

GO! BORDERLESS

BORDER LESS MUSEUMS

Redefining Museum
Narratives and Inclusivity

18–21 May 2025
Nova Gorica – Gorizia

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INTRODUCTION

Borderless Museums:
Redefining Museum Narratives and Inclusivity

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A Cultural Bridge across Borders

As part of the European Capital of Culture 2025 celebrations in Nova Gorica and Gorizia, Borderless Museums will offer an innovative cultural experience that transcends borders. Under the overarching theme of GO! 2025 – Borderless, this initiative invites visitors to immerse themselves in the shared heritage of these two interconnected cities. Nova Gorica and Gorizia, united as the European Capital of Culture, celebrate their shared history and future, nurturing unity, dialogue and artistic collaboration. Borderless Museums stands as a powerful symbol of culture's ability to overcome divisions, inspiring cooperation and renewal at a time of global transformation.

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ICOM Italy, ICOM Slovenia,
RA Europe and RA SEE

ICOM Slovenia and ICOM Italy are two national committees of ICOM, while RA Europe and RA SEE represent regional alliances within this global organization dedicated to museums and museum professionals. ICOM promotes best practices, ethical standards and the vital role of museums in society. Through their national committees and regional alliances, ICOM fosters international cooperation, professional development and cultural heritage preservation, helping museums navigate contemporary challenges while promoting dialogue and collaboration.

GECT/ EZTS GO

GECT/EZTS GO (*European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation – EGTC*) is an Italian public authority with legal personality, founded in 2011 by the municipalities of Gorizia, Nova Gorica and Sempeter-Vrtojba in line with Regulation (EC) no. 1082/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council, with the aim of pinpointing and tackling the shared challenges and to make the entire cross-border area more competitive and more attractive. It plays a crucial role in strengthening economic, cultural and social ties among the three municipalities that established it. By promoting collaboration in infrastructure, culture, tourism and governance, GECT/EZTS GO enhances regional integration and cross-border mobility.

EPIC

EPICenter (EPIC Venue) is a key cultural and event space for *GO! 2025*, serving as a hub for creativity, collaboration and cross-border exchange in Nova Gorica and Gorizia. Designed to host exhibitions, performances and community initiatives, it embodies the *Borderless* spirit by bringing together diverse audiences and artistic expressions.

GO! 2025

GO! 2025 is the organizing body responsible for implementing the European Capital of Culture programme 2025 in Nova Gorica (Slovenia) and Gorizia (Italy). It coordinates cultural initiatives, cross-border collaborations and community engagement projects under the theme *GO! Borderless*, fostering artistic expression and regional development.

Partners

Walk of Peace

The Walk of Peace links regions, people and heritage along the former Isonzo Front/ Soška fronta. It honours WWI victims, warns against future wars, and promotes peace and shared progress, above all emphasizing the value of peace and opportunities for common development.

Goriški muzej

Goriški muzej is a regional museum showcasing the cultural, historical and natural heritage of the Goriška region. It features various collections, including archaeology, art and ethnology, housed in different historic locations.

Auditorium della Cultura Friulana

The Auditorium is a cultural space in the centre of Gorizia. It hosts conferences, concerts, shows and exhibitions.

Samo Turel
Mayor of Nova Gorica

It is a great honour and pleasure to welcome you to Nova Gorica as we open this important conference, held within the framework of the European Capital of Culture 2025. Together with our twin city Gorizia, we are proud to host this initiative, which is as symbolic as it is significant. At this unique crossroads of languages, cultures and histories, Nova Gorica and Gorizia stand as living proof that borders - once lines of division - can become spaces of connection and creativity. Our shared slogan, *Borderless*, reflects a deep commitment to openness, to dialogue and to shaping new cultural and social realities that transcend traditional boundaries. It is especially meaningful that, here and now, museum professionals, cultural thinkers and researchers from across Europe have gathered to reflect on borders - not only in their physical form but also those that exist in our societies, our perceptions and our histories. These conversations are essential. They challenge us to reconsider how we remember, how we represent and how we relate to one another in a rapidly changing world.

As part of the European Capital of Culture 2025, we are proud to inaugurate the EPIC Interpretative Center - a new space dedicated to exploring the shared history of this border region through the personal stories of its people. The exhibition, spread over 500 square meters, presents both Slovenian and Italian perspectives, highlighting how our views of the past may differ, yet also intersect. By listening to these testimonies and confronting the complex legacies of the First and Second World Wars, EPIC invites us to understand one another better. It is through this mutual understanding and acknowledgment of past suffering that we can begin to build a more peaceful and united future.

Museums and cultural institutions are essential in this effort. They are not only guardians of heritage, but also spaces for dialogue, critical reflection and inclusion. Let this conference be a space in which bold ideas are exchanged, in which professional bonds are strengthened, and in which a shared vision for the future of culture in Europe can take root. I wish you an inspiring and productive conference - and I hope you will feel at home here in our beautiful region.

It is with great honour and enthusiasm that I welcome you to this significant international conference, held in the spirit of “GO! Borderless” - the guiding vision of Nova Gorica and Gorizia as the European Capital of Culture 2025.

Our two cities, once divided by history, now stand united in a shared cultural journey that transcends borders. This initiative is not just a celebration of our rich heritage but a powerful statement of cooperation, dialogue and the values that define a modern and inclusive Europe. It is encouraging to observe that museum institutions are also adopting the motto GO BORDERLESS, reflecting on the boundaries, barriers and obstacles that exist between them and the community, and between them and visitors.

At the heart of this project lies the ambition to rethink how we tell our histories, ensuring that museums become spaces of participation, understanding and collective memory. The creation of EPIC - our European Platform for the Interpretation of the 20th Century - embodies this mission, giving voice to the diverse stories and experiences that shape our community. However, the city of Gorizia also boasts the Santa Chiara Museum and the Attems Petzenstein Palace, which play host to exhibitions of considerable importance. Furthermore, the Borgo Castello district, in conjunction with Via Rastello, is currently undergoing an ambitious urban regeneration and cultural development project. Gorizia Castle, situated on the hill, chronicles the millennial history of this city.

This conference is an opportunity to exchange knowledge, explore best practices and discuss the evolving role of museums in fostering dialogue and inclusion. In a world facing growing divisions, we must work together to ensure that cultural institutions serve as bridges between people, offering a deeper, more nuanced understanding of our past and present.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all those who have contributed to making this event possible. Your presence here today is a testament to the power of collaboration and the enduring importance of cultural exchange.

I wish you all an inspiring and fruitful conference.

Welcome to Gorizia and Nova Gorica!

Slovenia joined the European Union in May 2004 and marked the occasion with a symbolic celebration at the border between Gorizia and Nova Gorica. At the very site where, in 1947, a border divided Transalpina Square - cutting the main train station in two - people gathered to welcome a new era of unity and shared future. This location, once defined by separation, now stands as a powerful symbol of reconciliation and cooperation. Its history, shaped by division, has become a foundation for dialogue and connection - especially fitting as we gather here in 2025 to celebrate culture as the force that unites, enriches and inspires us.

It is no coincidence that the theme of our European Capital of Culture is *Borderless*. It reflects not only the unique character of our region but also our ambition to build bridges where borders once stood. Frontiers are no longer lines of separation but starting points for collaboration, understanding and the sustainable development of our shared space. Many projects within this year's programme are dedicated to exploring these themes - dismantling taboos, challenging stereotypes and offering space for diverse interpretations of the past. Through open dialogue and creative exchange, we strengthen the very values upon which Europe is built.

The European Capital of Culture initiative also unlocks economic, scientific and touristic potential - rooted in the arts, in innovation and in community engagement. Today's museum conference, held under the theme *Borderless Museums: Redefining Museum Narratives and Inclusivity*, invites us to reflect on the evolving role of museums as agents of change in our societies.

We are honoured to welcome you and to co-create part of this meaningful cultural journey with you. May this gathering bring inspiration, new perspectives and lasting friendships. Culture connects us - and we hope you feel truly at home in our region. With warm regards and best wishes for a successful conference,

As Director of EGTC GO, a public entity created by the municipalities of Gorizia, Nova Gorica and Šempeter-Vrtojba to bridge our cross-border region, I have witnessed firsthand the power of collaboration in transforming historical divisions into opportunities for connection and shared growth. This year, as our two cities stand united under one cultural banner, we are not just celebrating our intertwined history - we are shaping a future that embraces openness, diversity and dialogue.

Under the slogan *GO! Borderless*, our joint programme is a testimony to the transformative power of culture: breaking down barriers, promoting dialogue and creating spaces in which different voices and perspectives can be heard.

This vision is closely aligned with the definition of a museum approved by ICOM in Prague in 2022, which recognises museums as *“inclusive and accessible spaces that promote diversity and sustainability, involving communities through the research, conservation, interpretation and exhibition of tangible and intangible heritage”*. Today museums are not just repositories of history but actively participate in the formation of contemporary society. They act as platforms for dialogue, reflection and knowledge sharing, values that are at the heart of the *GO! Borderless* initiative.

