spatial and participatory storytelling. She has a track record of pioneering interdisciplinary immersive formats, including notable works for Secret Cinema, London Contemporary Orchestra and the National Trust (England & Wales). Helen was Senior Immersive Mobile Augmented Reality Producer on the 2022 StoryTrails project, bringing history to life in public spaces across 15 UK cities. She currently leads industry-facing innovation and training for StoryFutures (Royal Holloway, University of London) and the UKRI CDT in AI for Digital Media Inclusion.



REGINA BAIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE LOUIS ARMSTRONG HOUSE MUSEUM, UNITED STATES

Regina is an artist, educator, and curator serving as the Executive Director of the Louis Armstrong House Museum. She recently opened the Armstrong Center, including exhibition, performance space, and archive. Her writing is included in the Handbook of Black Librarianship, Third Edition. Named one of AMNewYork's 2025 Power Players in Art and Culture, Ms. Bain was Vice President of a national college access program, is co-facilitator for the Culture @3 community of cultural leaders, and recently served her alma mater on the Yale University Alumni Board of Governors.



JORDI PARDO, GENERAL DIRECTOR, PAU CASALS FOUNDATION, CATALONIA, SPAIN

President of the Cercle de Cultura as well, Jordi holds a Degree in Ancient History and Archaeology (UB), and an Executive Master in Administration (EMPA) from ESADE Business School. He has held various positions in museums and cultural centres: managing director of the CCCB, project director of the Barcelona Design Museum, and director of the Archaeological Park and Museum of the Greek and Roman City of Empúries. He has been a member of the panel of experts for the European Commission's European Capitals of Culture initiative, and of the UNESCO panel of experts for the 2005 Convention. He has directed and advised cultural and heritage projects in more than 20 countries across Europe, Asia and America.



HIBA ALKHALAF, ARCHITECT, RESEARCHER, HERITAGE SPECIALIST, SYRIA / UNITED KINGDOM

Hiba is a Syrian-British architect and researcher specialising in contested heritage, recovery, and community-led conservation across the MENA region and the UK. She is a Research Fellow at the Carena Institute of Sustainable Archaeologies (CISA), Birkbeck, University of London, and founder of Heritage Voices / Aswat AlTurath. Dr Alkhalaf co-leads award-winning initiatives including MaLiCH (Managing Libya's Cultural Heritage), supporting heritage documentation, digital archives, capacity building, and women-led safeguarding of crafts and living heritage.



JOHN CHEESEMAN, INDEPENDENT CULTURAL PRODUCER AND ARTS CONSULTANT, AUSTRALIA

John is the former Director of Mosman Art Gallery (Sydney, Australia), President of the Regional and Public Galleries Association of New South Wales (RPGNSW) and Australian and Oceania Ambassador for AVICOM. John maintains a strong interest in sector development and advocacy for galleries and museums, as well as supporting interpretive projects, cross-artform practices, social engagement and new technologies. He is currently focussed on developing a documentary series on Australian Aboriginal art, new museum based applications for AI and international exchange projects. John previously presented 'Bungaree's Farm' (winner of the MAGNA award for best exhibition in Australia) at The Best in Heritage 2016.



ART, IDEAS, AND COMMUNITY: INSIDE CAIXAFORUM BARCELONA

CaixaForum Barcelona is a leading cultural centre managed by the "la Caixa" Foundation, located on the slopes of the city's Montjuïc hill. It is housed within the modernista building of the former Casaramona textile factory, designed by Josep Puig i Cadafalch, which was restored and adapted for cultural use. Since its inauguration in 2002, it has offered a wide-ranging programme that includes temporary ancient, modern and contemporary art exhibitions, often organised in collaboration with museums of international prestige, such as the Louvre, the Prado, and the British Museum.

In addition to its exhibitions, CaixaForum hosts concerts, lectures, film screenings, family-oriented shows, educational workshops and immersive experiences such as virtual reality. The centre has an auditorium, spaces for school activities, a specialist bookshop and a café.

Its cultural programming is designed for a range of audiences, with a particular focus on schools and families as well as people in vulnerable situations. CaixaForum Barcelona is a space that promotes dialogue between disciplines, reflection and public participation, contributing to both personal and collective development through culture.



