

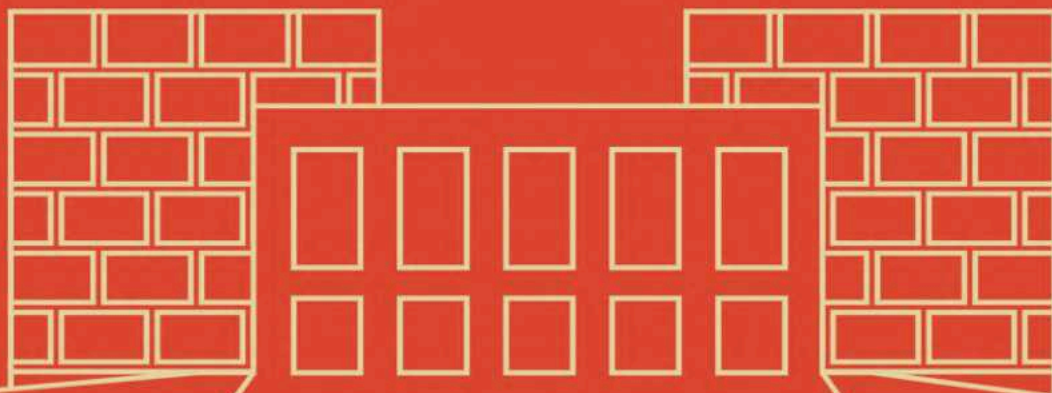
50th  
Annual Conference of

# ICAMT 2024

## BOOK OF PROCEEDINGS

### Encountering Transition

Reshaping museum architecture,  
exhibition design and techniques in response to global/local changes



National Museum of  
Prehistory

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Encountering  
Transition

ICAMT

50th Annual Conference

2024

Reshaping museum architecture,  
exhibition design and techniques in  
response to global/local changes

Oct.06-10

Taitung/Taipei, Taiwan

博物館如何因應全球／在地變化而重新形塑建築、展示

臺灣／臺北

設計

還

ICOM

ICAMT

文化部

國立臺灣博物館

中華民族博物館

## ICAMT 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Taiwan 2024

Supervisor:	International Council of Museums (ICOM)
Sponsor:	Ministry of Culture, Republic of China (Taiwan)
Organizers:	ICAMT International Committee for Architecture and Museum Techniques National Museum of Prehistory Taiwan Museum Association, ROC
Co-organizers:	National Palace Museum National Museum of History Tainan Art Museum Fo Guang Shan Buddha Museum
Supporters:	Taitung County Government National Taitung University The Center for Outdoor & Tribal Recreation Education Cultural Affairs Bureau, Tainan City Government Tainan City Museum National Museum of Taiwan Literature National Taiwan Craft Research and Development Institute, Taipei Branch Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall National Taipei University of Education Cultural and Creative Industries Management
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# Welcome Note

## Welcome Note

### Nana Meparishvili

Chair, ICOM ICAMT

Dear ICAMT members, distinguished colleagues and esteemed friends,

Dear Conference participants,

It was a great pleasure to welcome you all to the 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of ICAMT (ICOM International Committee for Architecture and Museum Techniques) in October 2024, and now I have the honour of presenting its outcomes in this publication.

This event held special significance as we hosted our annual conference for the 50<sup>th</sup> time, demonstrating ICAMT's dedication to fostering innovation and collaboration in the museum field.

ICAMT – The International Committee for Architecture and Museums Techniques - is one of the first International Committees of ICOM, listed in ICOM News on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1948. Throughout its rich history, ICAMT has consistently provided a platform where knowledge, best practices, and groundbreaking ideas converge. We strive to create a vibrant forum for professionals and enthusiasts alike, drawing together diverse perspectives from architecture, museum techniques, and exhibition design. Our annual Conferences are a testament to this commitment, offering a space for meaningful exchange and exploration.

The theme for this landmark Conference, *"Encountering Transition – Reshaping Museum Architecture, Exhibition Design and Techniques in Response to Global/Local Changes"*, reflected the dynamic and rapidly evolving landscape in which museums operate today. As we navigate a world characterised by technological advancements, shifting cultural paradigms, and environmental imperatives, our museums must be agile, adaptable, and responsive to these challenges.

ICAMT, together with a list of esteemed organizations and individuals from Taiwan - to whom I will extend special thanks in the 'Acknowledgements' section - designed this conference to catalyze transformative discussions and innovative solutions. We delved into the interplay of Western and Eastern architectural traditions, explored the integration of cutting-edge digital technologies and addressed the critical need for sustainable museum practices.

Dear Conference participants, your presence and active participation were invaluable in shaping the future of museums as we navigate these complex and exciting transitions. I am confident that the insights shared, the collaborations fostered, and the ideas generated during the Conference will be valuable. They will definitely have an impact on the museums we serve today or will serve in the future.

Let us be inspired by the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. May these Conference proceedings serve as a valuable resource and a font of inspiration for all who are passionate about the evolving role of museums in our society.

I wish you all a good reading!

**Nana Meparishvili**

Chair of ICAMT



# Introduction

## Introduction

### Taiwan Organising Team

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Following the invitation of the International Committee for Museum Architecture and Techniques (ICAMT) of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the National Museum of Prehistory (NMP), Taiwan Museum Association (TMA), in collaboration with the National Museum of History (NMH), National Palace Museum (NPM), Tainan Art Museum (TAM), Fo Guang Shan Buddha Museum of Taiwan, organised the 50th International Conference of ICAMT. The Conference, themed Encountering Transition – Reshaping Museum Architecture, Exhibition Design, and Techniques in Response to Global/Local Changes, offered insights into various aspects of museum architecture, exhibition design, and techniques, highlighting their role in shaping the narrative of cultural institutions in the face of global and local changes.

In the dynamic landscape of the global and local cultural spheres, museums play a pivotal role as repositories of history, culture, and knowledge. As the world undergoes rapid transitions driven by technological advancements, socio-political shifts, and environmental changes, museums must adapt and evolve to remain relevant and effective.

The 50th Annual Conference of ICAMT provided a dynamic space for experts from a variety of traditions to engage in meaningful exchanges. By exploring how museums can adapt to global and local changes, the conference encouraged critical discussions on how architecture and exhibition techniques must evolve to meet contemporary demands.

This gathering also highlighted the significance of sustainable development and cross-cultural perspectives in museum practices, offering an opportunity to reflect on these transitions, exploring how museums can remain agile and responsive to the complex, shifting landscapes of today's world.

The Conference took place from 6 to 10 October, 2024 and was organised as follows: the mornings began with a keynote address by a distinguished international guest; the rest of the mornings were taken up by the presentation of selected papers and subsequent discussion (Q&A) in the National Museum of Prehistory (NMP) Conference Hall in Taitung; during the afternoons of days, the participants spread out across the city, actively participating in the discussions and case study visits organised by different partners. The Conference's closing session took place in the National Palace Museum (NPM) Multimedia Auditorium in Taipei.

The enthusiastic response to the call for papers was submitted for evaluation by a group of experts, allowing for the selection of 45 high-quality presentations by professionals and researchers from 4 continents, organised around the following sub-themes / Sub-theme #1 - Cross-Cultural Museum Architecture 2 – Exhibition Design - tangible, intangible and digital: current tendencies 3 - Museum Techniques & Sustainability. In addition, 3 digital posters were also displayed online.

This annual gathering is truly special, bringing together museum professionals from around the world on the western Pacific coast—Formosa, Taiwan. We are especially fortunate to convene in eastern Taiwan, a land of breathtaking landscapes and deep cultural roots. The NMP stands at a crossroads of time and space, situated beside the Pacific Rim's largest prehistoric slate coffin burial site. This land is also believed to be one of the earliest departure points of the great seafaring Austronesian-speaking population and remains Taiwan's most culturally diverse Indigenous ancestral territory.

Here, at the NMP, we come together across borders and generations, embracing change and reimagining the

possibilities of the future. May this gathering inspire new dialogues, forge lasting connections, and strengthen our shared commitment to preserving and interpreting the many narratives of human history.

**Taiwan Organising Team**



# Acknowledgements

## Acknowledgements

### Nana Meparishvili

Chair of ICOM ICAMT

### Danusa Castro

co-Chair of ICOM ICAMT

As we embark on this intellectual journey, we want to acknowledge the vibrant community that makes events like this possible. ICAMT, with over 700 individual and 25 institutional members worldwide, represents a powerful collective dedicated to advancing knowledge in our field.

We express our deepest gratitude to **Minister Yuan Li**, Ministry of Culture, Republic of China (Taiwan), who generously sponsored this Conference, to **Shih-yu Hung**, the President of the Taiwan Museum Association, ROC, and to **Chang-hua Wang**, ICAMT Board Member and Head of the Taiwan Organising Team who tenaciously enabled our committee to have one of its best Conferences ever.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our esteemed Organiser and Host **Futuru C.L. Tsai**, Director of the National Museum of Prehistory of Taiwan.

Our Co-organisers were extremely important and appreciated, so we express our thanks and gratitude to the National Museum of History and **Tsung-Huang Hsiao**, Director of the National Palace Museum; **Chiu-fang Lin**, Director of the Tainan Art Museum; **Venerable Ru Chang**, Director of the Fo Guang Shan Buddha Museum, for their support and exquisite hospitality.

We also want to acknowledge the city authorities, institutions and museums who graciously opened their doors and supported us: **Ming-feng Chen**, Taitung City Mayor; **Magistrate April Yao**, Taitung County Government; **Shih-yuan Hsieh**, Head of Cultural Affairs Bureau-Tainan City Government, National Taitung University-The Center for Outdoor & Tribal Recreation Education, Tainan City Museum, National Museum of Taiwan Literature, National Taiwan Craft Research and Development Institute-Taipei Branch, Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, Department of Education Cultural and Creative Industries Management of National Taipei University.

We also thank the collaborative partner of our conference Tianyi Management Consulting CO., LTD.

A special Thank You goes to our distinguished keynote speakers – **Paulina Florjanowicz**, **Jou Min Lin AIA** and **Marco De Muttis** whose expertise undoubtedly inspired and enlightened us - and **Chang-hua Wang**, **Sirin Yuanyaidee**, Director of the Golden Jubilee National Museum, Thailand and **Shiro Sasaki**, Executive Director of National Ainu Museum, Japan. Their Roundtable presentations and final discussion enriched our minds and kept us connected till the last minute of our Conference.

