

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  اللوفر أبوظبي 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*

Guilhem André, *Acting Director for scientific, curatorial and collections management 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

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 Forsell, 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

Moderator : **Alexandre Chevalier**, Treasurer of ICOM Europe

Part 2

Stéphanie Rosenthal, Director of Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi

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 DEAI 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 (TBC)

L'ouverture des nouveaux musées en Afrique : Nouveaux prismes, nouvelles infrastructures, nouvelles appréhensions.

Le début du XXI^e siècle est marqué, en Afrique, par de nombreux changements dans le secteur patrimonial en général et muséal, en particulier. On assiste à une revisitation du rôle du Musée dans les différents pays africains. Cette situation se traduit par la construction ou le réaménagement d'infrastructures qui s'appuient sur le patrimoine architectural des communautés et la prise en compte des tendances architecturales. Cette alchimie entre recherche identitaire et immersion dans un monde où la diversité se conjugue au quotidien traduit la nouvelle vision que les Africains ont du musée, de son rôle sociétal et de tout son potentiel en tant qu'adjuvant au développement durable de la société.

Nouveaux prismes, nouvelles infrastructures, nouvelles appréhensions, l'ouverture de nouveaux musées en Afrique s'inscrit dans une volonté affirmée de construire l'identité nationale sur un socle culturel fédérateur, faisant du Musée la vitrine et le creuset des richesses culturelles des peuples. N'était-ce pas d'ailleurs l'objectif premier assigné à ces équipements aux premières heures des Indépendances africaines ?

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

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

Cairo 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*

Guided tour 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 »

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 at the University of St Andrews, UK, and ICOM Ireland

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

Moderator : **Marion Bérengère Bertin**, *Secretary of ICOFOM*

5:30 PM

Cocktail offered by ICOM France