We are honoured to have the opportunity to host this significant conference in our two cities. For the first time, the two ICOM National Committees of Italy and Slovenia, the two regional alliances of Europe and South-East Europe and the two bodies responsible for implementing the European Capital of Culture 2025 programme, Javni Zavod *GO! 2025* and EGTC GO have come together. I am also delighted to share that this initiative has been brought to life through a concept developed within the EGTC, which garnered the immediate and enthusiastic support of all participating organisations.

I still remember the feeling of enthusiasm when Marco Marinuzzi, on behalf of a group of promoters, proposed to me, as early as the autumn of 2023, the participation of ICOM Italia in *GO! Borderless*, the project of the cities of Nova Gorica and Gorizia on the occasion of their nomination as the European Capital of Culture 2025. The connection with the ICOM International Museum was also interesting and very welcome. The project was particularly close to my heart, as I had previously worked with the EGTC (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation) Euregio in 2021 on the creation of the *Charter of Museums of the Euregio Tyrol - South Tyrol - Trentino for sustainable development*.

This first contact with *GO! Borderless* took place during a pleasant conference held in Verona on the subject of community museums. In particular, their ability to create positive relationships with communities by working at a subtle, close and participatory level with their communities was highlighted. This shows a great affinity with the themes that we are addressing in 2025. The general considerations arising from this proposal focused on the promotion of cross-border collaboration on a cultural basis were immediately clear. Certainly, and above all, the promotion of mutual understanding together with respect for differences, the reduction of prejudices and stereotypes. However, the exchange of ideas leads to cooperation, stimulating new ideas and innovative solutions. Furthermore, the exchange of different experiences, perspectives and traditions can indeed inspire new ways of thinking and addressing common challenges, such as those related to sustainability in its various forms, the sharing of good practices on a cultural basis, the development of common goals in scientific research and artistic production. These collaborative practices, though, also have an impact on the level of cultural enrichment of individuals, who find themselves exploring new traditions, languages, artistic practices and, why not, gastronomic ones. In other words, it is an enrichment of the individual life experience, a broadening of one's horizons and sense of connection with the world. The themes of strengthening international cooperation were certainly touched upon, as well as greater consideration for

an active and participatory conservation of the cultural heritage of the geographies considered. Last but not least, a different way of looking at the territorial brand, with interesting consequences for the development of a cultural tourism that is indifferent to borders.

This positive thinking combined with the specificity of the relationship between the two cities in terms of borders, clearly explained by stories, geographies and policies and by the project of “overcoming” them in a cultural sense, led me to conceive of a different perspective to look at the *borderless* concept. In our attentive work towards communities, consciously or unconsciously, we encounter “*hidden borders*” wherever we operate. These are borders between communities that are more or less welcomed and “integrated” into the social, economic and cultural mainstream of our cities. These are borders of loneliness for the elderly, who do not have the means to maintain a lively relationship with their neighbourhoods, borders between politics and civic participation, which is increasingly reduced. I believe it will be interesting to ask ourselves this question in order to give substance to the concepts of *in the service of society and with the participation of communities*, very present in our common definition of a museum.

I wish great success to the important initiative promoted by Nova Gorica together with Gorizia, *GO! Borderless*, on the occasion of the prestigious assignment of European Capital of Culture 2025!

Transnational and cross-border museum collaboration: strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities.

‘You know that I am Slav-German-Italian’. The well-known statement, written from Florence by the writer Scipio Slataper, whose family had reached Trieste, recreated by Maria Teresa in the early eighteenth century from the upper Soča valley, expresses more than ever today the feeling that a part of us, born and/or grown in a border town, have experienced since birth. Even more so because this feeling was fed by the European aspirations in which we were brought up and which, fortunately for us, we have seen come true.

We have always experienced the concept of a border, be it physical or psychological, as a heavy beam on our right side, obstructing the path of the day and of life, if I may permit myself a personal memory. If a border identifies a limit, it also identifies an area of contact, a proximity that we know to be geographical, political, historical, linguistic, philosophical, religious, social, anthropological, literary, human and sentimental.

For us museum professionals, a museum embodies similar meanings of closeness, more related to thought than to concepts of physicality, even if the sentimental closeness or empathy that binds us to the material and immaterial heritage of museums sometimes translates into physical sensations.

As president pro tempore of ICOM Europe, I cannot fail to feel that the founding theme of an alliance of European ICOM committees is that of overcoming borders between states. European history has been, since antiquity, a history of borders, created and changed, of disputed territories, of mixed linguistic areas, of mixed cultures.

Linking the overcoming of one of these borders, the one that divided not only Italy from Slovenia, but Western Europe from the Soviet bloc after the Second World War, with a new idea and concept of museums seemed to me from the outset the right way to go down the difficult road that should lead us to conceive museums as a real expression of the communities of reference; communities of reference that often do not correspond with the political boundaries that history has created.

A difficult road, certainly, that of community participation in the museum, about which much is spoken but not much is done. Conceiving museum management as a process of active democracy means undermining principles of authority, political, managerial and professional, changing practices that have been consolidated since the very birth of the museum in the mid-18th century, apparently changing the very structure of the museum.

The difficulties are many: defining the procedures of participation, the role of professionals, the relationship between existing collections and new participatory collections, changing standards, changing roles and working practices. Everything is changing, Europe changed the role of states, the rules of the political game, the relationship between states and communities, let's be available to understand how to change museums for the better, adapting to these changes.

We Are Stronger Together

Museums are precisely the institutions that can strive towards dismantling physical and psychological borders. It is museums and museum employees that can contribute their small shares to the large mosaic of changes in society for the better – be it on the level of the individual museum or within organisations.

It is an honour and excellent opportunity for ICOM SEE to be one of the conference organizers. The ICOM South East Europe Regional Alliance connects museum experts from 11 countries. The Alliance was established in 2005, first as part of ICOM Europe and, since 2008, specifically to foster the particular needs of the region that was and is still struggling with social, economic and political differences. We deal with contested heritage and redefining museum narratives to be more open, inclusive and diverse. We know that museums cannot be without a voice or in the service of contemporary politics. However, we are also aware that neither is having a strong independent statement easy.

In recent years, ICOM SEE has joined various projects focused on improving leadership and governance through training and has participated in most discussions of experts in different world regions. Can we help each other? Do we have similar or even common challenges even when we are geographically distanced? The ICOM network gives us the opportunity to work in our regions while also gaining knowledge and skills from the world.

A conference focused on the work and role of museums and museum narratives on borders to overcome borders and connect instead of divide is an excellent chance to emphasize the voice and power of museums in our region. The heritage “captured” in our museums echoes voices of our communities from the past in service for our present and future. Can we go forward and be successful in mitigating various risks and coping with the constant challenges in our societies without crossing borders and changing narratives is not a question. We know our missions and responsibilities, so we cheer GO! Borderless with Museums.

We are thrilled to welcome you to Nova Gorica and Gorizia for the first cross-border European Capital of Culture. In a region where borders have shifted and identities collided, the idea of *borderlessness* carries special weight. It reminds us that culture and memory do not stop at physical boundaries. This gathering is a celebration of that idea. Through transnational conversations, we aim to dismantle rigid narratives about our identities, histories, and the ways we understand the world — to create space for a shared cultural mission of museums: one that is plural, inclusive, and dynamic.

This is precisely the foundation of the EPIC project — a new interpretative centre established as part of the European Capital of Culture. Through its exhibition on Slovenian and Italian perceptions of key 20th-century events, EPIC offers a different, reciprocal perspective on how history is created and how museum narratives are shaped.

At the heart of this mission is participation. We believe that communities must shape how heritage is understood and shared. By inviting people of different genders, beliefs, and political perspectives to share both their collective and personal experiences, we can build more nuanced, multilayered narratives — ones that truly reflect the complexity of this region's past and present.

Orhan Pamuk, in his *Modest Museum Manifesto*, calls for museums to move away from grand, impersonal institutions toward spaces rooted in individual stories and everyday life. He imagines museums as places of empathy — where ordinary objects and personal memories invite emotional connection and reflection. We are inspired by this vision.

Each story we share is more than a single thread — it's a tapestry shaped by choices, values, and the hope for something better. Our role is to bring these stories to light, even those from cultures and communities that no longer exist as they once did. In doing so, we can connect past and present, fostering a deeper understanding of identity, ethics, and belonging.

Museums, then, are not just keepers of history — they are catalysts for dialogue, education, and healing. By cultivating empathy and cultural understanding, we contribute to a future built on respect and cooperation. We are honoured to begin this journey with you. Welcome.

International Museum Day 2025

Every year on 18 May, museums around the world come together to celebrate International Museum Day.