We also extend our heartfelt appreciation to all session moderators and participants, whose contributions enriched our understanding of the conference themes. **Chun-wei Fang**, **Cheng-Yi Shih** and **Wei-chun Lai**, thank you for your contribution to the Abstracts Review Team. To our attendees - your engagement and active participation in discussions were vital to the success of this event.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the tireless efforts and kindness of the exceptional Taiwan Organising Team - **Chang-hua Wang**, Head; **Sing-Da Huang**, Project Coordinator; **De-yu Chen**, Project Coordinator; **Cheng-Yi Shih**, Project Coordinator; **Chun-wei Fang**, Executive Coordinator; **Ching-Shuang Hsu**, Project Executor; **Po-kang Hsieh**, Project Executor; **Pi-ling Wen**, Project Executor; **Yu-chen Wen**, Collaborator; **Joe Chang**, Conference Visual Identity Designer. A grateful note to our lovely, attentive guides who supported us during this incredible journey!

Thanks to ICAMT board members - **Eeva Kyllönen**, Secretary; **Alessandra Labate Rosso**, Treasurer; **Marina Martin**, Board Member; **Marzia Loddo**, Board Member; **Maddalena d'Alfonso**, Board Member and **Chang-hua Wang**, Board Member a sincere Thank You for your work and dedication.

Finally, we sincerely thank **ICOM** (International Council of Museums) for its financial support through the annual subsidy for international committees, which contributed to the organization of this conference.

Once again, thank you all for your commitment to ICAMT and the advancement of museum practices! We look forward to our continued collaboration and the exciting possibilities that may lie ahead.

Sincerely and with gratitude,

**Nana Meparishvili**

Chair of ICAMT

**Danusa Castro**

Co-chair of ICAMT

# PROGRAM

# Encountering Transition

Reshaping museum architecture,  
exhibition design and techniques in  
response to global/local changes

# Sunday / October 06

National Museum of Prehistory

Time	Program	Speaker/Presenter
8:30	Registration	
9:00-9:20	Opening Ceremony	
9:20-9:30	Break	
9:30-10:30	<b>Keynote Speech I</b> Transforming from OLD into BETTER OLD and NEW	<b>Jou Min Lin</b> AIA, Principal Architect of J.M. Lin Architect/The Observer Design Group - Taiwan
10:30-10:40	Coffee break	
10:40-12:00	<b>Paper presentations / Session I / Sub-theme #1 / MODERATOR - Marina Martin Barbosa</b> Cross-Cultural MUSEUM ARCHITECTURE	
10:40-10:55	[Re]presenting Philadelphia from the Centennial International Exhibition to Museum-City	<b>Gonca Z. Tuncbilek Dincer</b>
10:55-11:10	Shaping Indigenous Taiwan: Spatial Imagery of Local Museums for Indigenous Peoples in the Early 21 <sup>st</sup> Century	<b>Langus Lavalian (Meng-Ping Chiu)</b>
11:10-11:25	How we work together in China to create museums	<b>Geuntae Park</b>
11:25-11:40	Limitations of Reusing Old Buildings as Museums—the Case of the National Cheng Kung University Museum	<b>Mei-Fang Kuo, Hsiao-Tung “Charlotte” Su</b>
11:40-12:00	Q&A	
12:00-13:30	Lunch	

# Sunday / October 06

## National Museum of Prehistory

Time	Program	Speaker/Presenter
<b>13:30-14:50</b>	<b>Paper presentations / Session II / Sub-theme #1 / MODERATOR - Maddalena d'Alfonso</b>	
13:30-13:45	<i>Silangaw i Katangka</i> : leaf buds of the Autumn Maple Tree "display and the spatial metaphor of "luma'"	<b>Daong Cinceng</b>
13:45-14:00	Showcases and space	<b>Andrea Sartori</b>
14:00-14:15	<b>Online Presentation</b> - Museu do Seridó: um museu invisível	<b>Isaias Ribeiro</b>
14:15-14:30	<b>Online Presentation</b> - Cultural Narratives in Museum Architecture: Exploring Religious Beliefs and Beyond	<b>Yatin Singhal</b>
14:30-14:50	Q&A	
<b>14:50-15:00</b>	<b>Coffee break</b>	
<b>15:00-16:30</b>	<b>National Museum of Prehistory Tour</b> 1. Museum Architecture 2. Taiwan Prehistory Hall 3. Austronesian Hall	
<b>16:30-17:00</b>	<b>Transportation to the Welcome Dinner Venue</b>	
<b>18:00-20:30</b>	<b>The ICAMT 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Welcome Dinner</b>	

# Monday / October 07

## National Museum of Prehistory

Time	Program	Speaker/Presenter
<b>8:30</b>	<b>Registration</b>	
<b>9:00-10:00</b>	<b>Keynote Speech II</b> The Museum Incomplete – For an eternally unfinished museum between physical and online space.	<b>Marco De Mutiis,</b> Digital Curator, Fotomuseum Winterthur - Switzerland
<b>10:00-11:20</b>	<b>Paper presentations / Session III / Sub-theme #2 / MODERATOR – Chang-hua Wang</b> EXHIBITION DESIGN – tangible, intangible and digital: current tendencies	
10:00-10:15	WEIRD SENSATION FEELS GOOD: The Design of a Feeling	<b>James Taylor-Foster</b>
10:15-10:30	Bridging the Digital Gap	<b>Maddalena D’Alfonso</b>
10:30-10:45	Curating the Exhibition Design and Designing the Exhibits’ Curation: Gae Aulenti and the Phoenicians at Palazzo Grassi	<b>Marina Martin Barbosa</b>
10:45-11:00	Non-Visual Perception of Museum Buildings: A Case Study on the Strategy of the Spatial Conceptualization in the Architecture of the National Center for the Performing Arts for the Visually Impaired	<b>Hsin-Yi Chao</b>
11:00-11:20	Q&A	
<b>11:20-11:30</b>	<b>Coffee break</b>	
<b>11:30-12:50</b>	<b>Paper presentations / Session IV / Sub-theme #2 / MODERATOR – Nana Meparishvili</b> EXHIBITION DESIGN – tangible, intangible and digital: current tendencies	
11:30-11:45	Art as Paratext: How Art Transmits Museum Narrative and Rewrites the Space	<b>Cheng-Yi Shih</b>
11:45-12:00	Thick Description Experiment of Confronting Difficult Histories: A Curatorial Experience at a Taiwan Indigenous Peoples Local Cultural Museum	<b>Po-Kang Hsieh</b>
12:00-12:15	Open Storage! A New Paradigm of Museums and Exhibitions	<b>Miok Cindy Choi</b>
12:15-12:30	Museu.xyz: Bridging Tangible, Intangible, and Digital Realms in Exhibition Design	<b>Caroline Pires Ting</b>
12:30-12:50	Q&A	
<b>12:50-14:00</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	



# Monday / October 07

## National Museum of Prehistory

Time	Program	Speaker/Presenter
<b>14:00-14:30</b>	<b>Ignite Talks / Session I / Sub-themes #1 and #2 / MODERATOR - Chun-wei Fang</b>	
14:00-14:05	The museum architecture in Old Taipei, in a perspective of modernity	<b>Szu Wei Lee</b>
14:05-14:10	The Development and Transformation in Building Form of the Museums in Taiwan	<b>Mei-Fang Kuo</b>
14:10-14:15	Let's Enjoy Art and Have Fun: A New Approach to Creative Interaction & Accessibility in Art Museum	<b>Hsinchun Chen, Chia-Li Chen</b>
14:15-14:20	Museum Actions for Animal Conservation: Constructing the Exhibition Framework for Advocacy	<b>Wen-Qian Lee, Hsu Huang</b>
14:20-14:25	Beyond Barriers: Exploring Inclusive Exhibition Design and Collaborative Narratives	<b>Chia-Yi Lin</b>
<b>14:30-17:30</b>	<b>Off-site Meetings in Taitung</b> 1. Tour of Catholic Churches in Taitung Built by Societas Missionaria de Bethlehem 2. Cultural Experience in the Paiwan Sapulju Community in Southern Taitung 3. Tour of Historical Streets on the Taitung Plain	

## Tuesday / October 08

### National Museum of Prehistory

Time	Program	Speaker/Presenter
8:30	<b>Registration</b>	
9:00-10:00	<b>Keynote Speech III</b> PANOPTIKUM – a competence center for museums. Sustainable solution to museum challenges	<b>Paulina Florjanowicz, Ph.D.</b> Director General, National Institute for Museums. Archaeologist, expert in cultural heritage management
10:00-11:20	<b>Paper presentations / Session V, Sub-theme #2 / MODERATOR – Futuru C.L. Tsai</b>  EXHIBITION DESIGN – tangible, intangible and digital: current tendencies	
10:00-10:15	How to Display Outsider Art in a Contemporary Way	<b>Peter Stohler</b>
10:15-10:30	Steven Holl's Concept of Parallax as A Tool for Motivating the Visitors' Movement, A Space Syntax Analysis of the Kiasma Museum, Helsinki	<b>Majed Awadh Alghaemdi</b>
10:30-10:45	Where to go when everything became ashes? An analysis of the audience-targeted activities during the reconstruction of cultural institutions and cultural heritage sites after a destructive fire	<b>Nicolle Manuelle Bahia Bittencourt</b>
10:45-11:00	Cross-Domain Curatorial Dialogue and Interaction, and the Integration of Multiculturalism: A Case Study of Digital Interactive Exhibitions in Multi-Museum Collaboration	<b>Ruen-Ya Yu, Shao-Chun Wu</b>
11:00-11:20	Q&A	
11:20-11:30	<b>Tea break</b>	
11:30-12:00	<b>Ignite Talks / Session II / MODERATOR - Sing-Da Huang</b>	
11:30-11:35	Multilayered Exhibition Strategy	<b>Ming-Ying Tsai</b>
11:35-11:40	Designing Curiosity: Beyond Aesthetics in Exhibition Space	<b>Sebastian Chun</b>
11:40-11:45	Others' Past, Our Belief: Chinese Prehistoric Collections in The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm	<b>Jiayi Chang</b>
11:45-11:50	Uncovering Indigenous Labour History - A Case Study of the Exhibition People of the Sea: Amis/Pangcah Indigenous High Seas Fishermen	<b>Yi-Chun Lu</b>
11:50-11:55	From digital platform to dialogic space - unfolding the hidden story of the displaced object	<b>Mingshi Cui</b>
11:55-12:00	Representing the Sacred in Museum Spaces: Through Digital Technology and Social Engagement	<b>Yu-Chun Kao</b>

