

International Symposium

*What do museums born during the second quarter
of the 21st century look like ?*

Monday, November 10th 2025

Hosted by Louvre Abu Dhabi



Auditorium & Zoom

At a time when the global museum landscape is undergoing profound transformation, **ICOM Europe**, in collaboration with **ICOFOM**, **ICOM France**, and **France Muséums**, will host a full-day international symposium on November 10th 2025 at the **Louvre Abu Dhabi**.

This special event, organized within the framework of the **27th ICOM General Conference** in Dubai, is dedicated to exploring how new museums conceived in the early 21st century are redefining the role, form, and ethics of the museum institution.

The conference brings together curators, directors and researchers from all regions of the world to examine how museums are being reshaped in response to climate and social crises, technological evolutions, and shifting expectations of public engagement.

As the museum of the 21st century emerges both as a place for heritage conservation and valorisation, a civic actor and a site of innovation, the event aims to identify and compare diverse professional approaches, focusing on new models of participation, sustainability, and intercultural dialogue.

The conference aims to address a central question: **“What do museums born at the dawn of the second quarter of the 21st century look like?”**

By examining recent examples of new and transformed museums across continents, the discussions will explore how institutions are redefining themselves as places for collections and spaces of civic participation, sustainable development, and intercultural connection.

The initiative builds on ICOM’s recent work to redefine the museum and revise its Code of Ethics, offering a timely reflection on how these principles are being applied in practice.

The event seeks to:

- Compare different regional approaches to museum creation and renewal;
- Identify emerging trends in museological thinking and design;
- Foster dialogue between museum practitioners and professionals, academics, and cultural policymakers;
- Contribute to ICOM’s broader reflection on the future of museums in rapidly changing communities.

Program

9:00 AM

Welcome coffee and registration

9:30 AM

Official Opening Session

Manuel Rabaté, *Director of Louvre Abu Dhabi*

Giuliana Ericani, *President of ICOM Europe*

Émilie Girard, *President of ICOM France*

Karen Brown, *President of ICOFOM*

Nasir Aldarmaki, *President of ICOM UAE*

Hervé Barbaret, *General Director of France Muséums*

Moderator: **Juliette Raoul Duval**, *ICOM Europe*

10:30 AM

Session 1: « New Museums » Case Studies

Part 1 - Moderator: **Alexandre Chevalier**, *Treasurer of ICOM Europe*

Manal Ataya, *Sharjah Museum Advisor (UAE)*

Development of museums in the United Arab Emirates over the past four decades

This presentation will reflect on the development of museums in the United Arab Emirates over the past four decades, positioning today's rapidly expanding cultural landscape within a longer and more nuanced historical continuum. While recent attention has focused on large-scale "new museum" projects and ambitious cultural districts, it is important to recognize that these initiatives emerge from an existing ecosystem of museums, cultural centers, archives, and learning programs that have steadily evolved since the 1980s. By tracing key milestones in institutional growth, collection building, educational outreach, and community engagement, this talk will highlight how earlier foundations have shaped current approaches to cultural production, narrative-building, and public access. In doing so, the presentation invites a more holistic understanding of what "museums of the future" mean in the UAE: not isolated flagship developments, but institutions rooted in local contexts, responsive to diverse publics, and connected to a wider cultural fabric that has matured over time.

Lourdes Ramos, *President and CEO of the Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA), USA*

The museum of the future

The Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA) in Long Beach, California, is the only U.S. Museum accredited by the American Alliance of Museums dedicated exclusively to modern and contemporary Latino and Latin American art. Representing artists from 24 countries, MOLAA operates within a shifting landscape where Latinos comprise nearly 20% of the U.S. population and 40% of California's. This context informs an interdisciplinary approach to research, education, and curatorial practice that fosters dialogue across geography and identity. As a museum of the 21st century, MOLAA redefines relevance through inclusion, innovation, and community engagement—culminating in an upcoming architectural expansion.

Zsolt Sári, *Chair of ICOM Hungary, Deputy Director General of Skanzen Open-Air Museum, Hungary*

New and renewed museums in Hungary. Is the new definition of a museum becoming visible?