This year's International Museum Day theme, "*The Future of Museums in Rapidly Changing Communities*", also sets the stage for the ICOM General Conference taking place this November. For the first time, it will take place in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia region, in Dubai. The word to be emphasised from the theme is community. The new museum definition voted on at the previous ICOM general conference in Prague in 2022 reaffirmed all the historical responsibilities of museums, including acquisition, conservation and research, but also gave space for the need for museums to confront themselves openly and with equality with the communities that they represent both historically and geographically.

In this view, the museum is no longer just a place for specialists but has an element of communication and progress for all citizens. Museums exhibit collections, but also establish a dialogue on sustainable development, preserves tradition and opens to new debates regarding diversity and decolonization.

Our meeting in Gorizia and in Nova Gorica, the capital City of Culture for 2025, has an important symbolic value. We gather in a museum that was strongly desired by two communities once divided by war. Today, this is no longer a place of division and contrast, but a powerful symbol of participation and community.

As President of ICOM I feel honoured to participate in a meeting of this importance. My hope is that opportunities of this kind will be multiplied and that, in a world where violent conflicts continue to rage, Gorizia and Nova Gorica will become the symbol of what we want and must do.

Let's talk borderless!

This year, the prestigious title of European Capital of Culture is shared by Chemnitz, Germany, and an unprecedented cross-border collaboration between the cities of Nova Gorica, Slovenia, and Gorizia, Italy. This partnership marks the first "borderless" European Capital of Culture, symbolising a groundbreaking cultural union. Under the slogan "GO! Borderless," Nova Gorica and Gorizia will unite to create an innovative cultural experience that transcends borders, inviting everyone to explore and celebrate the rich, intertwined heritage of the two cities.

The symbolic significance of this partnership is especially striking. This region, which once exemplified peaceful coexistence, multilingualism and multiculturalism, was devastated by the First and Second World Wars. Awarding the European Capital of Culture title to these two border towns, long divided by history, reconnects them with their shared roots and past glories. It opens the door to renewed peaceful coexistence and creates a model for dialogue and exchange – a vital alternative in Europe's challenging times.

This conference seeks to explore and redefine the narratives told by museums, with a focus on inclusivity. It will examine how museums can break away from traditional models to become truly inclusive educational spaces, fostering global understanding and collaboration.

Our goal is to promote the exchange of ideas, best practices and expertise among museum professionals from diverse backgrounds. This international conference will highlight the potential of a paradigm shift, one that values personal narratives and addresses topics often omitted, erased, or difficult to discuss in contemporary societies.

We will explore how national narratives should be reconsidered, who gives voice to the unheard and vulnerable, and reflect how personal encounters can be key to understanding our rapidly evolving world. This is particularly important as we witness the resurgence of antisemitism, racial prejudices, stereotypes and hate speech.

Topics:

- Exchanging Best Practices: Museums as Borderless Platforms of Knowledge
- Ethics in Museums: Curatorial Roles and Dilemmas
- Museums Serving Their Communities: Building Connections
- Hidden Frontiers: Plural Communities Reflecting on History and Shaping the Future
- Transnational and Cross-Border Museum Collaboration: Strengths, Weaknesses, Challenges and Opportunities

Sunday 18.05

EPIC building, Transalpina square

16:30	Registration	
17:00	Greetings	Representatives of the organisers and the government
17:30	Opening	Emma Nardi, President of ICOM #IMD 2025: The Future of Museums in Rapidly Changing Communities
18:00	Keynote	Sharon Macdonald Connective Heritage – Museums beyond Borders
19:00		Kaja Širok Presentation of GO! 2025 Borderless project: Embracing the Past, Shaping a Borderless Future
19:30	Reception	

Monday 19.05

EPIC building, Transalpina square

8:30 – 9:00	Registration and welcome coffee	
9:00 – 10:00	Keynote	Steph Scholten, invited by ICOM Slovenia Discomfort, Decolonisation, Repatriation. Museums, History and Identity in Times of Nationalism.
10:00 – 11:00	Keynote	Tamara Nikolić Đerić, invited by ICOM SEE Three Possible Aspects of Borderlessness in Museums
11:00 – 11:15	Coffee break	
11:15 – 12:45	Panel	Exchanging best practices: museums as borderless platforms of knowledge Moderator: ICOM Slovenia ↳

		↳ Stanislava Paunović (University of Glasgow) <i>Engaging Imagination, Emotions and Bodies: Inclusive Practices in Modern Art Museums</i>
		Michela Perrotta (Peggy Guggenheim Collection) and Elena Minarelli (Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation) <i>Io vado al museo / I go to the Museum / Я ИДУ В МУЗЕЙ / Je vais au musée / ഓൾവുൻ്റ്</i> <i>ᾠᾠᾠᾠᾠᾠ / МЕН МУЗЕЙГЕ БАРАМЫН / 私は美術館に行きます /</i>
		Joni Karjalainen and Titta Kallio-Seppä (Museum of Torne Valley) <i>Our Shared Museum of Tornio and Haparanda</i>
		Lidija Nikočević (Ethnographic Museum of Istria) <i>Tightrope Walk: Cross-border Cooperation on Difficult Heritage Issues</i>
12:45 – 14:00	Lunch	
14:00 – 15:30	Panel	Ethics in museums: curatorial roles and dilemmas Moderator: ICOM Slovenia
		Suy Lan Hopmann (Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin) <i>How to Deal with BIPOC Staff in Participatory Exhibition Projects?! The Model Exhibition “Dekoloniale – What Remains?!” as a Case Study</i>
		Manuel Scortichini (University of Camerino) <i>Curatorial Ethics in the Digital Age: Navigating Data-driven Dilemmas in Museums</i>
		Tanja Roženberger (Slovene Ethnographic Museum) <i>The Museum and the Isolated Individual</i>
		Aleksandra Berberih Slana (Zagreb City Museum) <i>Zagreb City Museum at the Crossroads between Tradition and Inclusivity</i>
15:30 – 17:00	Panel	Museums serving their communities: building connections Moderator: ICOM SEE

		David Kožuh (Goriški muzej) <i>Art Beyond the Visible</i>
		Elena Corradini, Sara Uboldi, Francesco Gherardini, Elisabetta Genovese (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia) <i>TOUCHWELL: A Project to Employ Archaeological Museum Collections for People’s Care, Welfare and Wellbeing</i>
		Tanja Kocković Zaborski (Ethnographic Museum of Zagreb) <i>The Remek Tijelo“ Project as Part of the Ethnographic Museum Dealing with Mental Illness Stigma in Our Society</i>
		Francesca Monachino, Cecilia Vicentini (Università degli Studi eCampus), Stefania De Vincentis (Università Ca’ Foscari of Venezia), Elisa Mazzella (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore) <i>Accessibility in Museums for Individuals with ASD: A Systematic Review of Cognitive and Digital Approaches Using Advanced Technology for Enhanced Cultural Engagement</i>
		Corinne Brenko and Nejc Kovačič (Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana) <i>Breaking Barriers and Making Connections: 40 Years of Ljubljana’s LGBT Community</i>
		Mario Buletić (Ethnographic Museum of Istria) and Jan Franjul (Process – Association for the Promotion of Queer Culture and LGBTIQ+ Rights of Pula) <i>Encounters Beyond Boundaries: Fostering Inclusion and Acceptance in the Coming Out Museum</i>
17:20 – 19:00	Guided tours	Coordinator: GORIŠKI MUZEJ

Tuesday 20.05

Auditorium della Cultura Friulana

9:00 – 10:00	Keynote	Charles Esche, invited by ICOM Italy Hidden Frontiers. Museums and Plural Communities Reflecting Together on Histories and to Foresee Futures
10:00 – 11:00	Keynote	Roberto Balzani, invited by ICOM Europe Transnational and Cross-border Museum Collaboration: Strengths, Weaknesses, Challenges and Opportunities.
11:00 – 11:15	Coffee break	
11:15 – 12:45	Panel	Hidden frontiers: plural communities reflecting on history and shaping the future Moderator: ICOM Italy Kristina T. Simončič and Galerija Božidar Jakac (Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Kostanjevica na Krki) <i>Cisterscapes - Cistercian Landscapes Uniting Europe. Unity in Diversity.</i> Constanze Itzel (House of European History) <i>Go Europe! Transcending Borders in Narratives, Space and Museum Practice at the House of European History</i> Roberta Altin (University of Trieste) and Katja Hrobat Virloget (University of Primorska) <i>"In the Garden of the (In)visibles." A Travelling Exhibition on the Material Traces of Borders and Migrations</i> Reem Elshorbagy (Grand Egyptian Museum) <i>The Role of Loans and Travelling Exhibitions in Transnational and Cross-Border Museum Collaboration: Strengths, Weaknesses, Challenges and Opportunities</i>

