

Programme & Abstracts for IC Day at ICOM Dubai 2025

15 November – Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Centre for Cultural Understanding (SMCCU)

9:30-10:30

Welcome

Overview presentation: Beyond Museumification

“Cultural Districts and Heritage Performance: Practices from the UAE” – Ayman Kassem, University of Ajman (United Arab Emirates)

10:30-11:00

Break & socialising

11:00-12:00

Bridging Generations: Dialogue in Cities and Museums

Moderator: Joana Sousa Monteiro (Portugal)

“Not My Museum? Reconnecting the City Museum with Young Urban Citizens” – Jinhyun Lee (Republic of Korea)

Urban museums are often intended as inclusive civic spaces, yet many younger visitors feel detached from their narratives and environments. Compared to art museums, history museums in Korea see far fewer visitors in their 20s and 30s—and even fewer return. This generational gap poses a significant challenge for institutions aiming to stay relevant to contemporary urban life.

At the Seoul Museum of History, this concern is approached through the question: “Why doesn’t this feel like my museum?” In response, the museum has launched targeted initiatives to reconnect with younger audiences by aligning with their interests, media habits, and spatial experiences.

The Young Museum program offers dual-track creative workshops for university students and local office workers, using historical artifacts as the basis for participatory design projects. Beyond

the museum's walls, pop-up exhibitions in youth-oriented districts like Seongsu-dong, collaborations with brands such as Starbucks, and influencer-driven campaigns extend the museum's presence into everyday life.

This presentation also highlights the Youth Program: How We Remember the City, part of the Korea–China–Japan International Symposium hosted by the Seoul Museum of History in 2025. The program brings together 30 young participants from Korea, China, and Japan to explore urban memory through painting, sound, video, and photography. Through fieldwork, creative production, and a final exhibition, participants reinterpret the city as both a historical archive and a site of shared identity. By treating youth as cultural co-creators, the museum is reshaping itself as a platform for intergenerational and transnational dialogue—reimagining what a city museum can be for the next generation.

Jinhyun Lee is Director of the Division of Education and International Relations at the Seoul Museum of History, where he oversees education programs, international exhibitions, and the development of a new children's museum. His work focuses on urban history, architectural heritage, and inclusive museum practice. He has led collaborative projects with institutions such as the Vatican Museums, the Edo-Tokyo Museum, the War Childhood Museum, and the Shanghai History Museum. He is committed to developing the museum as a civic platform and is co-author of *Stories of East Asian Cities* and *Seoul Is Memory*.

“Youth Memory, Shared Futures: MLEADS in Palembang as a Catalyst for Intergenerational Dialogue and Inclusive Urban Identity” – Nofa Lestari (Indonesia)

In a city shaped by layers of history and inequality, MLEADS (Museum for Local Economic Development and Social Changes) reimagines the museum as a platform for belonging, memory, and rehabilitation. This paper spotlights the program's implementation in Palembang, Indonesia, where it facilitates intergenerational collaboration by working directly with youth in prison—an often-overlooked community in cultural and civic life.

Led by Indonesia Hidden Heritage Creative Hub (IHHCH), MLEADS partnered with LPKA Kelas I, a juvenile correctional facility, alongside Palembang City Museum, artisans, local communities, and local businesses. Through workshops in storytelling, museum interpretation, and vocational skills like barista training, incarcerated youth developed creative works that were later exhibited across four museums—Palembang City Museum, Museum Negeri Sumatra Selatan, Museum SMB II, and Museum Dr. A.K. Gani—embedding their voices in the city's cultural fabric.

These exhibitions became touchpoints for dialogue between generations, as older community members, curators, and families engaged in mentoring and reflection. MLEADS also collaborated with UNIC Indonesia and media partners to incorporate and amplify SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), ensuring the stories extended beyond prison walls to the heart of public discourse.

This paper argues that Palembang City Museum evolved from observer to active civic actor, bringing together the silenced and the seen to co-author new urban memory. It offers a template for how museums can be mediators of care—reaching the most underserved while strengthening intergenerational understanding.

Nofa Farida Lestari is Executive Director of Indonesia Hidden Heritage Creative Hub (IHHCH), where she leads initiatives that reimagine museums as community anchors for social innovation. Through MLEADS (Museum for Local Economic Development and Social Changes), she has

activated institutions in Jakarta and Palembang to engage marginalized youth—from coastal neighborhoods to correctional facilities—through heritage-based education, entrepreneurship, and reintegration programs.

“Jaipur: The City Museum and the Chowkri Pop up Museums” – Shikha Jain (India)

Historically, the rulers of Jaipur envisioned the city as a centre of crafts that were further adapted to contemporary styles through various times. In 1880, Albert Hall, the first museum in Jaipur, was envisioned as a museum of Industrial Arts to display products of local craftspeople, to protect and preserve traditional art and revive skills while employing artisans. Since the establishment of Jaipur's first museum, the city has continued to nurture a rich ecosystem of museums and interpretation centres, both within the historic walled city and beyond.