PROTECTING, SHARING, AND INNOVATING FOR THE FUTURE: THE CATALAN CULTURAL HERITAGE AGENCY

The Catalan Agency for Cultural Heritage (ACPC) is a public body of the Government of Catalonia dedicated to managing, protecting and disseminating Catalonia's cultural heritage. Its mission is to improve the visitor experience at heritage facilities by integrating innovation, accessibility and sustainability into its management.

The ACPC's main functions include encouraging the social and educational use of heritage, promoting cultural tourism and strengthening community engagement. It also works to boost the sector through collaboration between public and private institutions and by encouraging citizen participation in heritage conservation and dissemination. Its activities are structured around three core areas: protection, social engagement and governance.

The ACPC manages around thirty monuments, archaeological sites and museums in Catalonia. It also promotes programmes that link heritage with education, sustainable tourism and local development.

One of its key areas is innovation. The Catalan Agency for Cultural Heritage incorporates immersive technologies in order to offer new forms of interaction, using a contemporary language to bring us closer to the public. One example of this is the programme "The Eyes of History: An Immersive Look at Catalan Cultural Heritage", a proposal that puts technology at the service of knowledge, enabling visitors to relive history through new stories from a more human, emotional and inclusive perspective.

At the ACPC, we work with passion and determination to ensure that Catalonia's cultural heritage continues to be a source of inspiration for future generations.



EL BORN
A UNIQUE SITE

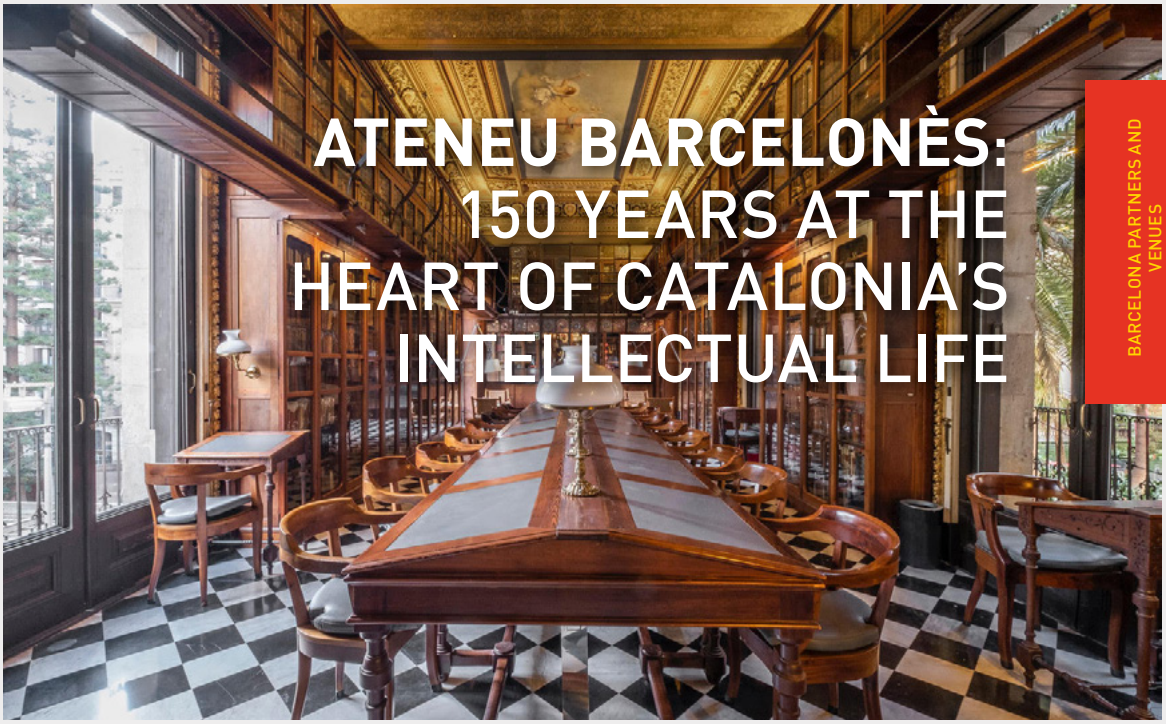
Contemplating the site of the Old Born Market is an approximation of the daily life of Barcelona in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, and is walking the streets of the city that resisted the siege of Philip V's troops until the capitulation on September 11, 1714.