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12:45 – 14:00	Lunch	
14:00 – 15:30	Panel	Transnational and cross-border museum collaboration: strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities Moderator: ICOM Europe Alenka Černelič Krošelj (Posavje Museum Brežice), Jurica Sabol (Museums of the Croatian Zagorje) <i>Borderless: The Croatian Zagorje and Posavje Regions – From Past Stories to a Project with a Vision for a Strong Network</i> Michele Toss and Anselmo Vilardi (Fondazione Museo storico del Trentino) <i>The Euregio Digital History Museum: How to Build a New Approach for a Common Transnational Narrative</i> Darja Komar (Podzemlje Pece), Tadej Pungartnik (Carinthian Regional Museum), Gerald Hartman (EGTC Geopark Karawanke- Karavanke), et al <i>Opportunities of the Cross-border Karawanken/ Karavanke UNESCO Global Geopark for the Development of Regional Museums</i> Uršula Lipovec Čebtron (University of Ljubljana) and Marijana Hameršak (Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research Croatia) <i>Museums – Places of Counter-commemorative Practices of Border Deaths?</i>
15:30 – 17:00	Workshop	Cristina Da Milano

Wednesday 21.05

Walk of Peace	An action-packed journey through the historic trails of Upper Posočje! We'll uncover the Soča Front (Isonzofront) battlefields, explore the Kolovrat open-air museum, relive WWI in the Kobarid Museum, and dive into the rich Longobard heritage of Cividale.
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Emma Nardi
The Future of Museums in Rapidly Changing Communities
 18 May

On May 18th, International Museum Day (IMD) 2025 is celebrated under the theme “The future of museums in rapidly changing communities” (“L’avenir des musées au sein des communautés en constante évolution”; “El futuro de los museos en comunidades en constante cambio”). The theme reflects the vital role museums play in navigating social, cultural, technological, and environmental changes. It encourages institutions to innovate, engage more inclusively with their communities, and adapt to new realities — be it through digital transformation, participatory experiences, or sustainability efforts.

As the world navigates an era of rapid transformation, museums stand as vital institutions that foster resilience, innovation, and inclusivity. They are dynamic spaces that drive social progress and contribute to global sustainability. Museums play a crucial role in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, and IMD2025 highlights the following SDGs: Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth, Goal 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure, Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities. This year’s IMD theme aligns with the ICOM General Conference, set to take place in Dubai in November 2025, which will further explore how museums can adapt, evolve, and lead in times of change.

Prof. Dr. Emma Nardi is an Italian academic recognized for her expertise in museum education and pedagogy. A former professor at Roma Tre University, she founded the Centre of Museum Education. She has held several key leadership positions within the International Council of Museums (ICOM), including Chair of the Committee for Education and Cultural Action (CECA) (2010–2016), Member and Treasurer of the Executive Board (2016–2020), and Chair of the Strategic Allocation Review Committee (SAREC) (2016–2021). In 2022, she was elected President of ICOM, continuing her commitment to advancing museum practices and education worldwide.

Sharon Macdonald
Connective Heritage – Museums beyond Borders
 18 May

Museums and heritage have often played significant roles in making and reinforcing borders of various kinds – between nations but also between various kinds of people and ways of life. This includes by upholding senses of distinctive identity and difference from others, and by their capacities to reflect and even attribute value. At the same time, however, they have the capacity to make connections across time, space and difference. In this lecture, I will draw on various examples to highlight the connective capacities of museums and heritage. The examples are mainly drawn from a range of research projects in which I have been involved in recent years and which focus on Europe. Through the concept of *connective heritage*, I specifically seek to indicate the capacity to *make connections across difference*, including uncomfortable difference, and in this way to open up to other perspectives. Doing so can raise difficult challenges, especially when dealing with contentious topics that are subject to populist representations, such as histories of empire and slavery, and migration. Strategies by and for museums, including artistic, digital and participative, will be discussed in order to assess the potential of connective heritage and the capacities of museums to act – and be activist – beyond borders.

Prof. Dr. Sharon Macdonald is Professor of Social Anthropology at the Institute of European Ethnology and Director of the Centre for Anthropological Research on Museums and Heritage (CARMAH). Since 2021, she has been Director of the Hermann von Helmholtz Center for Cultural Techniques. Trained at the University of Oxford, she has held Chairs at the Universities of Sheffield, Manchester and York, and been a visiting Professor at Peking University, among other things. She came to Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin as Alexander von Humboldt Professor in 2015. Sharon is internationally known for her research on museums and heritage, with her work having been translated into many languages.

Kaja Širok
EPIC and the Reimagining of Heritage in the European Capital of Culture
 18 May

EPIC, a new cultural centre opening in May 2025 as part of the European Capital of Culture, will be housed in a renovated warehouse near the border between Italy and Slovenia. Designed as both a learning space and a social hub, EPIC will explore the region’s complex history through personal stories, objects, and multiple, often conflicting perspectives. It will highlight the narratives of communities displaced after the World Wars, while connecting historical events to contemporary issues such as migration and identity.

By fostering dialogue and reflection, EPIC aims to deepen the understanding of shared heritage, promote cross-cultural exchange, and empower individuals through inclusive, participatory engagement with history.

Kaja Širok is a Slovenian historian and museologist. She has worked in museums, memory studies, and cultural heritage projects. From 2011 to 2021, she was the director of the National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia and took part in various European cultural initiatives. She sees museums as places for social change and often deals with topics like difficult heritage and historical revisionism. Širok is a member of the Academic Committee of the House of European History and serves on ICOM’s Executive Board.

Steph Scholten
Discomfort, Decolonisation, Repatriation. Museums, History and Identity in Times of Nationalism
 19 May

Three years ago, The Hunterian, the university museums of the University of Glasgow, put a ‘Declaration of Discomfort’ on its walls, that starts with:

“Most museums are monuments to a system that privileges some people over others and creates a narrative about the identity of nations or cities that institutions seek to project and protect.

Museums hold collections from donors who benefited from the practice of racial slavery, violent endeavours, forced removal and the systematic oppression of Indigenous peoples. Museums are political places.”

All heritage professionals know (or should know) that museums are not neutral and that history is not fixed, but is made and remade every day. The same facts can be used to construct a multitude of narratives and truths. In this talk, Steph Scholten will explore how some of the events and experiences in his professional history have (re)shaped his professional identity and discomfort over time. Exploring how the power of objects, from the Scottish Stone of Destiny to the Jamaican Giant Galliwasp, can shape and reshape identities and address past injustices in the present.

Prof. Steph Scholten is the Dutch Director of The Hunterian at the University of Glasgow. A long time ago, he studied art history. In previous lives, he was the Director of Allard Pierson (University of Amsterdam), Deputy-Director at the National Museum of Antiquities, Head of Conservation Science (Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage), and policy advisor at the Dutch Ministry of Culture. Steph is a member of ICOM’s Executive Board. He was previously a member of EthCom and vice-chair of ICOM|UMAC.

Tamara Nikolić Đerić
Three Possible Aspects of Borderlessness in Museums
 19 May

Tracing the shift in heritage discourse toward inclusivity, multivocality and participation - reflected in the evolving museum definition and the 2003 UNESCO Convention - this presentation explores three dimensions of borderlessness in museums: disciplinary, methodological and thematic. This shift, shaped by broader socio-political contexts, has fostered multidisciplinary and holistic approaches in museum practice.

Disciplinary borderlessness is examined through intersections, integrating intangible cultural heritage (ICH) into museum functions. Methodological borderlessness highlights participation as an audience development strategy, emphasizing multistakeholder collaboration and affective curatorship. Thematic borderlessness addresses museums’ role in navigating cultural fluidity and shifting national borders, drawing from dialogues with Istrian emigrants and those who remained, to explore how museums adapt to evolving socio-political landscapes.

Dr. Tamara Nikolić Đerić, independent senior curator, holds degrees in Cultural Anthropology and Indology. From 2008 until 2023, Nikolić Đerić worked as curator at the Ethnographic Museum of Istria. Since 2014, she has collaborated as cultural manager with Ecomuseum Batana (UNESCO Register of Good Safeguarding Practices, 2016) and since 2017 with the UNESCO Living Heritage Entity as facilitator for the implementation of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of ICH. Since 2023, she has worked as an independent curator and heritage consultant, providing support in planning, interpretation and management for various heritage organisations and initiatives.

Charles Esche
Hidden Frontiers. Museums and Plural Communities Reflecting Together on Histories and to Foresee futures
 20 May

Demodernising to decolonise: modern art museums in the 21st century. This talk will suggest some ways in which modern and contemporary art museums, in parallel with colonial, ethnographic or ‘world’ museums, can create narratives appropriate to the diversity of the people and communities they serve. It will use my experience at Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, the Netherlands as a basis to explore some concrete strategies that can be defined as decolonising and demodernising in terms of reorientating the story of modern art towards something that is potentially pluriversal and propositional rather than critical or deconstructive. It will question the effectiveness of ‘inclusion’ as an aim, and provide examples where diversity in its many aspects might be more an appropriate goal. In concluding, I will touch on questions of public engagement and different models of constituent working, and discuss how the broader politics of the decolonial can be understood in museums in the near future, given the current reactionary political climate and a decade of decolonising strategies that have already been attempted.