Several NGOs (Jaipur Virasat Foundation, DRONAH) and institutions (Aayojan College of Architecture, Manipal University Jaipur) in Jaipur are fostering a collaborative network across Jaipur to envision the creation of new thematic museum circuits including its museums, crafts streets and heritage sites. This initiative is inspired by the legacy of the 36 traditional 'karkhanas' (craft ateliers), to celebrate and sustain the city's living heritage of crafts and creativity recognised by UNESCO in its designation as a City of Crafts and Folk Arts in 2015 and, as a World Heritage City in 2019.

The activities involve curating a series of Chowkri (a unit of Jaipur city) pop-up museums as an interpretive tool to acquire knowledge about society, skills, cuisine, literature and traditional practices besides encouraging adaptive reuse of historic structures. Rooted in the craft streets of Chowkri Modikhana, the community-led street museum reimagines courtyards, verandahs and street edges of havelis, shops and temples as a platform for cultural exchange, storytelling, and skill-sharing. This initiative invites residents, artisans, and visitors to co-create a living museum experience through pop-up exhibits, workshops, performances, and dialogues. Together, they foster a deeper understanding of heritage while building pathways for inclusive and sustainable local development.

Shikha Jain has an extensive portfolio on cultural heritage of India that covers Conservation, World Heritage and Museum Planning of 75 plus projects, largely realised through her organisation DRONAH. She has led several Museums, Interpretation Centres, Exhibitions and Cultural Park projects from design to execution across various states of India for Central and State government organisations besides working on projects for international bodies such as UNESCO, WMF and the Getty Foundation. Her design of India Garden in China for the National Horticulture Board, India based on the theme of Hinduism and Buddhism received the Gold Award at the Beijing Horticultural Expo, China in Oct 2019. Her ongoing museum works include the Indian Museum, Kolkata, Port Museum at Kolkata and Patna Museum, Bihar besides several State and City Museums in Agra, Bhopal and Jaipur.

“Revitalizing Community Engagement with Thematic Interpretation Structure at Toronto History Museums” – Hillary Walker (Canada)

How can a collection of historic sites across Toronto, Canada serve as compelling centres where communities, cultures and histories come together? The Toronto History Museums are made up of ten museums ranging from a colonial era fort, a nineteenth century crossroads inn, an early

twentieth century schoolhouse, and a gallery space in the once forgotten former City Council Chamber. We also have house museums in idyllic parks, amid the increasing press of downtown condo towers, and a collection of houses in a suburb with predominately newcomer populations. To achieve the goals of telling the histories of Toronto in ways that decentre traditional colonial narratives and connect with the highly diverse and changing communities that make up Toronto, we developed a framework of themes across the museums.

Each site has a pair of themes that tap into their inherent histories but also connect to contemporary issues. The themes enable our interpretation to go beyond the museum sites and activate aspects of the city with rich but hidden histories. For example, at Fort York National Historic Site, the themes of conflict and sovereignty allow interpretation that has focused on the War of 1812 between British and American forces to expand on existing dialogues with contemporary First Nations communities about treaty land rights and reconciliation. This pair of themes also supports programming targeted at refugees and newcomers who have moved to Canada seeking stability and new opportunities. Fort York staff can also delve into what Canadian sovereignty presently means with local and international visitors.

This talk will explore the sites' themes with examples of how our museums serve as cultural centres and activate communities throughout the City of Toronto.

Dr. Hillary Walker is the City of Toronto Historian. She currently works with the Toronto History Museums to highlight the rich diversity of Toronto, Canada from time immemorial to the present. She also oversees commemorative naming for City of Toronto assets. Dr. Walker ensure that equity-deserving groups are reflected in the City of Toronto's placemaking practices.

12:00-13:30

Lunch & socialising

13:30-14:30

Introduction to CAMOC & General Meeting

14:30-15:00

Break & socializing

15:00-16:00

Urban Voices and Urban Spaces: Rethinking the Margins

Moderators: Manar Mazhar Ashour Hassan (Egypt) & Annemarie de Wildt (The Netherlands)

“Reading the City Together: Co-Learning Bangkok’s Past Through Maps, Photos, and Place-Based Exploration” – Chewasit Boonyakiet (Thailand) *Video presentation

In a city like Bangkok, where rapid urbanisation reshapes everyday life, young people often feel disconnected from the historical layers beneath their feet. This paper presents a case from the Museum Links initiative of the National Discovery Museum Institute (NDMI), which responds to this challenge by designing activities that bring youth into direct, interpretive engagement with their city’s heritage. The project developed two types of programmes tailored to school levels, one for upper primary and another for secondary students—combining historical maps, archival photography, and site exploration to help them uncover spatial transformations and human stories embedded in the urban landscape.