## Tuesday / October 08

National Museum of Prehistory

Time	Program	Speaker/Presenter
12:00-13:00	Lunch	
13:00-14:20	<b>Paper presentations / Session VI, Sub-Theme #3 / MODERATOR - Danusa Castro</b> MUSEUM TECHNIQUES & Sustainability	
13:00-13:15	Sustainable Futures: Innovations in Museum Techniques, perspective of Asia and Europe	Jingyuan Ling
13:15-13:30	Landscapes on display	Cecilie Rørstad, Audhild Gregoriusdotter Rotevatn
13:30-13:45	Urban Waste Rethink: Museum, the Community, and Environmental Agency	Yasaman Esmaili, Kimia Amini
13:45-14:00	<b>Online Presentation</b> - "Navigating with the climate issues in different cultural fields" or equivalent	Teemu Kirjonen
14:00-14:20	Q&A	
14:20	Transportation to Kaohsiung City	

# Thursday / October 10

National Palace Museum

Time	Program	Speaker/Presenter
<b>13:50-14:00</b>	<b>Registration</b>	
<b>14:00-14:20</b>	<b>Ignite Talks / Session III / MODERATOR – Wei-chun Lai</b>	
14:00-14:05	From Flat Images to Immersive Experiences in Virtual Space: The Online Exhibition Practices of 2D, 3D and 360-degree Narratives on Google Arts and Culture	<b>Yi-Fan Tseng</b>
14:05-14:10	The Interdisciplinary Narrative Approach in an International Curatorial Project: Formosa Orchids Blossom	<b>Yian Chen</b>
14:10-14:15	Religious Sites and the Sense of Place: A Study of Ba-Kou Worship in Tai'an Township, Miaoli	<b>Chih-Wen Lan</b>
14:15-14:20	Curatorial Advocacy for the Historical Space of Kikumoto Department Store	<b>Deng Teng Leon Shih, Jen-Hao Chang</b>
<b>14:20-14:30</b>	<b>Break</b>	
<b>14:30-14:55</b>	<b>Ignite Talks / Session IV / MODERATOR –Cheng-yi Shih</b>	
14:35-14:40	Recycled Places: The Journey of the Museum of Reclaimed Urban Space from Squat to Museum	<b>Sooah Kwak</b>
14:40-14:45	An Exploration of Mobile Museums in China: Innovations in Exhibition Practices	<b>Chih Ju Yang</b>
14:45-14:50	Mobile Bamboo Panels, On-site Objects and Local Stories: the Taiwan Multi-ethnic Cultural Route's Collaborative Exhibition Strategies and Techniques.	<b>Po-Sheng Kuo, Hsiao-Ping Chuang</b>
14:50-14:55	Carlo Scarpa: the life of a display case	<b>Alba Di Lieto</b>
<b>14:45-15:15</b>	<b>Break</b>	

# Thursday / October 10

National Palace Museum

Time	Program
15:20-16:20	<p><b>ROUNDTABLE</b></p> <p>"Museum Architecture and Technique for Better Lives: Humanity, Technology, and Sustainability"</p> <p><b>MODERATOR: Futuru C.L. Tsai</b> Director of the National Museum of Prehistory, Taiwan</p> <p><b>Keynote Speakers:</b></p> <p><b>Chang-hua Wang</b> Board member of ICOM-ICAMT/ The former Director of the National Museum of History, Taiwan</p> <p><b>Shiro Sasaki</b> National Ainu Museum, Japan</p> <p><b>Sirin Yuanyaidee</b> Director of Kanjanaphisek National Museum, Thailand</p>
16:20-16:50	<b>Closing Ceremony - "ICAMT 50 TAIWAN Collective Discourses"</b>
16:50	<b>Group photo / end of the Conference scientific program</b>

# KEYNOTE SPEECHES

JOU MIN LIN

MARCO DE MUTIIS

PAULINA FLORJANOWICZ

# Transforming from OLD into BETTER OLD and NEW

Jou Min Lin AIA

AIA, Principal Architect of J.M. Lin Architect/The Observer Design Group

Taiwan

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## Abstract

Jou Min Lin's office has transformed several existing historical buildings into functional cultural intuitions in the past twenty years and will continue to do so. The speech will address how architects should consider "People's Eco-Museum" when designing museums from users' perspectives.

## Keywords:

The National Museum of Marine Science and Technology, 2004-2014

National Taiwan Museum, 2003-2006

National Taiwan Museum Land Bank Branch, 2006-2009

## CULTURAL EVOLUTION NATIONAL TAIWAN MUSEUM 2003-2006

Established in Taipei in 1920, the prestigious National Taiwan Museum depicts nature and the land through the knowledge of anthropology, geology, zoology, and botany. For decades, the museum has served as a medium for cultural communication and education with its devoted academic research and ample collections. Due to the limited exhibition space and unorganized open areas in the park, this project is a renovation of the museum's interior and the open areas in the 228 memorial park.

We retrofitted the museum with a touch of simplicity by removing the obtrusive objects in the plaza and laying on new paving, creating a visually and physically accessible area for passengers, visitors, or families seeking a pleasant afternoon in the park. We then emancipated the exhibits from the traditional ways of displaying the historical relics to give the people a visual and transverse obstruction-free plaza.

As for the museum building itself, we extended the rear side into the park, creating an outdoor cafe that embraces the park to engender a new-found space. This cafe not only serves as a recreation spot but lightens up the atmosphere of the museum and provides another entrance. This establishes an important fact that the museum is as much a kingdom of wisdom to its visitors as it is a leisure time choice for people in the park.

The re-construction was completed in April, 2005. The National Taiwan Museum added another excitement to the pleasure of both visitors and the whole community. It also achieved a balance between preserving the old and upgrading the urban infrastructure in Taipei. Entering through the grand and welcoming gate, visitors will find themselves in this vast plaza with 3600 panoramas. Looking around, they will learn a moment in history from the ancient tablets within the organized exhibit stands, accompanied by comfortable stone chairs to rest, and have the opportunity to participate in activities of the museum and the park. The accessibility of the plaza allows visitors to observe the museum, the main character of the park, from all angles, which brings out the best features and gracefulness of the architecture, standing proud in this new era. The museum now, with the plaza as a supportive sidekick, will still stand to amaze for generations to come.

After removing the ceiling of the second-floor corridor to produce a void, the enclosed space suddenly transforms into a spacious dimension without pressure. The visual extensivity allows visitors of the second and third floors to interact, thus improving the spatial layering and playfulness. The original intent of inserting the voids in the loft space was to increase the interaction and diversity of the exhibition circulation and to provide the visitors with

fresh perspectives and thinking. However, the unexpected reward we have obtained is that the natural light not only lightens the interior and brings vitality into the once obscured space but also opens up and reveals the magnificent trusses. Thus, one can savour the sophisticated aesthetic architectural structures.

The enclosed existing classrooms on the 3rd floor are removed and two exhibition rooms are added to improve the spatial quality.

The principal idea engaged under the restricted structural layout of the historical existing structure was to provide the most visual impact to the spectators. As for the visitor centre and the ticket room beside the first-floor lobby, by taking advantage of an existing high ceiling, the mechanical installations are installed with little visual loss of the height of the space. Furthermore, the simplicity beyond the use of the horizontal extension of the shelves and the joint lines presents the high-serene interior space that matches the nature of a majestic and dignified museum experience.

1. Gift Shop: Through the frameless display box, the merchandise becomes an exhibition.
2. Restroom: The simple division of horizontal and vertical lines expresses the majesty and grandness of the museum space.
3. Service Center: The open and luminous ticketing and information centre contrasts with the existing inadequately small counters. Project Name: National Taiwan Museum

Project Location: 2, Xiangyang Road, Taipei, Taiwan R.O.C.  
 1<sup>st</sup> period of design: 2003/07/15~2003/08/08/05  
 1<sup>st</sup> period of construction: 2003/09/01~2003/10/24  
 2<sup>nd</sup> period of design: 2003/11/21~2004/01/13  
 2<sup>nd</sup>\* period of construction: 2004/02/20~2004/06/07  
 3<sup>rd</sup> period of design: 2004/08/16~2004/09/16  
 3<sup>rd</sup> period of construction: 2004/09/29~2005/04/07  
 Building Area: 1685m  
 Total Floor Area: 4892m

## National Taiwan Museum Taiwan Land Bank Branch 2006-2009

To rise from the long-time predicament of insufficient exhibition room, with the assistance of Council of Cultural Affairs in Taiwan, National Taiwan Museum has sought its wings across street. The perfect extension base is Taiwan Land Bank, a historic modern Greek architecture built in the period of Japanese Colony; for the past two years, this very place has undergone evolution into a modern exhibition space to accommodate and display fossils of creatures before mankind. National Taiwan Museum, Taiwan Land Bank branch and other facilities in the vicinity will together establish a Museum Complex in the heart of



the capital, presenting to the public the best knowledge and education platform Taiwan has to offer.

Established in Taipei in 1920, the prestigious National Taiwan Museum depicts nature and the land through the knowledge of anthropology, geology, zoology, and botany. Through decades, the museum has served as a medium for cultural communication and education with its devoted academic research and ample collections.

The major challenge in this project is to insert modern design into the limited structural layout of the existing building; the principal idea under the premise is carried out in efforts to preserve the nature of the architecture while embellishing its inner beauty and enhancing the spatial flexibility. The elevated grand lobby of the former bank is the optimal choice for the main exhibition hall, a rectangular space of 40 meters in length, 15 meters in width and 10 meters in height.