Charles Esche is a writer and curator based in Amsterdam. He is professor of contemporary art and curating at University of the Arts, London. Until 2024 he was director of Van Abbemuseum (NL). His latest major publication is *Art and Its Worlds*, Afterall and Koenig Press, 2021. Among international exhibitions, he has

(co-)curated *Soils*, Australia and the Netherlands, 2024; *The Meeting That Never Was*, Vilnius, 2022; *Art Turns, Word Turns*; Museum MACAN, Jakarta 2017 Jakarta Biennale 2015; 31st Sao Paulo Bienal 2014, RIWAQ Biennale, Palestine, 2007 and 2009; Istanbul Biennale, 2005 and Gwangju Biennale, 2002. He is currently writing a book on *Demodern Thinking* with Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti to be published by Duke University Press in 2025/6.

Roberto Balzani
Transnational and Cross-border Museum Collaboration: Strengths, Weaknesses, Challenges and Opportunities
20 May

Memory museums have undergone significant development over past decades, becoming a key focus of transdisciplinary research. This is undoubtedly due to the crucial role cultural institutions play in reconstructing memory, recognizing victims and processing trauma. Borders - whether national, geographical, territorial, urban or even physical (such as a boundary wall) - often create fractures that polarize alternative narratives, frequently reinforced by the rhetoric of distinct social groups. However, museums have the potential to build bridges between communities, moving beyond their traditional role as intergenerational vectors of history. The concept of transnational museums, rather than aiming for a 'shared memory' - an artificial and externally imposed construct that rarely succeeds - offers an alternative and original perspective that challenges pre-existing identity narratives. This remains an open challenge, particularly in the current context, in which the rigidification of so-called 'imagined communities' risks permeating common discourse with renewed force.

Roberto Balzani is a full professor of Contemporary History and Director of the Department of History, Cultures, Civilisations at the University of Bologna. He also directs the Historical Museum of the Liberation of Rome. Since 2017, he has been Scientific Director of the University of Bologna's Historical Archives. His research focuses on political-cultural and economic-administrative history, cultural heritage protection laws in Italy and France, and the evolving concept of heritage since 1972.

Cristina da Milano
Community Engagement: Processes and Methodologies
Workshop
20 May

Community engagement is a fundamental issue when talking about access and participation in museums: but how should such a process be activated and embedded in museums' core practices? Furthermore, who are the communities about whom we are talking and what are the most appropriate methodologies to engage them? The session will provide a short overview of the topic and will then continue by asking participants to participate actively in practical exercises and discussions.

Cristina da Milano, An archaeologist specializing in museum education and communication, focusing on lifelong learning and culture for social integration. She has led and contributed to numerous EU-funded projects on intercultural skills, cultural mediation and audience development. President of ECCOM, Vice-President of CAE-Culture Action Europe, and a board member of Teatro di Roma since 2017.

Panels

Stanislava Paunović (University of Glasgow)
Engaging Imagination, Emotions and Bodies: Inclusive Practices in Modern Art Museums
19 May

This paper explores how recent art exhibitions in Europe have implemented embodied learning, (role) play, participatory and emotional engagement to enhance their educational potential and create inclusive spaces for diverse audiences. The focus is on the following 2024 exhibitions: "I Feel, For Now" at Amos Rex (Finland), "Ambienti" at MAXXI (Italy), "Experiments in Concretism" at Espoo Museum of Modern Art (Finland) and "Residential" at Copenhagen Contemporary (Denmark). The methods and tools used to design more comfortable spaces for fostering empathy and imagination in the museum setting are examined through a case study approach. This research analyses the potential of such creative practices in dismantling the stigma of elitism often associated with contemporary art spaces. By envisioning learning as a holistic process – one that integrates sensory, emotional and participatory engagement alongside meaningful social interaction – these exhibitions aim to foster welcoming environments. In this sense, different forms of immersive approaches have the potential not only to align with the themes of the exhibited artworks but also to contribute to evolving approaches in embodied and emotional learning, redefining the way art museums connect with their audiences.

Stanislava Paunović completed her BA and MA in Serbian Literature (University of Belgrade). She is currently pursuing her second master's degree as an Erasmus Mundus scholar, in Education in Museums and Heritage (University of Glasgow). Her research interests include contemporary BCMS literature, (post)Yugoslav heritage, contested heritage and feminist museology.

Michela Perrotta (Peggy Guggenheim Collection) and Elena Minarelli (Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation)
Io vado al museo / I go to the Museum / Я йду в музей / Je vais au musée / ฉันไปพิพิธภัณฑ์ / МЕХ МУЗЕЙГЕ БАРАМЫН / 私は美術館に行きます
19 May

The Peggy Guggenheim Collection presents *I Go to the Museum*, an innovative program designed for people with migration backgrounds. Focused on promoting plurilingual and pluricultural learning, the program is based on translanguaging, a pedagogical approach that encourages participants to observe artworks and exchange thoughts in an informal, safe and inclusive environment: a museum. Through the observation and interpretation of art, participants engage with the museum's collection using all the languages they speak, with an emphasis on their mother tongue. This approach underscores the value of all languages and cultures, promoting the idea that they are equally important. The experience fosters intercultural dialogue and champions personal empowerment, while educating about beauty, promoting intercultural understanding, breaking down language barriers and stereotypes and enhancing wellbeing. Last year, the program celebrated a key moment with "Once Upon a Time," a collection of plurilingual stories written by 60 participating students. Inspired by four of the masterpieces on view, the stories are narrated primarily in Italian, with some parts read in the narrator's native language. The stories, recorded in the radio studios of Ca' Foscari University, are now available on the museum's website.

Elena Minarelli is an art historian with extensive experience in museum education. As Head of Education, she oversees the museum's educational programs and secures funding from foundations and public administrations.

Michela Perrotta, with a background in Cultural Activities Management, develops and implements educational programs, focusing on public engagement, social inclusion and accessibility.

Joni Karjalainen & Titta Kallio-Seppä (Museum of Torne Valley)
Our Shared Museum of Tornio and Haparanda
19 May

The Museum of Torne Valley is located just 30 meters from the world's most peaceful border, between Finland and Sweden. In 2024, the museum celebrated its 10th anniversary as a shared museum for the two cities of Tornio, Finland and Haparanda, Sweden, as well as the 110th anniversary of museum work in Tornio. The theme year was entitled Our Shared Museum.

The process of becoming a museum for two cities in two separate countries was not easy. The process started in 2001 and flourished at the beginning of 2014, when the museum celebrated its 100th anniversary. The status as a joint museum is reflected in the museum's permanent exhibition, since it tells the story of the whole Torne Valley.

Our museum offers similar experiences, events and services to both Finnish and Swedish citizens. The museum is also committed to safeguarding the local cross border cultural heritage, as we apply this year for local rapid water fishing methods to be added to UNESCO's list of the intangible culture heritage.

Being a cross-border museum does not come without challenges. Object donations and offering museum services occasionally raise legal issues. In recent years, world events, such as the coronavirus pandemic, re-erected the border, affecting the borderless work at our museum.

[Joni Karjalainen](#) is a museum professional who works in the field of event coordination, museum pedagogy and experimental archaeology in museums. Joni has been in his current position of museum educator for three years and is responsible for the museum's pedagogical work and communication.

[Titta Kallio-Seppä](#) is the Museum Director at the Museum of Torne Valley, a shared museum of the towns of Tornio and Haparanda on the border of Finland and Sweden. She is also a researcher specializing broadly in cultural heritage, cultural history and historical archaeology.

[Lidija Nikočević](#) (Ethnographic Museum of Istria)
Tightrope Walk: Cross-Border Cooperation on Difficult Heritage Issues

19 May

Working in a regional museum in Istria means taking into account the fact that this region is geographically and culturally part of Croatia, Slovenia and Italy. At the beginning of the 20th century and before, Istria belonged to the same rulers, which contributed to the formation of similar historical circumstances. However, dramatic changes in the 20th century have led to contested interpretations of history, which are still present today. This presentation will show how this

is reflected in museum interpretations. Three examples will be analysed. The first is the Civico Museo Della Civiltà Istriana, Fiumana e Dalmata & Magazzino 18 in Trieste, Italy, which mainly interprets the exile of Istrian Italians after the Second World War and after the establishment of the border between Italy and the then Republic of Yugoslavia, which at that time was a kind of iron curtain. The second example is about the preparation of the exhibition "Suitcases and Destinies" (about Istrian emigration), which was prepared by the Ethnographic Museum of Istria and in which exiled Italian Istrians also participated. The third is about the cooperation with Istrians from both sides of the border in researching and working on the exhibition "Connections: Istrians after the Second World War". The exhibition was part of the overall project "Identity on the Line".