Several significant museum developments have been implemented in Hungary in recent times. Architect Sou Fujimoto dreamed up a modern, extravagant house for music. He drew inspiration from both nature and music when designing the building. The Ethnographic Museum not only moved to a new building, but also created a new permanent exhibition presenting its collection after a full digitization. The new building complex of the Hungarian Open Air Museum, applying the methodology of renewed museology – with visual elements, digital tools, and modern interpretation elements – realizes a 21st-century exhibition that, following the main directions of European open-air museum studies, in addition to presenting buildings, also undertakes storytelling, presenting individual stories, destinies, and historical events.

All three institutions have tried to adapt to the new museum definition, in the areas of diversity, sustainability, reflective thinking, and ethical operation.

Hanna Forssell, *Head of Exhibitions and Events at the National Museum of Finland*

Transformation of the National Museum of Finland

A transformation of the National Museum of Finland is being carried out to redefine its institutional role and practices in response to evolving societal and cultural contexts. The process combines architectural renewal with organizational and conceptual change. The new 5,900 m² annex and renovation of the 1910 building are accompanied by a re-evaluation of operational models, participatory collection management, and the notion of "national" within an increasingly diverse society. Emphasis has been placed on co-creative methods, cross-sectoral partnerships, and digital tools that enhance inclusivity and emotional engagement. The renewal process aims to strengthen institutional resilience, adaptability, and social relevance. Completion of the new facilities is scheduled for summer 2026, with reopening in spring 2027.

Reading by the moderator of the survey answers to questionnaire provided by : **Carina Jaatinen**, Head of Content, Museum of Finnish Architecture & Design Museum, Finland - and - **Sigita Baguzaitė**, Head of the Palanga Amber Museum, Lithuanian National Museum of Art, Chairperson of ICOM Lituanie

Part 2 - **Moderator** : **Lana Karaia**, President of ICOM Georgia, Chair of ICOM Europe

Stéphanie Rosenthal, Director of Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Project, Abu Dhabi

Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, presentation of the museum's vision and artistic direction

Guggenheim Abu Dhabi is a museum of modern and contemporary art that reimagines how we see the art of our times. Celebrating artistic creation from the 1960s to the present, the Museum highlights art and artists from West Asia, North Africa, and South Asia, tracing their global connections. The newest institution in the Guggenheim's international constellation of museums, located within the vibrant Saadiyat Cultural District, Guggenheim Abu Dhabi is shaped by the city's cultural diversity and global outlook. It offers a living space of encounter, where multiple voices, ideas, and experiences intertwine to form a thriving creative ecosystem—a vision of global art as seen from West Asia.

Eduardo Santana Castellon, Director of Museo de Ciencias Ambientales Centro Cultural Universitario-Universidad de Guadalajara, Mexico

Museums as agents of social change in rapidly changing urbanocene communities

My hybrid 2008+2025 ICOM- themed title underscores the continued relevance of museums in catalyzing socio-ecological processes to improve our communities' lives. Museums should try to reinvent themselves to face the civilizational challenges of this new millennium by finding interstitial communication spaces to provoke emotions and exchange diverse knowledge through art and science. A process of "evolutionary exaptation"—using what we were to achieve what we need to be. Not easy, considering our origins in privileged spaces of authoritarian power, affluence, cities and "temples of knowledge". Environmental protests held in museums, rather than in shopping malls or churches, seem to reflect positively on our pertinence. Discontent in changing communities should push us beyond academic "authority" towards morally relevant authorities. Achieving this requires revisions of our mission, vision and performance metrics.

Antonia Napp, Managing Museum Direction KOLK 17 Puppet Theatre & Museum Director, Germany

KOLK 17 – Puppetry – Game of Life

KOLK 17 is a cultural institution for puppetry that combines a museum and theatre under one roof. Located in the heart of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Hanseatic city of Lübeck in Germany, the renovated building complex combines historical substance with modern architecture. With over 20,000 objects, the collection is one of the most important in Europe. Historical figures, props, musical instruments, posters, and texts from Europe, Africa and Asia tell the stories of this art form, while the KOLK 17 puppet theatre hosts the full spectrum of modern international puppet, figure and object theatre. Since this summer, the exhibition 'Puppetry – Game of Life' has been inviting visitors to experience the world of historical puppets in a lively way. Four themed rooms and the 'Room of the Meeting Assembly' showcase the diversity of the collection and different forms of puppetry, inviting visitors to join in. The exhibition was created collaboratively: Museum professionals, puppeteers, external experts and associations worked together. As a research-based cultural institution, KOLK 17 participates in current debates on puppetry, the performing arts and museology. At KOLK 17, knowledge is shared, participation is enabled and (international) exchange is promoted –also via the online collection.