We created a U-shaped layout and circulation in an independent platform detached from the existing elevation, with huge exhibition objects standing tall in the center; around the space is a gradually ascending pathway to the existing second floor, accompanied by informative display boards. The pathway and the center are partitioned by light wooden fences, loosely arranged to enhance spatial visibility and variety throughout the viewing experience.

The context of the architecture is carefully preserved and blended into the openly designed objects and display boards, fabricating time layers of ancient and past and a subtle collaboration of old and new. Architecture itself is also an attraction that wows the spectators.

#### "History Reviewed and Renewed"

While on space we innovate, on history we preserve, such efforts can be found everywhere in the space, equipments, and facilities within. The private-run cafe is set on the second floor at the end and viewing pathway; the dinosaurs will remain in sight through glass partition and the impact will linger on minds. The original steel fences are preserved and serve as a moderate partition to separate the exhibition and rest areas.

The storage and vault spaces in the bank are planned to be future exhibition areas. For now, we have removed parts of the existing floor in the space and installed a glass stairway to connect the two existing floors. The original walls and machines are partially preserved and decorated into objects of public display, as we believe the rearrangement of those will bring impact to the space with energy from the past.

Transforming a bank building into a museum space requires fundamental changes in the utilities and infrastructure settings. To sustain the architecture with

minimal structural modification, we moved the supporting network outside the building. By wrapping the equipment in wooden surfaces, an instant outdoor terrace is erected for visitors to get fresh air between intensive downloads of knowledge and information.

We were also required to design office spaces for museum personnel, and designing office areas for authorized personnel is also carried out under the principle of creating and preserving. The original brick wall partitions the briefing room/auditorium, and an ambient atmosphere is created by slight remodelling.

#### "The Power to Move Forward"

The renovation of the Taiwan Land Bank has set a benchmark for the future development of the National Taiwan Museum Complex. The Taiwan Land Bank will stand as a piece of historical architecture reborn in the new era.

National Taiwan Museum Taiwan Land Bank Branch  
2006-2009

Resign Period:2006. Interior Resign:2007.1~10

Exhibition Resign:2008.2~11

construction Period:2009.12 2009.1~12

Building Area:1300 sqm.

Total Floor Area:1900 sqm.

# 台灣博物館 土地銀行分館

National Taiwan Museum

Taiwan Land Bank Branch 2006–2009

location Taipei, Taiwan  
completed 2009.12  
building area 1300 sqm  
total floor area 1900 sqm

Established in Taipei since 1920, the prestigious National Taiwan Museum depicts nature and the land in the knowledge of anthropology, geology, zoology and botany. Through decades, the museum has served as a medium for cultural communication and education with its devoted academic research and ample collections.



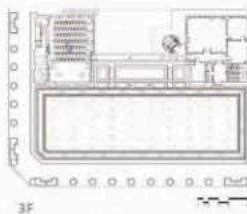
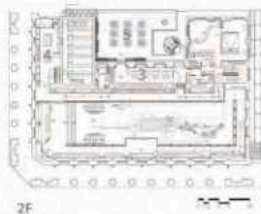
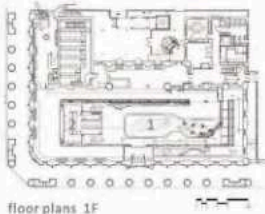
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the site in 1950s



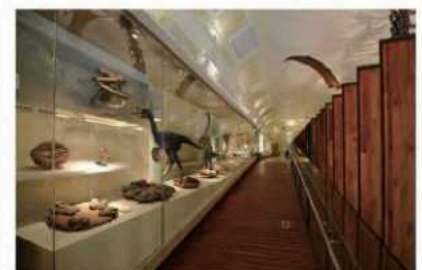
the site before renovation



- 1 exhibition hall
- 2 information center
- 3 indoor cafe
- 4 gift shop
- 5 outdoor leisure area
- 6 auditorium
- 7 meeting room



display wall



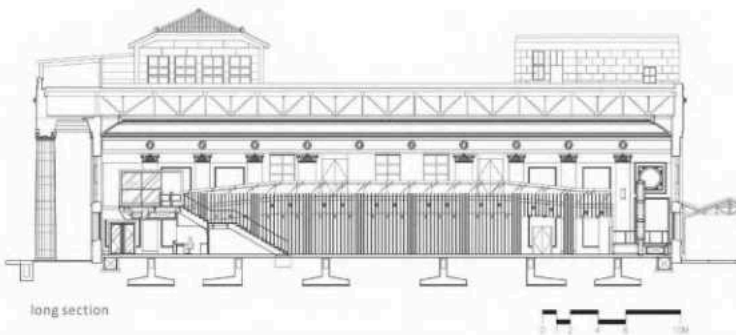
pathway to the second floor



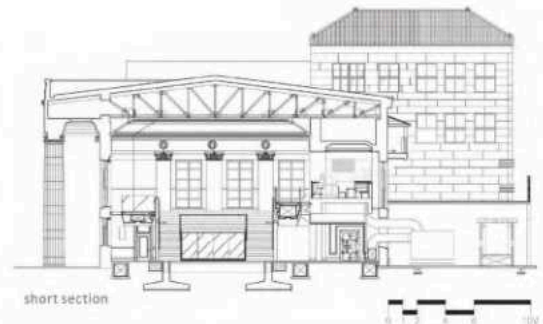


exhibition on the second floor

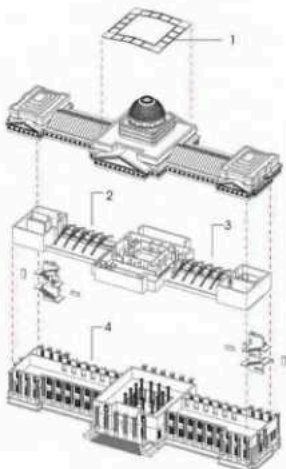
The context of the architecture is carefully preserved and blended into the openly designed objects and display boards, to fabricate time layers of ancient and past and a subtle collaboration of old and new. Architecture itself is also an attraction to wow the spectators.



long section



short section



1. Natural light at the central area
2. 3F Mezzanine exhibition
3. 3F Mezzanine educational area
4. Natural light

We decorated the museum with a touch of simplicity by taking away the obtrusive objects in the plaza and laid on a new paving, creating a visually and physically accessible area for passengers, visitors or families seeking a pleasant afternoon in the park. We had then emancipated the exhibits from the traditional ways of displaying the historical relics to give the people a visually and traverse obstruction-free plaza back.

As for the museum building itself, we extended the rear side into the park creating an outdoor café that embraces the park to engender a new-found space. This café not only serves as a recreation spot, but lightens up the atmosphere of the museum and provides another entrance. This establishes an important fact that museum is as much a kingdom of wisdom to its visitors as it is a leisure time choice to people in the park.







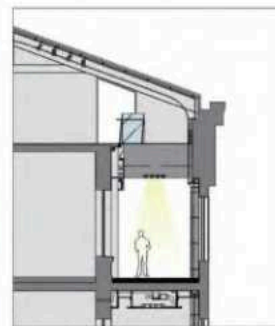
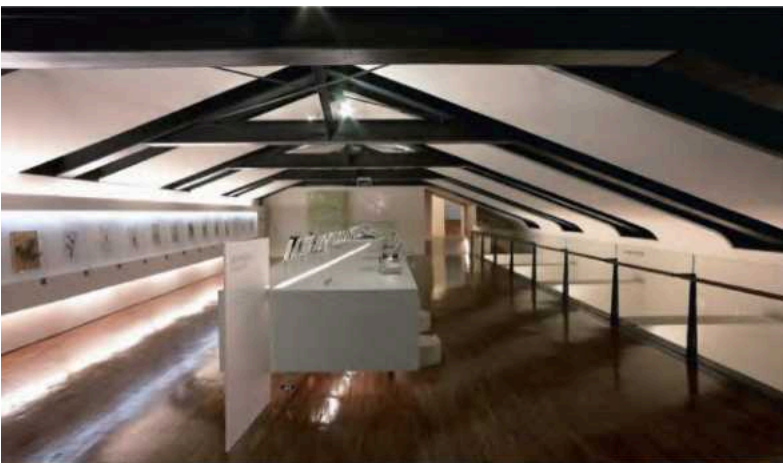
Original 3F corridor



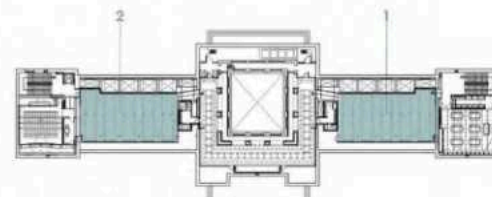
3F Corridor during construction



The original intent of inserting the voids in the left space was to increase the interaction and diversity of the exhibition circulation, and to provide the visitors with fresh perspectives and thinking. However the unexpected reward we have obtain is that the natural lights not only lightens the interior and brings vitality into the once obscured space but also opens up and reveals the magnificent trusses. Thus one can savor the sophisticated aesthetic architectural structures.



corridor section



3rd floor plan

1. 3rd floor west wing exhibition room
2. 3rd floor east wing exhibition room

The enclosed existing classrooms on the 3rd floor are removed and two exhibition rooms are added to improve the spatial quality.

## The National Museum of Marine Science & Technology 2004-2012

### The People's Eco-Museum Complex

This is a place truly made accessible to a diverse audience and deeply attached to people's lives in learning and delight. It is the interests of the general public and the interactions of the museum visitors and local residents.

The Museum Complex is located in northern Taiwan, in Keelung City. The area covers 49 hectares and includes a core museum, the National Museum of Marine Science & Technology, and a 300-seat IMAX Theater; satellite exhibition centers, which include the Regional Exploration Building and the National Aquarium; the seashore biking trail; and highland parks. Above all, it comprises an eco-museum network for the community.

### The History of Keelung and the Northern Power Plant - The Predecessor of the Museum Complex

The City of Keelung is one of the major ports in northeastern Taiwan; it is the second largest seaport after Kaohsiung. Its first contact with the West was back in the 17th century when the Spanish came and built a fort as an outpost of its Manila-based colony, which was then followed by the Dutch's control. The name Keelung was derived from its association with the rooster cage (pronounced Kee-Lung in Mandarin) shaped local mountains, or some said it was related to the name of the first inhabitants, Katagalan. With more than 200 rainy days per year, it also bears the nickname "Rainy Port," contributing to its humid and subtropical climate.