[Lidija Nikočević](#) is an anthropologist who was the Director of the Ethnographic Museum of Istria for twenty-four years. Her main interests are intangible heritage, historical anthropology, migrations, difficult heritage and museum interpretation. She has been an active member of the Board of ICOM ICME and the ICOM Committee on Ethical Dilemmas (IC Ethics), as well as head of the ICOM Croatia National Committee. Her international professional activities include participation in several commissions for museum evaluation and projects for the safeguarding of intangible heritage.

[Suy Lan Hopmann](#) (Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin)
How to Deal with BIPoC Staff in Participatory Exhibition Projects?! The Model Exhibition "Dekoloniale – What Remains?!" as a Case Study

19 May

On November 14, 2024, the model project Dekoloniale Memory Culture in the City and the Stadtmuseum Berlin opened their decentralized exhibition "Dekoloniale – What Remains?!". It explores Berlin's centuries-long entanglement in the global history of slavery and colonialism and critically examines this violent past. The show was developed in a unique organisational structure between Dekoloniale - a merger of the two main Black civil society organisations in Germany and Berlin Postkolonial - and the Stadtmuseum Berlin. A curatorial

team of white and BPOC curators met weekly to decide on all aspects of the exhibition. What happens, though, when the BIPoC curators disagree about how to decolonize a museum and to achieve the goal of the exhibition? How does a white institution with too little knowledge of its colonial entanglements and an urge to diversify its staff respond to such a conflict? Using the exhibition "Dekoloniale - What Remains?!" as a case study, the presentation will discuss what happens when museums start to employ highly qualified BIPoC staff, but don't know how to deal with them when criticism arises.

[Suy Lan Hopmann](#) is a curator at the Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin. She works on colonialism and coloniality, racism and migration, gender and queer issues. She is a board member of ICOM Germany, a member of ICOM's international Working Group Decolonization and a trustee of filia.der frauenstiftung.

[Manuel Scortichini](#) (University of Camerino)
Curatorial Ethics in the Digital Age: Navigating Data-Driven Dilemmas in Museums

19 May

As museums increasingly embrace data-driven strategies to enhance visitor engagement, curators face many ethical dilemmas that challenge their traditional roles and responsibilities. This contribution explores how the growing reliance on data - ranging from visitor behaviour analysis to digital content curation - compels curators critically to evaluate their practices in order to uphold transparency, inclusivity and community trust. Nowadays, it is crucial to balance curatorial responsibility, embrace the opportunities presented by data with an ethical conscience about the need to safeguard individual privacy, ensure equitable representation and avoid potential bias in decision-making. By analysing the curatorial role in interpreting and implementing data for educational and narrative purposes, the paper addresses how museums can avoid perpetuating social inequalities and instead become platforms for inclusive dialogue and community resilience through data. This research examines a range of international case studies, including digital exhibits, participatory programs and personalised visitor experiences, to explore how data can both

empower and constrain curatorial choices. Central to the discussion are ethical considerations such as who manages data, how aware visitors are of their data, how data are used to shape museum narratives and how transparent these processes are.

[Manuel Scortichini](#) works as a contract Professor and Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Industrial Design at the University of Camerino. Since 2018, he has been involved in teaching, thesis supervision and organizing exhibitions and conferences at the School of Architecture and Design 'E. Vittoria'. His research focuses on the interplay between digital technologies and exhibition design.

[Tanja Roženbergar](#) (Slovene Ethnographic Museum)
The Museum and the Isolated Individual

19 May

In the digital age, information is value, currency and treasure, but the spaces of human communication (formal and informal) are very often replaced by automated algorithms, applications, answering machines, transponders and other tools of the digital society. This raises questions and dilemmas about the trustworthiness and relevance of the data. The process of rapid digital transformation, consequently, causes the disappearance of various trusty physical meeting places or "social hubs", where individuals used to meet, contact, talk and communicate. The Covid 19 crisis further accelerated the trend of isolation and the issue of loneliness is becoming a burning and painful issue of the 21st century. However, even modern man cannot live without trust and social cohesion, which are valuable, even indispensable. Museums have a significant role in overcoming this state. A museum keeps trustworthy information, honest, original, verifiable and reliable. A collection should be understood not just in a static manner, but conceptually, with emphasized social approaches, with the possibility of adaptation and development of symbols and techniques, as well as the creation of new content. Museums with social and cultural capital have a great moral responsibility in the 21st digital century, a society of mistrust and isolated subjects.

[Tanja Roženbergar](#), Museum Councillor at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, has a PhD in ethnology and cultural anthropology from the Faculty of

Arts in Ljubljana. She has been professionally involved in cultural heritage and museology for more than 35 years and has worked in various fields of museum work. She was ICOM Slovenia chair from 2010 to 2017, and she is author of the book *Urban Phenomena of Museum Prospects* in an Ethnological and Cultural Anthropological Discourse (2019).

[Aleksandra Berberih Slana](#) (Zagreb City Museum)
Zagreb City Museum at the Crossroads between Tradition and Inclusivity

19 May

Zagreb City Museum has a permanent exhibition that was installed thirty years ago, when Croatia gained its independence and, after the war for independence, was rebuilding its places, heritage and identity. Looking at the exhibition, it seems that museum workers set it up to show what distinguishes Croatia from "others" and not to connect. Recognizing the need for diverse perspectives, we invited a non-governmental organization that had previously been critical of our museum and a group of students who had been educated in modern museum practices to study and comment on the museum. They concluded that the main protagonist of the lineup is a white man, a Croatian Catholic, a representative of the upper class, clergy or nobility. Women are at first absent and then appear as abbesses, wives, daughters, ladies and consumers. Wider social groups, as agents of social change, and different social groups are also missing.

[Aleksandra Berberih Slana](#) was Director of the National Liberation Museum Maribor (Slovenia) from 2006 to 2022. From 2015 to 2022, she held the position of President of the Association of Slovenian Museums. She has been on the board of ICOM Slovenia, and from 2019 to 2022, she was a member of the board of NEMO - Network of European Museum Organizations. She is currently the Director of Zagreb City Museum (Croatia), the biggest city museum in Croatia.

[David Kožuh](#) (Goriški muzej)
Art Beyond the Visible

19 May

Can an exhibition be accessible to all kinds of persons with disabilities? How can a gallery be designed to accommodate individuals with visual

impairments? Can we even consider labelling artworks with "Touching is required"? These are some of the questions addressed by an inclusive and participatory project within the European Capital of Culture - the exhibition *Art Beyond the Visible*. The project's participatory nature is reflected in the collaboration of numerous institutions and schools in the making of the exhibition. Museums and galleries from Slovenia and abroad have loaned tactile copies of well-known artworks, while students have interpreted famous visual art pieces and transformed them from two-dimensional images into three-dimensional reliefs. Other students have created audio descriptions of the exhibited works, collectively offering an unprecedented tactile tour through art history. However, this kind of initiative, albeit on a smaller scale, has been seen abroad.

[David Kožuh](#) holds a university degree in art history and the Italian language. He has been employed as a curator and educator in Goriški Muzej Regional Museum since 2014. In addition to his primary responsibilities of organizing and guiding various groups through museum collections, he occasionally curates exhibitions and other projects, dedicating significant time to improving accessibility for vulnerable groups, particularly the blind and visually impaired.

[Elena Corradini](#), [Sara Uboldi](#), [Francesco Gherardini](#), [Elisabetta Genovese](#) (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia)
TOUCHWELL, A Project to Employ Archaeological Museum Collections for People's Care Welfare and Wellbeing

19 May

We will present the first results of the *Touchwell* project: *Archaeological Museum Collections for People's Care, Welfare and Well-being*, led by Modena and Reggio Emilia University in collaboration with Pavia and Siena, and funded by the Ministry of University and Research. Using archaeological finds from museum collections and the *Heritage in Hospitals* protocol (UCL), the project examines their impact on psycho-emotional well-being, creativity, self-awareness, intercultural knowledge and socialization. The Touchwell project steps are:

- creation of sets of 3D reproductions of archaeological finds, produced

by research and the development of digital and plastic reproduction techniques and by experimental archaeology and experimentation of accessible materials suitable for sensorial and tactile stimulation,

- creation of cultural contexts through reproduction of archaeological finds for experiences of manipulation by elderly people with dementia, according to a model of cultural welfare
- experimentation of evaluation kits and tools of each experience conducted with elderly people with dementia to return quantitative measures and qualitative data on the impact that culture can have within care practices.

Elena Corradini Professor in Museology and Restoration at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, she has been ICOM-UMAC board member and vice-president, editor of the online magazine *University Heritage*, curator of exhibitions, author of over 170 publications in national and international journals, volumes on museology, history of collecting, conservation and valorisation of the cultural and university heritage.

Sara Uboldi PhD in Humanities, Post-doctoral Research Fellow, Department of Maternal, Child and Adult Medical Surgical Sciences, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia. Her research deals with the social impacts of culture, with a focus on computational analysis of emotions and dimensions of well-being and health through a multidisciplinary and qualitative approach.