Yuji Kurihara, Vice-chair of ICOM Japan, Executive Director of the National Museum of Nature and Science

New Museums in Japan

Many Japanese museums were established during the period of high economic growth in the 1960s-70s, and most of them are now undergoing renovations. These renovations finally take the SDGs and DEAL into account. Meanwhile, new art museums continue to open. One of the last prefectural museums to open was Tottori Prefectural Museum of Art, which opened in March of this year. Also, Hyper Museum Hanno opened in March, and the Naoshima New Museum opened in May. All focus primarily on contemporary art, and while none are conveniently located, they are highly popular—so much so that reservations are nearly impossible to secure—thanks to their strong entertainment appeal and the acclaimed beauty of their architecture, which harmonizes with the surrounding natural environment.

Although these new museums prioritize regional revitalization and tourism promotion, they are gradually implementing activities that consider sustainable development.

Jean-Paul Koudougou, Chair of ICOM Africa, Burkina Faso

The Opening of New Museums in Africa: New Perspectives, New Infrastructures, New Understandings

The beginning of the 21st century in Africa has been marked by numerous changes in the heritage sector in general, and in the museum field in particular. The role of the museum is being re-examined across various African countries. This evolution is reflected in the construction or renovation of infrastructures that draw upon the architectural heritage of local communities while also embracing contemporary architectural trends. This blend of identity exploration and immersion in a world of daily diversity reflects a new vision Africans have of the museum—its social role and its full potential as a catalyst for the sustainable development of society.

New perspectives, new infrastructures, new understandings—the opening of new museums in Africa reflects a clear determination to build national identity on a unifying cultural foundation, making the museum both a showcase and a crucible of the people's cultural wealth. Wasn't that, after all, the original goal assigned to these institutions in the early days of African independence?

1:15 PM

Lunch Break offered by France Muséums

Streaming Video Session

Video contributions:

Anne Kremers, Netherlands

Director of the FENIX Museum

Reem Shorbagy, Egypt

Museum Curator, Grand Egyptian Museum

João Pacheco de Oliveira, Brazil

Professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and Curator of Ethnological Collections at the National Museum of Rio de Janeiro

Annette Day, UK

Head of Content Delivery at the London Museum

Moderator : **Mario Antas**, ICOM Europe

Visit of Louvre Abu Dhabi

3:00 PM

Session 2: Synthesis and Debate of « New Museums » Case Studies

Klaus Staubermann, Founding Director of the German Port Museum in Hamburg, Germany

The new German Port Museum (in development)

Germany is gaining a new cultural highlight: With the German Port Museum, a new focal point for the past, present and future of German ports in a globally connected world will be created in Hamburg in the coming years. An innovative new building will house the museum, where the impressive four-masted barque PEKING will also be berthed. The location of the already existing part of the museum, an open storage with maritime artefacts at an authentic harbour location, will also be developed. Going far beyond the topic of maritime history, the German Port Museum, as a 'museum of globalisation', will focus on the world's ports as hubs of global trade.

Summary of the presentations, synthesis and debates: **Elke Kellner**, ICOM Europe

3:45 PM

Session 3: Round Table Discussion of ICOFOM « Museology in 2025 »

Guilhem André, Acting Director for scientific, curatorial and collections management of Louvre Abu Dhabi

Bruno Brulon Soares, Reader at the University of St Andrews, UK

Hervé Barbaret, General Director of France Muséums, France

Darko Babic, Assistant Professor at the University of Zagreb – ICTOP, Croatia

Karen Brown, Professor, University of St Andrews (UK) and ICOM Ireland, chair of ICOFOM

Carly Degbelo, Director and Curator of the Diocesan Center for Religious Heritage, Porto Novo-Benin