The Northern Power Plant was located in the northeastern suburb of Keelung City, between the fishing ports of Badouzi and Changtan Village. The construction of the power plant stated its engineering significance in the history of modernization in Taiwan; the Northern Power Plant was the newest and largest back in the 1930s and was also the first to use seawater as cooling water. The original site was a waterway linking the Island of Taiwan and the Island of Badouzi; however, after the reclamation to construct the power plant, the isolated island of Badouzi became a peninsula. In 1937, it was primarily built by the Japanese people, and after sixteen years, it was expanded by the Taiwanese and continued its destiny for another 30 years of service. In 1997, it became the property of the Ministry of Education for the construction of the National Museum of Marine Science and Technology.

### The Site of the NMMST Before Renovation

The Northern Power Plant was located in the northeastern suburb of Keelung City, between the fishing ports of Badouzi and Changtan Village. In 1937, it was primarily built by the Japanese people, and after sixteen years, it was expanded by the Taiwanese and continued its destiny for another 30 years of service. Moreover, in 1997, it

became the property of the Ministry of Education for the construction of the National Museum of Marine Science and Technology.

### Main Exhibition Area

The National Museum of Marine Science and Technology is an architecture transformed and expanded from two abandoned fire power plants, one built by the Japanese in the 1930s and the other by the Taiwanese in the 1950s.

### The Community

In the small fishing town, the architecture quietly slotted into the village skyline with its unique appearance, like a rock sitting steadily at the harbor that is not easily washed away.

### The Ship Sails On

East elevation, view from the Changtan Village Fishing Port. The port is famous for its squid harvest. At night, the boats are lit to attract squid. The architecture leads the cruise and humbly blends with the surroundings.

### Reservation of the Old - Coal Scuttle

The coal scuttle was used to load the coal before transforming it into energy. The giant black boxes hanging down from the ceiling create a playful space in the marine science museum as if representing the complementary of fire (the burning coal) and water (the marine scene).

### Reservation of the Old - Mass Concrete

The mass concrete retained in front of Building A was the original structure made by the Japanese Construction Company Shimizu Corporation (founded in 1804) in the 1930s. The contrast between the old and the new is evident, which gives various expressions on the architectural representation and enriches its architectural vocabulary.

### Renovation of the Old Power Plant

In order to bring more natural light to the entrance lobby, the architect adopted the original window scale to insert glass curtain walls.

The dark brown perforated aluminium panels highlight the museum's historic building image, which was also proportional to the original window scale.

### Construction and recovery of the RC walls

Reserved the RC structure of the old Northern Fire Plant, removed the original walls, and then implemented the reinforcement of the columns and beams.

Nine different types of depth create various projections from the wall to form an uneven surface for the effect of presenting the rough presence of the coal.

### Museum Port

The extensive "Museum Port" is a 200m long platform that spans to guide and facilitate the crowds in and out of the exhibition halls.

### Community Transform

The neighbourhood is a fishing town and mostly residential area. The ageing and declining city urgently required refurbishment of the existing facilities, parking space, cable design, and the exterior of the old buildings.

It was imperative that every change we made would make the city a better place to live in and that the local people know how to benefit from the changes we would together make possible.

### Mutual Efforts

In the past eight years, every step of the design progress has undergone countless discussions and public hearings with the local residents. Based on mutual efforts between the design team and the community, Batoutuz has been gradually changing its landscape to a more attractive and delightful harbor city.

### Exploring the Life at Badouzi

The third floor of the Regional Exploration Building is an exhibition that displays the local fishery culture, a collection of traditional fishing tackle and the village people in Badouzi.

The exhibition simulates the everyday activities at the Badouzi harbour by using real-size models and digital media.

Before entering the exhibition hall, there is a view window facing toward the Keelung Islet in the north. From the window you can see the ships unloading fish and adding supplies at the port. The entrance floor design is a huge map of the NMMST Area and Keelung City.

The museum complex comprises the National Museum of Marine Science & Technology, a 300-seat IMAX Theater, the Regional Exploration Building, the National Aquarium, a seashore biking trail and highland parks.

### Project Data

Phase One: The Museum of Marine Science and Technology

Construction Costs: USD 79.5 M

Site Area: 55,188 m<sup>2</sup>

Building Area: 17,052 m<sup>2</sup>

GFA: 58,363 m<sup>2</sup>

Completion: 12/2012

Location: Keelung, Taiwan

Original Power Plant Existence: Since 1930

Conversion and Expansion: 2004-2012

Phase Two: Regional Exploration Center

Construction Costs: USD 6.6 M

Site Area: 13,238 m<sup>2</sup>

Building Area: 4,240 m<sup>2</sup>

GFA: 6,267 m<sup>2</sup>

Completion: 12/2012

Location: Keelung, Taiwan

Project Year: 2008-2012

### BIOGRAPHY

**Jou Min Lin AIA** is the principal architect of J.M. Lin Architect / The Observer Design Group, which he founded in Taipei in 1995. His firm specializes in architectural, interior, and research-based design.

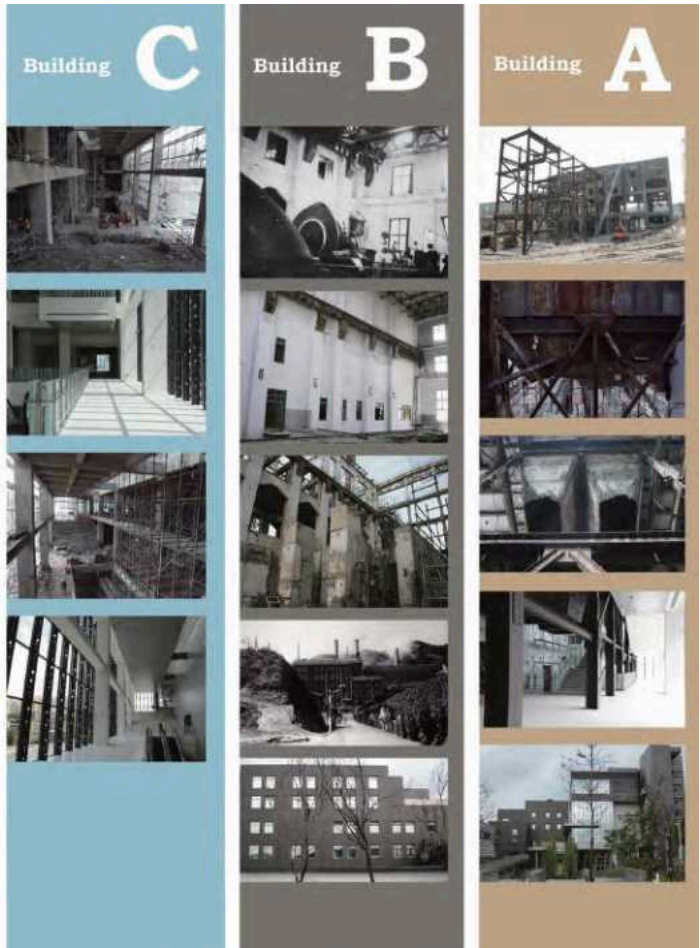
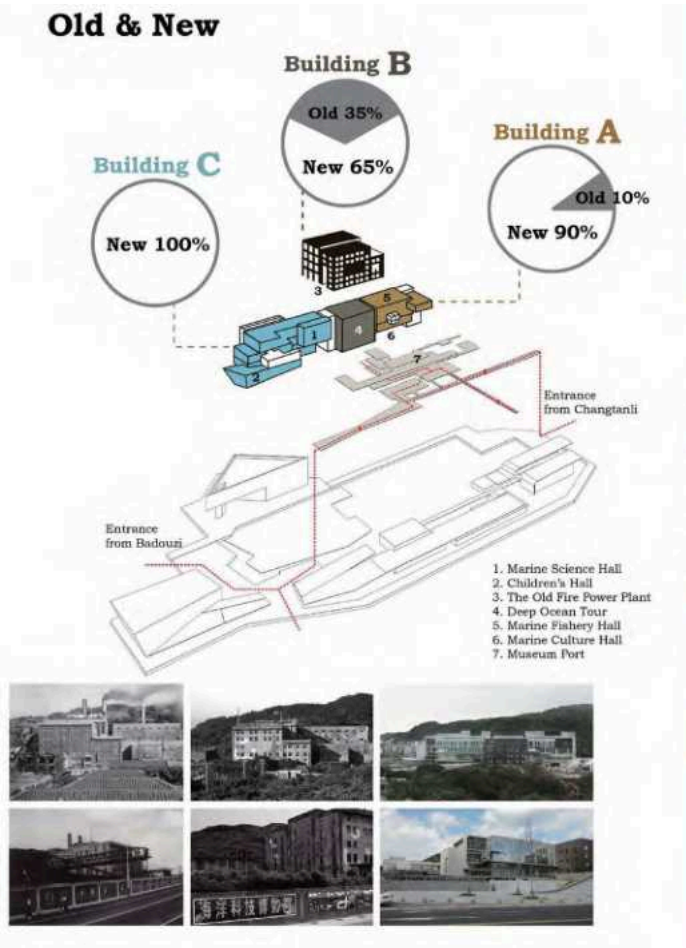
Lin is known for transforming historical buildings into functional cultural institutions.

His notable projects include schools, exhibit spaces, and cultural facilities, with the Keelung National Museum of Marine Science and Technology being a standout.