Elisabetta Genovese Full Professor in Audiology at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Director of the Specialization School in Audiology Phoniatrics, Master in Logopaedic Rehabilitation of Childhood Deafness, Master in Alternative and Augmentative Communication, Rector's Delegate for Disability and DSA, board member of directors of the National Conference, author of works published in national and international journals, books and scientific monographs.

Francesco Gherardini Associate Professor in Design Methods for Industrial Engineering at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia. His research interests include methods, tools for product design and simulation, CAD-based applications, parametric and free-form modelling, 3D digital reconstruction in cultural heritage, biomedical and industrial fields.

Tanja Kocković Zaborski (Ethnographic Museum)
The RemekTijelo“ Project as Part of the Ethnographic Museum Dealing with Mental Illness Stigma in Our Society

19 May

The exhibition *Faces of Hunger*, a collaboration between the Ethnographic Museum and the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore, examined hunger through three perspectives: the fight against hunger, hunger as a political tool, and its effects on the human body. During the research and preparation of the exhibition, the need for deeper engagement with the topic of eating disorders became evident. This led to a partnership with the Day Hospital for Eating Disorders at St. Ivan Psychiatric Hospital, resulting in the *RemekTijelo* public health campaign. The campaign included an online awareness initiative aimed at elementary and high school students, as well as workshops held at the Ethnographic Museum from January to May 2023. These workshops, entitled *Small School for the Prevention of Eating Disorders*, focused on education, prevention and peer-led knowledge sharing. By providing a safe environment for discussion and learning, the project helped reduce the stigma around eating disorders and mental health. In recognition of its impact, *RemekTijelo* received the ICOM Croatia annual award for intersectoral cooperation in 2023, highlighting the role of museums in fostering public health awareness and community engagement.

Tanja Kocković Zaborski works as a museum advisor in the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb. She has a PhD in Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology and has won several professional awards: Croatian Ethnological Society and Croatian Museum Society in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2023. She has worked at the Ethnographic Museum of Istria (2001-2019), and from 2019 has worked at the Ethnographic Museum Zagreb. She is co-author of the ethnographic exhibitions: “Market - Belly of the City” and “Faces of Hunger”. She was the organizer of the festival of traditional and ecological food “Watch What You Eat”, Pula (2011-2017) and the project “PSJ LAB” – for students of cultural anthropology to document intangible culture (food).

Francesca Monachino, Cecilia Vicentini (Università degli Studi eCampus),
Stefania De Vincentis (Università Ca’ Foscari di Venezia), **Elisa Mazzella** (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore)
Accessibility in Museums for Individuals with ASD: A Systematic Review of Cognitive and Digital Approaches Using Advanced Technology for Enhanced Cultural Engagement.

19 May

In the museum context, accessibility is a cornerstone of cultural inclusion and comprises a set of practices and principles designed to ensure that exhibition content is accessible to all, regardless of the physical, cognitive or sensory abilities of visitors. The aim of this study was to explore the complexity of cultural accessibility in museums through a multidimensional view, examining both cognitive and digital accessibility for visitors with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). A literature review was conducted across several databases from 2015 to 2023, identifying six studies. The research covers a wide range of museums and uses innovative digital technologies. Research on museum accessibility emphasises the importance of involving young adults with autism not only as beneficiaries but also as co-creators and highlights the need for more diverse technological applications. However, various studies warn that an excess of virtual elements can be disorienting for individuals with autism. In conclusion, the literature review highlights the need for further comparative studies between traditional and digital workshop activities better to understand the specific benefits for individuals with ASD.

Francesca Monachino is a PhD candidate in Media and Mediality at the e-Campus University, with a research focus on digital and cognitive accessibility in museums. She holds a Master degree in Art History from the University of Palermo and has been employed as a primary school teacher, specialising in special education.

Corinne Brenko and Nejc Kovačič, (Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana)
Breaking Barriers and Making Connections: 40 Years of Ljubljana’s LGBT Community

19 May

The *40 Years of Ljubljana’s LGBT Community: Spaces of Movement* exhibition (Oct 2024 – Mar 2025) at

the City Museum of Ljubljana highlights Slovenia’s LGBT movement through stories, milestones and artifacts. Embracing a community-driven approach, the museum launched a digital open call for contributions, transforming private memories into a shared civic archive. Featuring artwork, banners and documentation, the exhibition blends heritage with activism. Breaking from traditional museum practices, the project integrates diverse voices and hosts events such as drag shows and Living Libraries, redefining the museum as a space for social change and engagement.

Corinne Brenko has curated and coordinated European projects and exhibitions, including I-ON: Identity on the Line, which won the 2022 European Museum Academy Award and the 2023 ICOM Slovenia Award. Her work reflects her dedication to expanding democratic access to culture and promoting innovative, participatory approaches to heritage and historical interpretation.

Nejc Kovačič is an experienced project manager in marketing communications and advertising. His career spans various local and international projects, such as Istrian Breakfast, Plečnik 150 Jubilee Card and Box of Culture.

Mario Buletić (Ethnographic Museum of Istria), **Jan Franjul** (Process – Association for the Promotion of Queer Culture and LGBTIQ+ Rights in Pula)
Encounters beyond Boundaries: Fostering Inclusion and Acceptance in the Coming Out Museum

19 May

The Coming Out Museum (COME) is a collaborative initiative that documents and celebrates LGBTIQ+ histories through inclusive storytelling. By reimagining museums as dynamic, participatory spaces, COME empowers individuals to share personal and community-based narratives often overlooked in traditional exhibitions. COME redefines museums as active community agents, embracing participatory curation that prioritizes inclusivity and shared ownership of stories. This approach strengthens connections within the LGBTIQ+ community, while fostering dialogue across social and cultural boundaries, working on identity exploration through exhibitions, workshops and digital storytelling. Visitors shape the museum with their stories,

amplifying marginalized voices and promoting social justice. As a model for inclusivity, it encourages acceptance, cooperation and transformative connections beyond traditional boundaries.

Mario Buletić, senior curator in the Ethnographic Museum of Istria, Croatia. The focus of interest of his work is wide and open: from critical museology to digital aspects in museum theory and practice, from research and display of everyday life phenomena to inclusion and participatory practices related to the museum environment.

Jan Franjul works in the independent arts and culture. Working in NGOs turned his focus to activism, an intersection of art and activism, which uses arts and culture as tools for social change, challenging the status quo, and provoking new questions with the goal of creating a more accepting society.

Kristina T. Simončič (Galerije B. Jakac-Muzej moderne in sodobne umetnosti)
Cisterscapes - Cistercian Landscapes Uniting Europe. Unity in Diversity.

20 May

Her contribution will highlight how similar elements of Cistercian landscapes across Europe form a rich historical memory of past centuries. Before political-economic unions such as the European Union, networks of contemplative orders transcended linguistic and territorial boundaries, both physically and symbolically linking Europe transnationally. The Cistercian heritage is a symbolic foundation for the Božidar Jakac Gallery, housed in a former monastery. While the project’s theme does not naturally align with the museum’s focus on 20th and 21st century visual art, this challenge has inspired an innovative interpretation of our shared European cultural and natural heritage.

Kristina T. Simončič has been employed at the Božidar Jakac Gallery – Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art since 2016. As a senior curator, she is responsible for permanent and temporary exhibitions, participates in international exhibition projects, and works in the field of educational programs. Since 2019, she has also been the coordinator of the international project *Cisterscapes*.

Constanze Itzel (House of European History)
Go Europe! Transcending Borders in Narratives, Space and Museum Practice at the House of European History

20 May

Creating a museum about European history has meant transcending various borders and boundaries, be it in the narratives, disciplines, methodologies, languages or cultural references. The talk will explore the role that borders play in the transnational historical narrative of the museum, showing how the European space is presented as a whole, while taking its changing internal divisions into account. Importantly, it will also set out the attempts the museum has undertaken to transcend the boundaries of its physical space: digital and hybrid offers connect the museum to other places in Europe but also invite Europe into the museum. Offers outside of the House’s walls, and partnerships with museums around Europe have allowed the museum to reach audiences across borders and to co-create borderless narratives together. Finally, the talk will explore the museum’s current attempts to question and overcome its own boundaries and become more permeable to society by enhancing participation, inclusion, community engagement and, ultimately, its multi-perspectivity and relevance.

Constanze Itzel is Museum Director at the House of European History in Brussels. She previously worked for museums in Germany and France and for the European Parliament’s Committee on Culture and Education. Her curatorial and research work has led her to explore various border-transcending topics from cultural and European history.