Moderator : **Marion Bérengère Bertin**, Vice-President of ICOFOM

5:30 PM

Cocktail offered by ICOM France

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Biography of speakers

Session : « New Museums » Case Studies

Manal Ataya, Sharjah Museum Advisor (UAE)

Manal Ataya is a museum professional with two decades of experience in museum development, cultural heritage management, and cultural diplomacy. As the previous Director General, overseeing a network of 17 museums for over 15 years, Ataya pioneered initiatives to enhance learning, accessibility, audience engagement, cross-cultural partnerships, international collaborations and social responsibility. In 2023, Ataya was appointed Museums Advisor to His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qasimi, Ruler of Sharjah and the Sharjah Museums Authority. In this role, she contributes to the development of cultural strategy, policy, and new museum projects. Ataya's contributions to culture have been recognized internationally. She received the Order of Arts and Letters from France in 2018 and the Order of Merit from Germany in 2022. Additionally, she holds degrees from Hamilton College (2001) and Harvard University (2004).

Hanna Forssell, Head of Exhibitions and Events, National Museum of Finland, Finland

Hanna Forsell is the Head of Exhibitions and Events at the National Museum of Finland. She has led the New National operational model project, supporting the museum's renewal and expansion. With twenty years of experience in audience engagement, museum education, exhibitions, and management, she holds a Master's in European Ethnology from the University of Helsinki and has completed the Business of Culture program at Aalto University.

Jean-Paul Koudougou, Chair, ICOM Africa, Burkina Faso

Jean-Paul Koudougou is president of ICOM-Africa, historian, museum curator and multimedia communicator working for the Burkina Faso Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism (MCAT). I trained as a cultural heritage manager at Senghor University in Alexandria (EGYPT) in 2003-2005. He served his country at various levels of cultural administration, notably in the field of museum management, for over fifteen years now. He is currently preparing a doctorate in Museology at the University Ouaga 1 J.K.Z. He has taken part in training courses and meetings around the world, working for major organizations in the fight against TIBC, the protection of BCs in the event of conflict, and the promotion of cultural heritage. All of which has given him a wealth of experience that I'm honored to share and pool with African and Western colleagues at meetings, symposia and training courses.

Yuji Kurihara, Vice-chair ICOM Japan, Executive Director, National Museum of Nature and Science

Yuji Kurihara is Executive Director, National Museum of Nature and Science (Japan) and Vice-Chair, ICOM-JAPAN. Mr. Yuji Kurihara specializes in museum policy and museum management. He entered the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture in 1989; Director for Community Relations, the Japanese School of New York; Director of the Fine Arts Division, Agency for Cultural Affairs; Director of Administration, Tokyo National Museum; Vice-Director of Kyoto National Museum and since April 2023, current position. Now, He is Vice-chair of ICOM-JAPAN, Treasurer of ICOM-DRMC, Board member of the Japanese Association of Museums, Vice president of the Japan Society for Exhibition Studies, Vice president of Japan Museum Management Academy, executive member of the Museological Society of Japan, adjunct lecturer at Kokugakuin University, Gakusyuin University and International Christian University.

Antonia Napp, Managing Museum Direction KOLK 17 Puppet Theatre & Museum Director, Germany

Antonia Napp studied art history, Russian literature and ancient Greek literature at the universities of Freiburg and Vienna. From 1999 to 2003 she worked as part of the collaborative research centre "Identitäten und Alteritäten. Die Funktion von Alterität für die Konstitution und Konstruktion von Identität » at the University of Freiburg. In the following year she completed her doctorate at the University of Freiburg on the subject of "Gender and portraiture in Russia around 1800". Subsequently she worked for the Lübecker Museen and the Hamburger Kunsthalle. At this time her work focused mainly on contemporary art. During her academic traineeship from 2010 to 2012, she helped to set up the Duchamp Research Centre at the Staatliches Museum Schwerin. In 2015 she became head of the Theaterfigurenmuseum in Lübeck, which since 2018 has been undergoing extensive construction work and remodelling in the historic and partially listed Kolk. In 2021, under her and Stephan Schlafke's leadership, the Theaterfigurenmuseum and the Figurentheater merged into one joint institution: KOLK 17 Figurentheater & Museum.