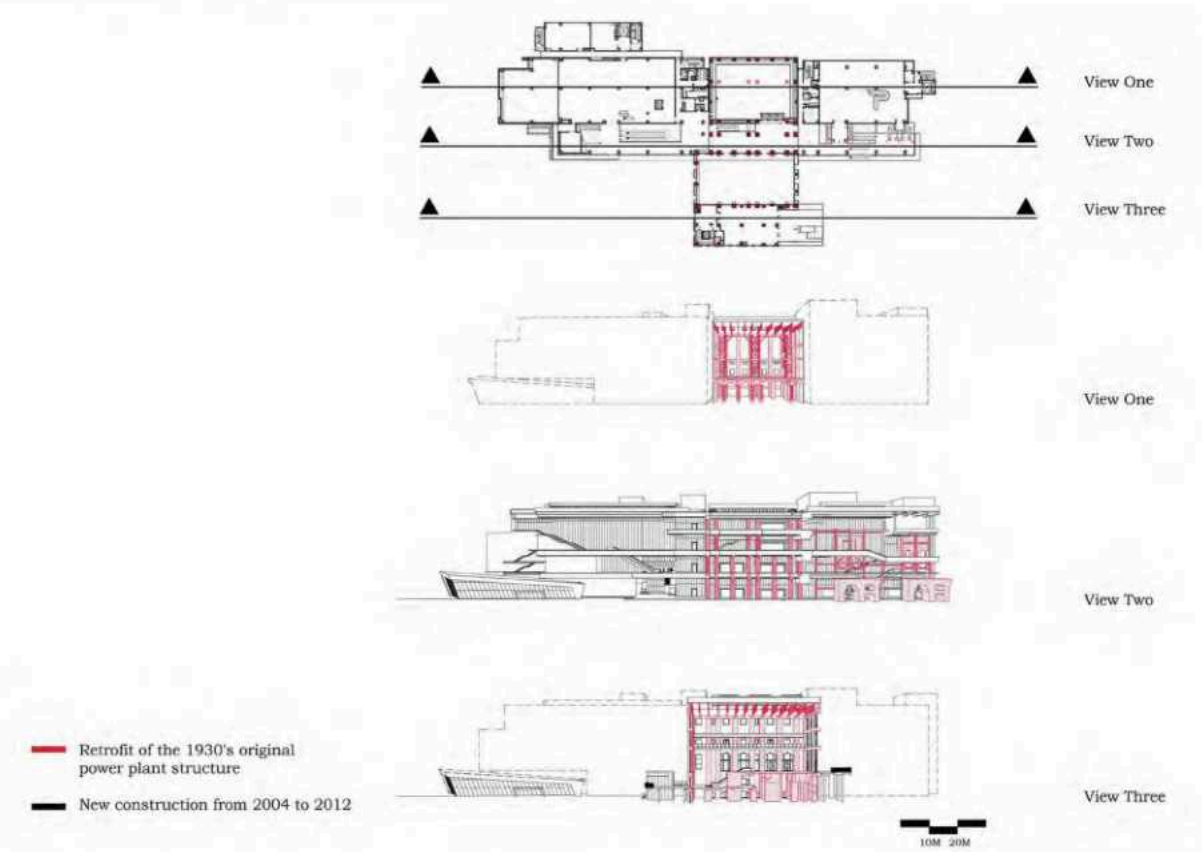
From 2014 to 2018, he served as Commissioner of the Department of Urban Development in Taipei. Since 2018, he has returned to his practice, focusing on creating lasting value in architecture.





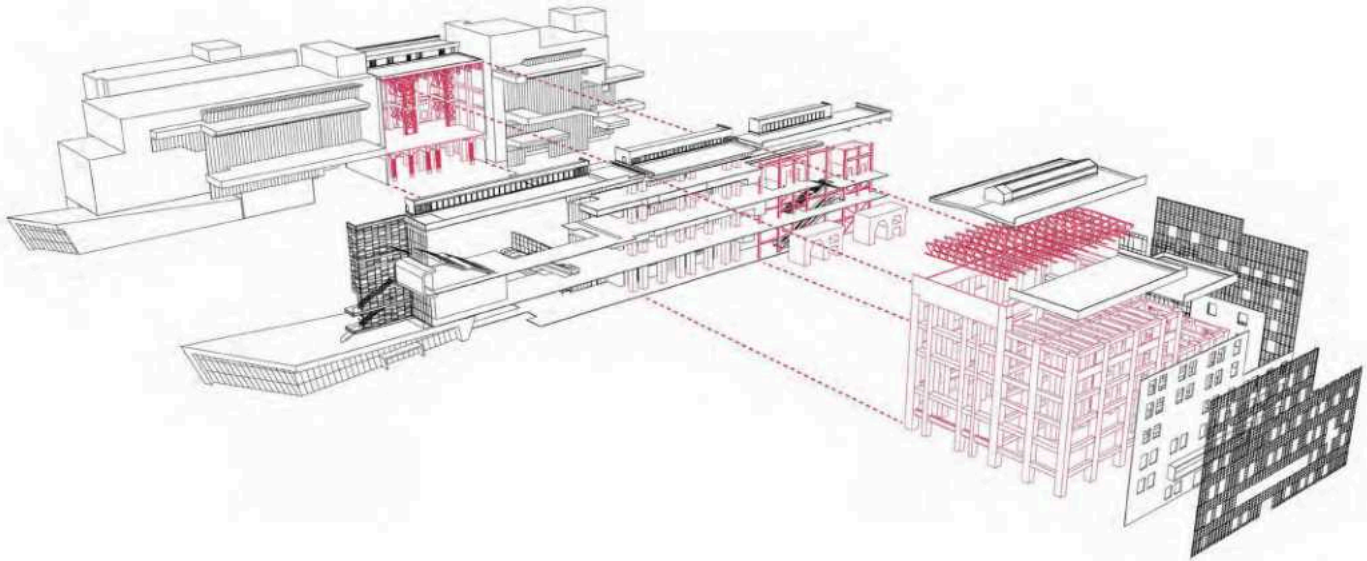


**Longitudinal Section of the NMMST**

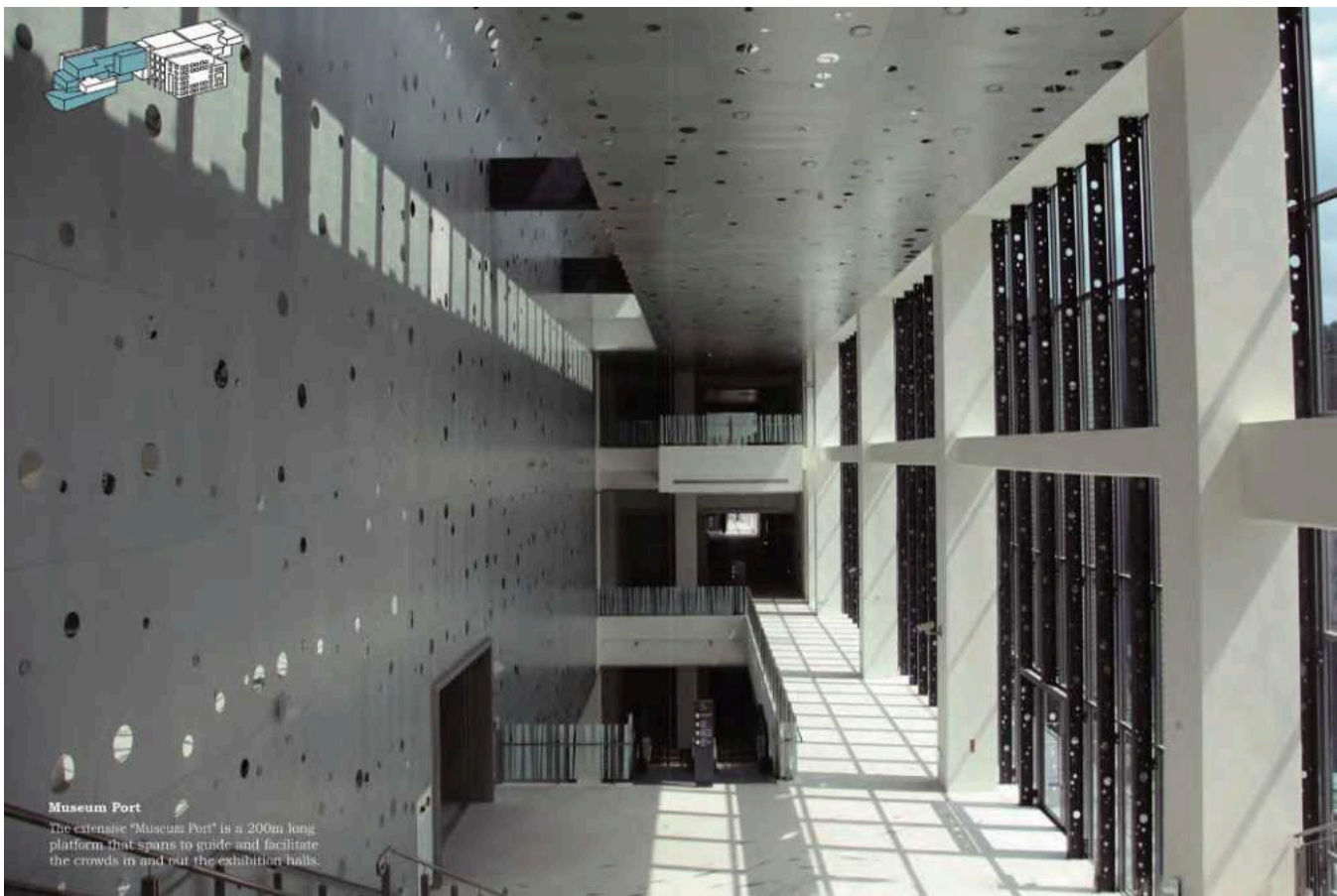




## Isometric Drawing of the NMMST Museum Port



- Retrofit of the 1930's original power plant structure
- New construction from 2004 to 2012



### Museum Port

The extensive "Museum Port" is a 200m long platform that spans to guide and facilitate the crowds in and out the exhibition halls.

# The Museum Incomplete – For An Eternally Unfinished Museum Between Physical And Online Space

Marco De Mutiis

Digital Curator, Fotomuseum Winterthur

Switzerland

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## Abstract

Museums are often understood as stable and fixed spaces, as neat physical boxes where arts and culture is organised, shown and guarded. Collections, archives and exhibitions have traditionally privileged the physical space and largely focused on ideas of art and culture made of objects. On the other hand, the promises of digital and online spaces have largely remained understood through an institutional discourse that separates physical and virtual space between different fields of the museum. If digitality and internet presence have become an almost compulsory asset for communication and marketing departments within the institution, curatorial processes or exhibition and collection strategies seem to remain anchored to outdated modes of understanding the museum space and forms of art and culture that particularly challenge the museum “white cube”.