Roberta Altin (University of Trieste) and **Katja Hrobat Virloget** (University of Primorska)
“In the Garden of the (In)visibles.” A Travelling Exhibition on the Material Traces of Borders and Migrations

20 May

This paper presents the travelling exhibition project *In the Garden of the (In)visibles*, composed of discarded personal objects left behind by asylum seekers from diverse backgrounds in Asia and Africa during their journey through Europe (authors: R. Altin, G. Grimaldi, K. Hrobat Virloget, A. Monsutti). In cross-border collaboration, the authors of the exhibition - from

the University of Primorska, University of Trieste, and the Graduate Institute in Geneva - travelled with students along the borders between Croatia, Slovenia and Italy, collecting objects used by migrants for eating, sleeping and self-care, as well as items of personal and spiritual significance. These abandoned items, found at the edges of forests or roadsides, often ignored or discarded as trash, confront us with a fundamental political and moral question of our time. The travelling exhibition serves as a sign of presence, fostering an encounter between those who cross borders and those who reside within them. It raises a critical question: What do we choose to see or not see, and why? The paper explores the anthropological significance of these objects, transformed from waste into meaningful artifacts - visible signs that reveal hidden boundaries and reflect the transnational heritage of the future.

Roberta Altin is Associate Professor of Cultural Anthropology at the University of Trieste (Italy). Her research focuses on transnational migration, refugee studies, museum and media anthropology; her last book was *Border Heritage. Migration and Displaced Memories in Trieste*, Lexington 2024.

Katja Hrobat Virloget is Head of the Department of Anthropology and Cultural Studies. Her book *Silences and Divided Memories. The Exodus and Its Legacy in Post-War Istrian Society*, Berghahn 2023 has received several prizes. She leads the research project *Ethnography of Silence(s)*.

Reem Elshorbagy
(Grand Egyptian Museum)
The Role of Loans and Travelling Exhibitions in Transnational and Cross-Border Museum Collaboration: Strengths, Weaknesses, Challenges and Opportunities
20 May

Travelling exhibitions are one of the best platforms for exchanging best practices and a convergence of voices between different cultures; they serve in interpreting one people to another, not only through the displayed objects in the exhibition but also through activities that can be carried out in conjunction with the exhibition, such as cultural programs, including concerts, lectures, workshops and dance performances. They are rich material for creating a global

dialogue between different cultures and dissolving cultural boundaries by encouraging dialogue and a search for intercultural understandings. Egypt has organized a lot of travelling exhibitions that have targeted large cities and capitals of European, Asian, American and Australian countries. It is now time to reconsider the policy of organizing Egyptian travelling exhibitions in order to reach a wider audience and target new cultural markets, such as thematic museums in small cities. This paper aims to highlight the strengths, weaknesses and challenges that face organizing Egyptian travelling exhibitions. It aims to present a new strategy for organizing Egyptian travelling exhibitions that target small museums around the world in order to encourage museum inclusion and social justice for marginalized people in small cities and remote places.

Reem Elshorbagy is a museum curator at the Grand Egyptian Museum specialized in Egyptology and Museum Studies, with more than 12 years of experience in archaeology and museum fields. She holds a Master degree in Museum Studies from the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, Helwan University, Cairo, in Egypt.

Alenka Černelič Krošelj (Posavje Museum Brežice) and Jurica Sabol (Museums of the Croatian Zagorje)
Borderless: The Croatian Zagorje and Posavje Regions – From Past Stories to a Project with a Vision for a Strong Network
20 May

Border regions are deeply connected, with the heritage forming one of the strongest links. While political borders influence these ties, they cannot sever them. Working across two countries presents both challenges and advantages. This paper unites perspectives from Slovenia and Croatia, featuring the Posavje Museum Brežice and the Museums of the Croatian Zagorje. In 2023, marking the 450th anniversary of the 1573 revolt, their directors collaborated to showcase the shared heritage and develop a vision for the future. Through project analysis, they assessed achievements, pitfalls and the potential for reshaping historical narratives. Can museums move beyond traditional storytelling to reframe politically charged history? Can a SWOT analysis

strengthen a cross-border network? With ongoing efforts and support from ICOM SEE, the process is already having an impact.

Alenka Černelič Krošelj is the Managing Director of the Posavje Museum Brežice (Slovenia). She is involved in various strategic and development groups and boards, organisations and societies focused on developing society through and with the cultural heritage. She is a lecturer at the Faculty of Tourism, Chair of Slovenian Museum Association and Chair of RA ICOM SEE (2019–2025).

Jurica Sabol has been employed at the Museums of the Croatian Zagorje since 2011, working as a guide, geology curator and museum manager. In 2021, he was appointed General Director of the largest museum in Croatia: Museums of the Croatian Zagorje. He has authored numerous domestic and international thematic exhibitions, as well as numerous papers on geology, palaeontology and strategic planning.

Michele Toss and Anselmo Vilardi, (Fondazione Museo storico del Trentino)
The Euregio Digital History Museum: How to Build a New Approach for a Common Transnational Narrative.
20 May

The Fondazione Museo storico del Trentino has been designated by Tyrol–South Tyrol–Trentino Euroregion (GECT) as the lead institution to establish a Euregio Digital History Museum, in collaboration with the Provincial Museums Authority of Bolzano and the Tiroler Landesmuseen in Innsbruck. The theoretical framework of the digital museum is based on the concept of “boundary” (political, administrative and cultural), not in the sense of a mere line of demarcation or closure but as a new perspective that instead enables the creation of a shared historical narrative; a brand new narrative that will foster dialogue among the three territories and highlight their specificities, differences, exchanges, connections, continuities and discontinuities over time. The Euregio Digital History Museum aims to examine critically the major political, economic, social and cultural changes and the identity processes that contribute to the development of a plurality of cultural and linguistic

affiliations. The museum therefore aims to become a virtual place for knowledge sharing and participation of the different local communities. The collections lie at the heart of the new museum experience, enhanced in innovative ways through the use of digital technologies and new forms of digital storytelling.

Michele Toss, a historian by profession, he holds a PhD in “History and Geography of Europe”. He also graduated in contemporary history from the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris. He works as a curator and researcher at the Fondazione Museo Storico del Trentino, where he coordinates cross-disciplinary research projects.

Anselmo Vilardi, a historian by profession, he holds a degree in the History of European Civilisation from the University of Trento. He works as a curator at the Fondazione Museo Storico del Trentino, where he coordinates a working group and curates the permanent exhibition. He is also the lead researcher for the “Regional History” project.

Darja Komar (Podzemlje Pece), Tadej Pungartnik (Carinthian Regional Muzeum), Gerald Hartman (EGTC Geopark Karawanke- Karavanke), et al
Opportunities of the Cross-border Karawanken/Karavanke UNESCO Global Geopark for the Development of Regional Museums
20 May

The cross-border Karawanken/ Karavanke UNESCO Global Geopark unites 14 municipalities, and is named after the mountain range linking the two sides of the border. With unique geology, it holds a rich natural and cultural heritage. Since 2013, it has been part of the European and Global Geoparks Network, managed by EGTC Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke. Its main goals include preserving geological and cultural heritage, raising awareness through education, fostering sustainable tourism and promoting cross-border cooperation. The Geopark actively involves museums in international projects, such as Podzemlje Pece, Hemmaberg Juenna Archaeological Museum and the Carinthian Regional Museum, integrating them into educational programs and cross-border events.

Darja Komar, Podzemlje Pece, Tourist Mine and Museum; Manager of

Podzemlje Pece, Tourist Mine and Museum, with a PhD in geological sciences, works in the field of education, information and international cooperation, she is an (international) project coordinator, curator and certified interpretive guide, (co)author of several popular, professional and scientific articles, active participant in numerous conferences and seminars.

Uršula Lipovec Čebtron (University of Ljubljana) and Marijana Hameršak (Institute of Ethnology and Folklore)
Research Croatia: Museums – Places of Counter-commemorative Practices of Border Deaths?
20 May

Border deaths, usually called also migrant deaths and deaths in migration, are premature deaths of persons whose movement and presence in a given territory is irregularized (Last 2020: 21). The number of these violent deaths is progressively growing in the European context and is usually associated with deaths at sea. Less emphasis is given to deaths occurring in the proximity of the European land borders on the so-called Balkan migration route. In this paper, we will present part of our three-year multi-sited ethnographic research of border deaths in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina conducted within the research project “ERIM: The European Irregularized Migration Regime at the Periphery of the EU – from Ethnography to Keywords” (2020-2024). During our research, we observed that, although non-visible and marginalized - or precisely because of that - border deaths provoke commemorative practices. Different forms of so-called grief activism, cemetery activism and other counter-commemorative practices are performed in different contexts: in the places of origin of the deceased, places of their death and burial, and in local institutions, including museums. In the paper, we will present some of the initiatives related to museums in Croatia and Slovenia focused on counter-commemorative practices.

Uršula Lipovec Čebtron is a professor of social and cultural anthropology at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, where she lectures courses in medical anthropology, the anthropology of migration and the ethnology of the Americas.

Her research interests include health aspects of migration, vulnerabilities in health and healthcare, critical border studies etc.

Marijana Hameršak is a research advisor at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, Croatia. She is the author of three books (one in co-authorship) and co-editor of five edited volumes, with the most recent being *Keywords Balkanska ruta* (2024). She is a member of various academic and activist groups and initiatives.

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