Since then, the expertise of both institutions has been incorporated into the development of the new KOLK 17 exhibition and the institutional development. Napp is also engaging in networking within the puppet theatre community in Germany and internationally. The latest project in which she participates is KompleXX Figurentheater. This involves the far-reaching networking of the entire puppet, figure and object theatre scene in Germany as well as further research into the genre of puppet theatre as an independent, transdisciplinary art form. Furthermore she regularly takes part in conferences on puppet theatre, latest in Salzburg (2020) and Munich (2023). She has published extensively on gender theory in art history, Russian art, body and representation, contemporary art, and curated numerous exhibitions on puppetry. Beyond that she is a member of the editorial team of UNIMA Germany's official magazine "DaT - Das andere Theater", which provides news about the association and the puppet theatre scene in general.

Lourdes Ramos, President and CEO, Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA), USA

Lourdes Ramos is the President and CEO of the Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA) in Long Beach, California, and a distinguished museum leader with over three decades of experience in arts administration, museology, and cultural development. Formerly the Executive Director of the Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico and the Museo de San Juan, she has led major institutional transformations, curated nationally and internationally recognized exhibitions, and secured significant funding and accreditation milestones. A Fulbright Scholar with a Ph.D. in Arts Management, Dr. Ramos has also served as a Museum Accreditation Commissioner and Site Visit Accreditation Professional for the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). She is widely recognized for her strategic vision, commitment to community engagement, and dedication to advancing Latin American and Latino art on a global scale.

Stéphanie Rosenthal, Director, Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi

Dr. Stephanie Rosenthal is Director of the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Project, appointed by Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation. From 2018 to 2022, she was Director at the Gropius Bau in Berlin, notably the first woman to direct the institution and widely recognized for revitalizing the museum's curatorial program and bolstering its international reputation. Throughout her career Rosenthal held key roles, such as Chief Curator at the Hayward Gallery in London and Curator at the Haus der Kunst in Munich. She also served as artistic director of the 20th Sydney Biennial in 2016. With a specific interest on performative practices, she organized influential exhibitions like Move: Choreographing You (2010), Art of Change: New Directions from China (2012), and Garden of Earthly Delights (2019).

Eduardo Santana Castellon, Director, Museo de Ciencias Ambientales Centro Cultural Universitario-Universidad de Guadalajara, Mexico

Eduardo Santana Castellon is Emeritus professor & founding director of the Museum of Environmental Sciences (Univ. Guadalajara, Mexico). Mission "understanding the city and inspiring the conservation of the nature that sustains it, to catalyze ecological and social transformations for the benefit of our community." Coordinates Socio-Environmental Film Award & the City and Nature Literature Prize. Adjunct professor Department of Forest & Wildlife Ecology (Univ. Wisconsin-Madison). Research, conservation, teaching & guest speaker experience +130 institutions (18 countries). Collaborates defending sacred sites and natural resources of Mexican indigenous communities. Designed WWF's Cuba Conservation Program. Elected to governing boards: Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Soc. Conservation Biology, Assn. Tropical Biology, & Aldo Leopold Found. +188 publications; +35 theses advisees; +50 distinctions.

Zsolt Sári, Chair ICOM Hungary, Deputy director general Skanzen Open-Air Museum, Hungary

Zsolt Sári is the deputy Director General of the Hungarian Open Air Museum. I studied ethnography and political science at university, and obtained my PhD in 2004. I work in the central open air museum of Hungary since 2001. In the past two decades, I participated in the design and construction of the building units of the museum. I conducted ethnographic research in Hungary, Romania, Argentina and Israel. I have organized several exhibitions, including the topic of rural architecture and way of life.

Klaus Staubermann, Founding director of the German Port Museum in Hamburg, Germany

Klaus Staubermann is the founding director of the German Port Museum in Hamburg, Germany. Earlier, he was a Principal Curator at National Museums Scotland and an Honorary Fellow at the Institute for Science, Technology and Innovation Studies of the University of Edinburgh. He teaches cultural anthropology and has been a visiting professor at the Universities of Gothenburg, Sweden, and Bengaluru, India. He has been active within ICOM in several roles for a long time and currently acts on their Strategic Planning Committee. Session 2: Strengthening Local Roots: Museums in Their Communities.