This talk will propose alternative forms of understanding online platforms and digital media as both spaces and practices – with specific properties and affordances – where the museum can extend its role and enhance its relevance. Looking at different examples and case studies, the presentation will highlight possible forms in which we can rethink the idea of museum. Moving from a stable place with rigid boundaries towards an ever-evolving hybrid place, the talk will invite the audience to consider the museum as an eternally incomplete and perpetually unfolding space.

**Keywords:** Digital, internet, space, incomplete, process

*In this talk I will propose alternative forms of understanding online platforms and digital media as both spaces and practices – with specific properties and affordances – where the museum can extend its role and enhance its relevance. I will offer an insight in the experiments I have carried out at Fotomuseum Winterthur over the last years, showing how we as an institution have played with digital formats and virtual spaces that simultaneously challenge the traditional idea of museum space and offer possibilities to create and reclaim cultural platforms outside of physical exhibitions. Moving from a stable place with rigid boundaries towards an ever-evolving hybrid space, the talk will invite the audience to consider the possibilities and values of “incompletion” within the museum.*

When I first joined Fotomuseum Winterthur in 2015, I was reminded how the European tradition of art collections and museums is based on spaces of control. Not just how the museum space disciplines the body in a Foucaultian sense - using spatial arrangements to shape viewers, control the gaze and the experience of the art – but also through the systems that allow institutions to collect, catalogue and preserve art and culture. If the experience of so-called “white cube” spaces was something I could already reflect upon in my role as museum visitor, it was my experience as “museum worker” that showed me the fixed perimeters and the tight parameters through which artworks are allowed to enter the institution. Exhibitions and collections rely on forms, databases, reports and contracts that regulate knowledge. On one side, these systems make sure that important aspects like title, provenance, materials, condition, dates and size are recorded. On the other hand these data fields shape the definition of what art is, of what culture can and cannot be; it produces the forms in which knowledge can be valued, and how it can be experienced. And while these systems have seen technical transformations that have revolutionised the process of organising artworks and collections – through digitization processes, collection management tools and online presentations – the logic behind museums remain largely attached to an idea of stable and fixed physical spaces, filled with art and culture that is essentially made of objects. Finite things with clear boundaries. Small boxes inside bigger boxes. clear boundaries. Small boxes inside bigger boxes.

## UNFINISHED CULTURE AND INCOMPLETE ART

Joining Fotomuseum Winterthur with the title of Digital Curator made my encounter with this system of disciplining

knowledge all the more puzzling. One of my tasks in the institution is to deal with the forms in which photography has been transformed through digital and networked technologies. From photorealistic computer graphics to current generative AI systems, from augmented reality face filters to smartphone photography and social media, in the last three decades the photographic medium has been expanding its forms becoming both ubiquitous as well as blurring traditional boundaries and definitions. This includes image practices that are not necessarily bound to be materialised through print and pressed behind frames, works that might not be meant to be converted into objects and stabilised through inventory systems, white cube exhibitions and collection storages. Artist Amalia Ulman’s 2014 work *Excellences & Perfections* might serve as a prime example of this friction. The artist used her Instagram and Facebook profiles to conduct a scripted online performance, undergoing an extreme, semi-fictionalized makeover. Through the images unfolding on her online accounts, Ulman created a work that parodied Instagram aesthetics and the consumerist fantasy lifestyle that is a fundamental part of the visual culture around social media of the time. Curator Michael Connor from Rhizome reminds us that “for many privileged users, social media is a way of selling one’s lifestyle, of building one’s brand. And Ulman went to great lengths to replicate the narrative conventions of these privileged feeds, from her use of captions and hashtags (#simple, #cutegasm), to the pace and timing of uploads, to the discerning inclusion of ‘authentic’ intimate or emotional content (a photo of a lover or a moment of despair).” (Connor, 2014) Ulman’s work uses the online platform of social media both as a space for publishing and circulation, as well as the cultural context on which to reflect. In other words, the platform provides not only a space for the work, but the cultural context. On top of the images, the comment function for each post allows users to react – including a participatory dimension to the work and incorporating external voices within the artwork. The performative nature of the project, its participatory aspect, and the online visual culture it reflects upon are all challenges to the systems that regulate the display and collection of knowledge in museums. It’s not surprising that most institutions that showed Ulman’s project relied on printed screenshots, sometimes next to iPads showing the social media accounts. The ever evolving properties of digital and networked spaces clash with those of physical exhibitions and collections, to the point where Ulman’s work needs to be converted into individual material objects, stabilised through fixed dimensions, but also through system of artificial scarcity that connect with



systems of value in the art market. A quick search on the art marketplace Artsy brings up a 2016 C-print of a screenshot from the online project, with dimensions 20.21 x 32.5 cm, in an edition of 20.

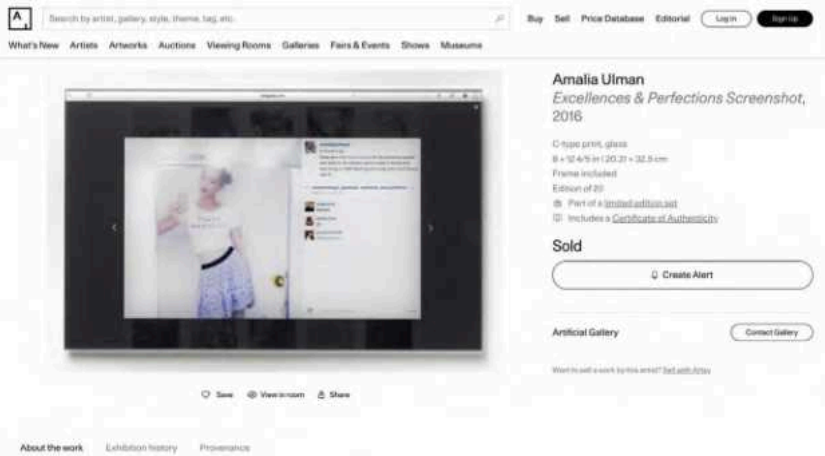


Fig. 1. Screenshot from Amalia Ulman's *Excellences & Perfections Screenshot, 2016* on artsy.net.

Furthermore, what to make of vernacular internet image practices that not only challenge the notion of original and copy, but also authorship and provenance. Memes and other fleeting networked forms of image communications which emerged in the mid 2000s with innocent ironic lolcats have by now become powerful bits of visual culture that have shaped Brexit referendums and U.S. elections. While the social (Dean, 2016), political (An, 2019) and economic relevance of such internet visual communication becomes more and more recognized, it's not museums which are engaging with networked culture, attempting to find a way to preserve it, but rather websites like Know Your Meme – which incidentally is owned by the Cheezburger network, not a non-for profit organisation for cultural preservation. Perhaps what makes digital media and networked spaces simultaneously important and challenging is their unfinished state, their ability to travel across screens around the globe at incredible speed, multiplying through variations that spread as a flock of fragments in continuous mutation. This “unfinished-ness” clashes with the ideas and strategies for collecting, exhibiting and preserving cultural and artistic works that most museums are built upon, and requires completely different investment of museum infrastructures, human resources, as well as adjustment from the side of funding bodies and boards of trustees. These challenges and the struggles to work outside of the clear boundaries of physical museum spaces became all too apparent when, for several months, the internet became the only space available for culture and art institutions.



Fig. 2. And if so, what do I write as author in my M+ database?

## WE BRING THE MUSEUM TO YOU IN 4K

When museums were forced to close their doors globally during the first wave of covid-19 pandemic in 2020, I started collecting reactions from different institutions (mostly from the field of photography and art) through screenshots that I would publish on a Tumblr site titled *Curating The Pandemic Image*<sup>1</sup>. I did so with the goal of documenting ideas and strategies that showed alternative ways to cope with a sudden epidemic that became a global health tragedy, but also offered the possibility for a giant experiment in how we could rethink online spaces. Going back to this online pool of screenshots that I took between the 20<sup>th</sup> of March and the 11<sup>th</sup> of September of 2020, I am confronted with a fragmented portrait of institutions forced to search for their identity in a new context, often resisting to engage with the internet as a possibility, but also facing extreme economic issues – which led to redundancies of cultural workers.

An initial panic produced a surplus of online content from communication and marketing departments desperate to let everyone know that museums were still very much alive and could be ‘visited from home’. With the doors shut, exhibitions inaccessible and events cancelled, galleries and museums saw online activity simply as a means to remind audiences they still existed. The pandemic museum first turned itself into a circulating surrogate of the physical experience of the museum, often accompanied by the hashtag #museumfromhome. Instead of addressing the specificity of online spaces and internet culture, museums

<sup>1</sup> *Curating the Pandemic Image* is also the title of an article written by Jon Uriarte and me (2021) for the publication LUR, the text is partly summarised in this section but can be found in full online.

aligned with the neoliberal logics of social media as spaces for communication and branding, which fuels the attention economy and the virality of content.

The initial #museumfromhome trend also represented the inability to think outside of the physical architecture of the institution, and how exhibitions and collections remained physical experience which could at best be photographed or mediated through a camera and circulated on networked screens. Curators were filmed walking alone through the museum halls, exhibitions were recorded in 360° video and tours were offered in 4K resolution. The museum space was squeezed through the fibre optic cable and brought to your screen, suggesting that if you really squint your eyes and suspended your disbelief for a bit, then we could all pretend we were inside the exhibition walls, and everything was fine again. The materiality and the temporality of the museum space struggled to be converted, as the “finished” museum and its objects were clashing with the “unfinished” digital space.



Fig. 3. A tweet by the Van Gogh Museum

Then came the Zooms, which allowed institutions to reach a global audience, but also showed that museums can be a social space, and move beyond walls and doors and benches. They reminded us that collections are not there to be owned and dusted, but discussed and debated; that exhibition experiences are often shared and museums are meeting places. Alternative experiments with social

ways of interacting online showed the possible forms in which cultural organisations could be integrated in digital environments, extend in virtual worlds, infiltrating places where institutions would rarely be seen before, such as multiplayer games and even online excel sheets.