This is a unique and exceptional archaeological space: due to its dimensions, its state of conservation, the historical sequence it presents and because historical documentation has allowed us to name the families who lived there.

Based on the archaeological remains excavated around and inside the old Born market, it is possible to trace the history of Barcelona from Roman times to the beginning of the 18th century , when life in this part of the city was suddenly interrupted by the outcome of the War of Succession.

Inaugurated in 1876, the old Born market was the first large iron architecture building to be designed in Barcelona. The 95 years it served the function for which it was built are divided into two major stages: the initial one, when it was the market for the Ribera district, and the second, from 1921, as a central fruit and vegetable market.

This, however, is not the whole story of a building that would not have been erected without the prior recovery, for citizen use, of the lands of the military fortress of the Ciutadella and its surroundings, and which, before reopening as a cultural facility, has experienced three decades of long debate about its fate.



ATENEU BARCELONÈS: 150 YEARS AT THE HEART OF CATALONIA'S INTELLECTUAL LIFE

The Ateneu Barcelonès is an association that has supported Catalan society and culture for more than one hundred and fifty years, with the aim of being one of the main centers of intellectual debate. Its main objectives are to promote citizens' cultural self-learning, to foster an open, transversal, and constructive dialogue with civil society, to serve as a hub for national-level debates, and to act as a nucleus of creation to encourage collective intellectual activity. Located in the very heart of Barcelona, the Ateneu is the place to share interests and passions in a privileged setting.

Every month, it offers more than 50 activities, including lectures, debates, discussions, round tables, concerts, recitals... and more! Each year, over 30,000 people enjoy its extensive program, curated by the work of its thirteen thematic sections: visual arts, science and technology, cinema, ecology, economics, chess, political, legal and social studies, feminisms, philosophy, history, literature, music, and theater.

In addition, we proudly host the most important and beautiful modernist library in Catalonia, with an impressive bibliographic collection of 250,000 unique documents, including 20 incunabula and 50 handwritten titles. Thanks to its trajectory and the heritage it preserves, it is one of the most significant private civil libraries in Catalonia.

The members are the foundation of the institution, and their participation in the cultural dynamic and daily activity shapes the life of the Ateneu. The Ateneu Barcelonès is also home to the most important writing school in Spain. The Escola d'Escriptura draws on the living tradition of schools of applied arts and artistic crafts, with the mission of becoming a catalyst for new cultural and literary expressions.



HERITAGE AS A CULTURAL RIGHT: HOW THE BARCELONA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL PROTECTS CULTURE ACROSS 311 MUNICIPALITIES

For decades, the Barcelona Provincial Council (Diputació de Barcelona) has worked to protect, conserve, and promote the province's cultural heritage—an endeavor that is central to its mission of supporting municipalities and ensuring public access to culture. This responsibility, which dates back to the late 19th century with the first efforts toward the conservation of monuments, continues today through a comprehensive strategy that combines technical assistance, funding, research, restoration, digitization, and the dissemination of cultural heritage.

Within this sphere, the Office of Cultural Heritage (OPC) serves as the Council's primary instrument for advancing local cultural heritage policies. Situated within the Culture Services Department, its mission is to support municipal governments in the protection, study, conservation, and promotion of heritage, while also helping to professionalize the management of cultural facilities and fostering stronger ties between heritage assets and local communities.

The OPC develops programs with a significant territorial impact, such as the "Local Cultural Heritage Maps"—a tool used to inventory and document heritage assets across municipalities, which now covers more than 70% of the province. It also coordinates the Local Museums Network and the Municipal Archives Network—two essential structures for ensuring the preservation, documentation, and dissemination of the museum and documentary heritage held by municipalities.

Through conservation and restoration services, traveling exhibitions, accessibility programs like "La Mirada Tàctil" (The Tactile Gaze), and initiatives focused on democratic memory, the Provincial Council works to ensure that cultural heritage remains a living, inclusive, and accessible resource. This vision is encapsulated in the CULTURA 311+ plan, which views heritage as a cultural right and a fundamental element for building identity, collective memory, and territorial cohesion across the 311 municipalities of the province.



MACBA MUSEU D'ART CONTEMPORANI DE BARCELONA

MACBA is a public institution dedicated to contemporary art, and a living museum, permeable to its social and cultural contexts, which believes in art and culture as constitutive of the commons. Since it opened its doors in 1995, it has established itself as a platform for innovative museological praxis, consolidating its position as a space for the formulation of collective consciousness, professional rigour, and public debate, guided by an understanding of its institutional role and its commitment to critical thinking and social transformation.