In Thai schools, history is often taught through memorising dates, events, and figures, leaving little room for critical engagement or personal connection. This project took a different approach, using activities that encouraged students to question, observe, and interpret change rather than passively absorb a fixed narrative. By comparing early 20th-century maps with current satellite imagery and analysing archival photos before visiting the actual sites, students learned to read the city as a palimpsest. These experiences were especially eye-opening for students unfamiliar with how much of their everyday surroundings carry traces of the past. Equally significant was the role of museum staff, who adapted facilitation strategies across age groups, discovering new ways to balance structure and creativity. This made the programme an intergenerational space for mutual learning—not only between students and staff, but also through shared inquiry, public memory, and cross-generational interpretations of place.

The paper reflects on how city museums can reposition themselves as collaborative civic platforms—linking schools, communities, and memory practices—to foster inclusive and dynamic engagement with urban heritage.

Chewasit Boonyakiet is a knowledge curator at the National Discovery Museum Institute (NDMI), Thailand. He works across museum education, heritage interpretation, and public engagement. His past experiences include research, publication, and exhibition development at the Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre (SAC) and National Science Museum. He has published widely on urban heritage, museum practice, and cultural memory in Southeast Asia, and currently leads interdisciplinary programs that bridge museums with schools and communities to promote civic learning through local history.

**“Gendered Memory and Urban Heritage: Rethinking Female Heroism in Southeast Asian Museums”
– Myra Mentari Abubakar (Singapore)**

Urban museums are increasingly called upon to represent not only the historical past but also the social dynamics of rapidly changing communities. In Southeast Asia, the politics of urban heritage are particularly visible in how national heroes, especially female figures, are commemorated within state museums and public memory spaces. This paper examines how urban heritage institutions represent gendered narratives through the lens of female heroism, drawing on case studies from Jakarta and Banda Aceh.

Using the Museum Nasional (Jakarta) and the Cut Nyak Dhien Museum (Aceh Besar) as primary sites, I explore how urban heritage infrastructure in postcolonial Indonesia negotiates contested narratives of gender, nationalism, and memory. These spaces foreground the legacy of Cut Nyak

Din (1848–1908), an anti colonial heroine whose representation has shifted across time, from Dutch colonial accounts to post-independence state canonisation to contemporary regional pride. In Jakarta, national memory tends toward symbolic homogenization, while in Aceh, localised expressions evoke more complex engagements with trauma, conflict, and community healing.

By juxtaposing urban-national and regional-local commemorative practices, this paper reveals how museums can simultaneously entrench and unsettle hegemonic narratives. I argue that gender-inclusive representation in urban heritage spaces is not only a matter of equity but a necessary response to the fluid identities and social transformations characterising 21st-century Southeast Asian cities.

The paper speaks directly to the ICOM Dubai 2025 theme by offering a grounded, Southeast Asia specific reflection on urban heritage as both a site of national imagination and lived community engagement. It proposes practical strategies for museums to rethink urban representation through gendered memory, participatory curation, and intersectional storytelling, ensuring relevance in increasingly plural and politicised urban landscapes.

Dr. Myra Mentari Abubakar is a postdoctoral fellow in the Asian Urbanisms Cluster at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. Her interdisciplinary research explores gendered memory, urban heritage, and postcolonial commemoration in Southeast Asia, with a particular focus on Indonesia. She received her PhD in Gender, Media, and Cultural Studies from the Australian National University, where her thesis examined the political afterlives of Cut Nyak Din, Indonesia's most prominent female anti-colonial hero. Myra's work engages with museum practices, spatial politics, and inclusive storytelling, especially in post- conflict and rapidly transforming urban contexts. She has conducted archival and ethnographic research across Indonesia and the Netherlands, and her current projects explore how urban memory infrastructures shape gendered and ethnic identities. She is passionate about rethinking heritage representation through feminist and decolonial frameworks that foreground community voices.

“A Mexican Experience in Becoming a Socio-Ecologically Community-Pertinent Urban Museum” – Eduardo Santana-Castellon (Mexico)