As a contemporary art institution, MACBA encourages the production of knowledge at the intersection of art —in all possible meanings of the term—, social sciences, and political intervention and, it takes on the responsibility to care for and disseminate an international art collection with focus on the cultural production of Catalonia, providing encounters for the experience of art as a space of hospitality and collective learning.

MACBA is a situated museum, part of the vital cultural and artistic milieu of the city of Barcelona, and the neighborhood of Raval where it is located. Positioned in and from this hyperlocality, the museum relates to the diverse and creative communities. As an international museum, MACBA supports contemporary art practices in Catalonia's multilayered and vibrant landscape and beyond, open to the world.

EUROPA NOSTRA

Europe's Largest Civil Society Heritage Network

Since 1963, Europa Nostra has celebrated, safeguarded and advocated for cultural heritage as a strategic resource to shape a more united, inclusive and sustainable Europe. Covering over 40 countries, Europa Nostra is recognised as the most representative heritage network in Europe. It maintains close relations with the European Union, the Council of Europe, UNESCO and other international bodies. Since 2009, Europa Nostra has been a partner of The Best in Heritage.

During its longstanding existence, Europa Nostra has not only become the largest organisation dedicated to cultural heritage in Europe, but it has also emerged as one of the leading civil society organisations in Europe altogether, whose voice and advice are increasingly sought for at European and international level.

As a result of our steadfast commitment for over six decades, Europa Nostra was selected by the European Commission to lead the EU-funded European Heritage Hub, which brings together heritage actors and initiatives to support the green, digital and social transformation of our society. The Hub launched in May 2023 for an initial two-year pilot project and is currently in its Preparatory Action phase. Run by a consortium of 28 partners, from heritage institutions and civil society organisations to universities and historic cities, the Hub gathers a wide array of expertise and experience from across the continent. The Hub covers the whole of Europe, including EU neighbouring countries with a special focus on Ukraine, Moldova, the Caucasus and Western Balkans.

Europa Nostra is proud of its ever-stronger partnerships with EU Institutions. We are delighted to have developed, together with the European Commission, a widely acclaimed European Heritage Awards scheme for nearly 25 years. Supported under the EU's Creative Europe Programme, the Awards have highlighted and disseminated heritage excellence and best practices in Europe, encouraging the cross-border exchange of knowledge and bringing major benefits to the winners, such as greater (inter)national exposure, additional funding and increased visitor numbers. The Awards have been a key instrument to recognise and promote the multiple values of heritage for Europe's culture, society, economy and environment.

Europa Nostra has run the 7 Most Endangered Programme, which helps communities save heritage at risk across Europe, thanks to the support of the European Investment Bank (EIB) Institute. Since its launch in 2013, this innovative programme has brought visibility, support and urgent action to 77 monuments and heritage sites in 35 countries; and many of them have since been safeguarded for both present and future generations.



Faced with a rapidly changing geopolitical scene, and conscious of the growing role played by culture and heritage in the evolution of our societies, Europa Nostra is ever more committed and determined to carry out its action to defend and promote Europe's legacy and shared values.

All the above would not have been achieved without our numerous members, volunteers, partners, supporters and donors. Our sincere thanks to all of them for their support and solidarity allowing us to become such a strong civil society movement for cultural heritage.

Find out more and join Europa Nostra!
www.europanostra.org

EUROPA NOSTRA

CREATIVE EUROPE

Creative Europe is the European Union's flagship programme to support the cultural and creative sectors, enabling them to increase their contribution to Europe's society, economy and living environment. With a budget of over €2.4 billion for 2021-2027, it supports organisations from various cultural and creative sectors such as heritage, performing arts, fine arts, interdisciplinary arts, publishing, film, TV, music and video games as well as tens of thousands of artists, and cultural and audiovisual professionals. The European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards, the Best in Heritage Conference and the network project Europa Nostra Heritage Agora have all received the support of Creative Europe.

FIND OUT MORE
WWW.CULTURE.EC.EUROPA.EU/CREATIVE-EUROPE

↗ WINNERS OF THE EUROPEAN HERITAGE AWARDS / EUROPA NOSTRA AWARDS 2026.
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