The persistent false dichotomy between “high culture” (elite, academically sanctioned, Eurocentric) and “mass/pop culture” has often hindered city museums from meaningfully engaging mind and soul with their communities. Tensions between aesthetic prestige and commercial appeal, cultural hegemony and subaltern culture, academic authority and lived experience, although harboring valid, real contrasts, have been perceived as irreconcilable, limiting museums' relevance and capacity to reflect urban realities and achieve their missions. Similarly, boundaries drawn between science and art, social and ecological urban interpretations, and top down vs bottom up planning have historically generated disciplinary and sectorial fragmented approaches that obstruct the transformation of cities. Debates around the implementation of 15-minute cities, feminist cities, resilient cities, or smart cities in the “right-to-the-city” context should be part of city museums dialogues. The Museum of Environmental Sciences in Guadalajara, Mexico, exemplifies this approach through its mission: “understanding the city and inspiring conservation of nature that sustains, to catalyze social and ecological transformations benefiting our community.” Conceptually situated within the “Mexican modality of UNESCO's biosphere reserves,” it has adopted a “museum without walls” model, integrating multiple metrics beyond traditional museum KPIs (visitor numbers, satisfaction, dwell time, repeat visitation). In our program we are developing ways to measure the museum impact in hectares

(green/public areas), parts per million (atmospheric contaminants), tons (recyclable solid wastes) cubic meters per second (treated water), minutes (spent in bicycles or waking), as well as social indicators- school drop- out and attrition rates, success in vocational/professional exploration experiences or young adults. Recently began engaging in one of Guadalajara's most urgent challenges: searching for clandestine graves of citizens that have been "disappeared" by organized crime cartels. By layering environmental, social, cultural, and safety indicators, the museum interprets marginalized and transitional urban spaces as lived, contestable terrains that encompass ecological function, community memory, informal economies, and emotional geographies.

Eduardo Santana, PhD, is Director of the Museum of Environmental Sciences of the University of Guadalajara (Jalisco, Mexico) and Emeritus Professor. He has taken a leadership role in promoting the role of museums in implementing the UN-HABITAT New Urban Agenda, with which the museums recently signed a coop agreement. He has promoted the role of museums in urban sustainability at UN World Urban Forums (Cairo, Katowiske), Biodiversity COP-16 (Cali, Colombia) and the Latin American Urban Habitat Summits in Guadalajara. He created and coordinates the Museum's Socio-environmental Film Award, the José Emilio Pacheco City & Nature Literature Award. He has been elected to the governing boards of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, the Aldo Leopold Foundation, the La Primavera Forest Public Decentralized Agency, the Intermunicipal Agency for the Integrated Watershed Management (Ayuquila River), and the Society for Conservation Biology. He has written public policy papers and participates in state and municipal committees on sustainable urban development and culture.

**"Holes in the Network: Absences, Frictions and Possibilities at the Barcelona History Museum" –
Elena Pérez Rubiales (Spain)**

The Barcelona History Museum has gradually established itself as a network museum, with heritage spaces spread throughout the city. This structure has evolved responding to urban complexity and incorporating sites linked to key historical moments, social demands, and political opportunities.

This communication explores the frictions between the theoretical ambitions of this model and the practical challenges of its implementation. While innovative, the model's application reveals tensions and limitations that call for critical reassessment. The network approach enables economies of scale, encourages shared cross- disciplinary teams, facilitates more plural narratives, and strengthens engagement with citizens through territorial anchoring. However, it also reveals weaknesses: unequal distribution of resources and visibility across sites, difficulties in sustaining wide opening hours and stable programming, thematic and territorial gaps, and fragmented management that hinders building a cohesive institutional identity. Within this context, we can speak of "holes in the network": physical and symbolic absences that limit the museum's representational scope. Uninterpreted spaces, unacknowledged communities, or forgotten histories are not merely shortcomings—they can become opportunities for reflection, experimentation, and collaboration.

The recent incorporation of El Born as a key space has sharpened these discussions. Its centrality, heritage complexity, historical significance, and strong symbolic charge have revealed both the strengths and constraints of the current model, reinforcing the need to enhance narrative coherence and integration mechanisms. Perhaps the only way to approach this reality is through

honesty: acknowledging that a city museum is in constant transformation, exposed to change and required to adapt swiftly—embracing limitations, mistakes, and failed projects.

Since the appointment of a new director in December, the Barcelona History Museum has begun rethinking the network's functioning to make it more accessible, operational, and representative. This is not about providing final answers, but entering a shared moment of pause, listening, and redefinition.

Elena Pérez Rubiales has been working at the Barcelona History Museum since 2017. She is currently part of the management area, where she is responsible for strategic planning, analysis, and networks. She holds a degree in Art History and a PhD in the Production and Consumption of Culture from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, where she also taught in the Humanities program. Her research focuses on museology and its relationship to the museum experience.

17:00-18:30

Neighbourhood Tour & Visit to Al Shindagha Museum

Journey aboard a traditional-style trolley, following a scenic route through Dubai's historic landmarks and neighborhoods. Emirati Cultural Ambassadors from the SMCCU will guide us on an immersive experience exploring key elements of Emirati traditions, values, and lifestyle, offering rich insights into the UAE's cultural legacy in an authentic setting. The tour will end at Al Shindagha Museum, Dubai's largest heritage museum.