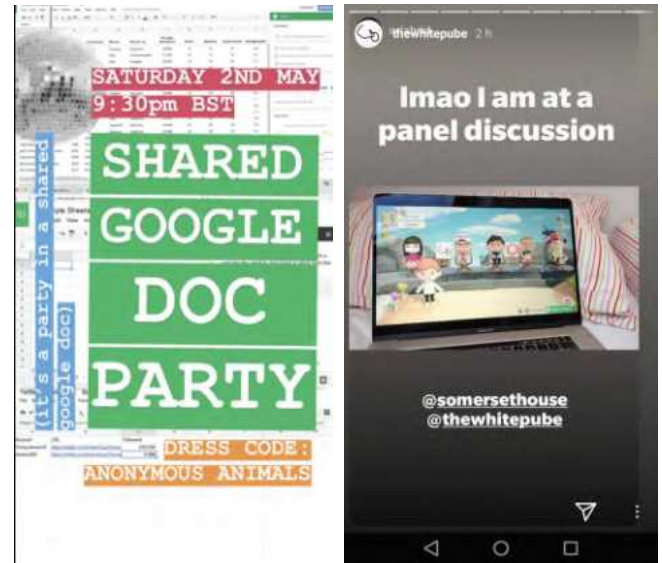


Fig. 4. An invitation to a Google Doc party and an Instagram post by The White Pube

Already in 1999, media scholar Peter Lunenfeld wrote that “the business of the computer is always unfinished. In fact ‘unfinished’ defines the aesthetic of digital media.” (1999) This “unfinished-ness” remains a major challenge both to the finite temporality of museum exhibition and collection systems, as well as the spatial properties of cultural institutions understood as a physical place. But this can also become a productive challenge to imagine and experiment with the museum, extending and expanding in digital and networked forms, playing with formats and engagement online, creating social spaces for experiences and discussions around arts and culture that move between physical and online spaces, and moving towards the possibility of an incomplete museum.

## INCOMPLETION MANIFESTO

Incompletion can help reveal many things that are left hidden or left out by completion. Through ten years of fieldwork, the artistic collective Alterazioni Video worked across Italy on identifying, surveying and researching the presence of buildings and infrastructures whose implementation has never been completed. In this context, the term “incompletion” refers to architectural works whose construction has been halted for a number of reasons – from design errors to budget miscalculations, from clashing political decisions to disregarded building regulations, from corruption and disappearing funds to contractor bankruptcies – leaving the abandoned ruins as



part of the environment and an all too common landscape in contemporary Italy. The highest concentration of incomplete works in the country can be found in Sicily – with 40% of the 696 unfinished buildings in Italy that have been identified and documented located there – with the town of Giarre as the main hub, and where the artistic collective developed a proposal for an *Archeological Park of Sicilian Incompletion* in collaboration with the public administration in 2008.

Together with the proposed archeological park, Alterazioni video also published a *Sicilian Incompletion Manifesto*, a decalogue celebrating incompletion as the “key to interpreting public-sector architecture in Italy since the Second World War” (Alterazioni Video, 2008). These contemporary ruins show the imagination and exuberance of “Unfinished Italy”, a deep, passionate and irrational relationship with the land, a redefinition of the landscape between concrete and nature reappropriating the sites. They reveal “an attitude that resulted in public buildings which are devoid of any declared function but open to the imagination of the people who inhabited them” and the notion of incompletion as “postulated on the partial execution of a project followed by continual modifications that generate new spurts of activity” (Alterazioni Video, 2008). Incompletion – Alterazioni Video argue – is a temporal process.

by Alterazioni Video relies on the unintentionality of the unfinished buildings, the mere existence of such structures show a space of possibilities and the possibility of a space. This possible unfinished space has been a starting point in my work at Fotomuseum Winterthur, in my task to experiment with potential networked and digital platforms that can extend the museum online and expand its role outside of the physical rooms. Next I will share three different projects I developed with my colleagues, where we tried to reimagine the museum as an unfinished space, embracing incompletion.

## THE MUSEUM (AS) INCOMPLETE SITUATIONS (situations.fotomuseum.ch, 2015 – 2021)

SITUATIONS was initiated by the co-directors of Fotomuseum Winterthur at the time Duncan Forbes and Thomas Seelig, and developed with Research Curator Doris Gassert and me<sup>2</sup> as an experimental format with the goal to investigate photography through a wider and critical approach. It ran from 2015 to 2021, featuring both an online platform and a physical space within the museum, enabling and encouraging a discursive exploration of the medium bringing together theoretical discourse, vernacular practices and artistic projects. SITUATIONS was structured around different positions that were ordered numerically and grouped into thematically driven clusters that formed exhibitions taking place online and at Fotomuseum.



Fig. 5. A picture of the incomplete Polo Stadium in Giarre taken by the author in 2018.

This notion of incompletion has inspired me to rethink the museum space as a place that can open up pockets for imaginations, partial extensions where continual modifications are possible, and rooms to be inhabited by artists and visitors can be created. While the artistic project



Fig. 6. Screenshot of the SITUATION archive from <https://situations.fotomuseum.ch/>

<sup>2</sup> Together with many others at the museum, who joined over time in different capacities and for different durations, including curatorial assistants, interns, fellows, as well as colleagues from art education.

Each SITUATION could be an artwork, a quote, a performance, a conference, a work from the collection of the museum. They could take place online, in the exhibition space in Winterthur, on an email, in Berlin; they could last one hour, three months or a full day. By allowing heterogeneous forms of knowledge to be grouped together, it allowed different voices and dialogues to take place, connecting alternative histories of photography to present and future incarnations of photographic technologies, social usages and political questions that require a new understanding of the medium. The project was simultaneously an experimental exhibition format as well as a research and media lab, questioning the traditional role of the photographic institution, attempting to find new ways to exhibit and present photography in its multiple forms, promoting a dialogue that raised issues of representation, circulation, value and ethics of the shifting image world. It challenged preconceived notions of museum experience and employed the networked properties of online media to create an ongoing - ever reconfiguring - archive of positions commenting on the many facets of photographic media. It's the incomplete properties of the web, its ever updatable and extendable content, that allowed a different temporality of the museum to exist. When the SITUATIONS installed in the physical space of the museum would be de-installed at the end of the exhibition, the online counterpart would live on and become an archive, updated with installation shots, interviews with artists, documentations of lectures and conferences. Furthermore, each SITUATION was tagged by the curators, allowing future SITUATIONS to enter in a thematic dialogue with past ones, in a way that the linear time of the physical exhibition would not allow. Through these curated tags, SITUATIONS progressively became an online archive that could be explored, and where new connections among all SITUATIONS could be made, allowing viewers to explore new thematic clusters and re-curate different positions through alternative groupings. Finally, SITUATIONS played with the properties of online and physical spaces, showing projects that lived solely online, or presented in the physical space, or a combination of both.

An example of this combination can be seen in SITUATION #57, which featured artist Morehshin Allahyari's work *Material Speculations: ISIS*. The project consists of a series that uses 3D printing technology as a tool for alternative artefact archiving, as well as a means of political resistance and documentation. The artist reconstructs selected artefacts of historical value that were destroyed by ISIS in 2015, based on vast numbers of images and documents of the destroyed objects. Photographs, documents, maps and videos are all instrumental in the process of re-building,

allowing the artist to create an image that cannot cease to exist, but is infinitely reproducible. All documentation gathered by the artist about the destroyed artefact is saved onto a flash drive embedded in the 3D-printed work. The work was shown presenting the artefact with the embedded flash drive in the exhibition room of the museum, while online the digital data that made the 3D print possible was made available to download for the time of the show. In this example the two spaces worked as complementary parts of the museum, allowing the physicality and materiality of the work to be experienced by visitor of the exhibitions, while the circulation of the data – which is an integral part of the project and of the material existence of the artefact – is made possible through the properties of the internet.



*Fig. 7. Morehshin Allahyari, Material Speculations: ISIS, 2015–2016, SITUATION #57, SITUATIONS/Re-enactment, installation view at Fotomuseum Winterthur, 2017 © Philipp Ottendörfer*

The convergence of some of these trajectories – research and artworks, digital and physical space – are also exemplified by SITUATION #144. After being commissioned to create a study for a glossary of contemporary photography, artist Akihiko Taniguchi realised a playable 3D environment on the basis of an exact replica of the SITUATIONS exhibition space in Winterthur. An abstraction of its counterpart, this virtual environment was populated by quotes from authors who have inspired Fotomuseum's ongoing research on the changing role of the photographic, as well as the artist's own interpretation. The digital SITUATIONS space allows the viewer to navigate through the different ideas and questions that lie at the core of the changes of photographic media that are shaping our understanding of images today. The study created a digital and playable space, complementary and integral part to the physical

exhibition experience, exploring forms in which discourse could be included in an exhibition setting. The game world created by Taniguchi was playable in a dedicated room in the museum, and also downloadable from the online SITUATIONS site.

practice takes place. Developed by Jon Uriarte, Curator of the Digital Programme at The Photographer's Gallery at the time, and me, Screen Walks opens up alternative spaces of visual experimentation outside of traditional exhibition settings. It invites each guest to experiment



Fig. 8. Akihiko Taniguchi, *Study for a Post-Photographic Glossary*, 2018, SITUATION #144, SITUATIONS/Lab, installation view at Fotomuseum Winterthur, 2018 © Philipp Ottendörfer

### SCREEN WALKS (screenwalks.com, 2020 – ongoing)

Screen Walks is a collaborative project created by Fotomuseum Winterthur and The Photographers' Gallery, investigating the changing role of the photographic image in its networked and digital forms through a series of live streams. The project was originally launched in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic in Europe, as a response to the first policies of lockdown and restricted mobility in March 2020. As Zoom became an accessible tool for most people stuck in their domestic spaces at the time, the project used the platform and the medium of the livestream to invite artists, curators and researchers to perform live explorations of digital spaces where their core

with the format of the livestream: from guided tours of internet spaces to online workshops, from participatory experiments to desktop performances. By using the properties of the live stream and screen sharing, Screen Walks have hosted projects that would not be possible in the physical space. Perhaps the most extreme example of this is artist Alan Butler's epic 2020 live endurance performance *Witness to a Changing West*, which saw him performing for more than seven hours in the video game *Red Dead Redemption 2* (Rockstar Games, 2018). Dressed as nineteenth century photographer Carlton E. Watkins, the artist attempted to restage photographs from the American West in the simulated environment of the game.



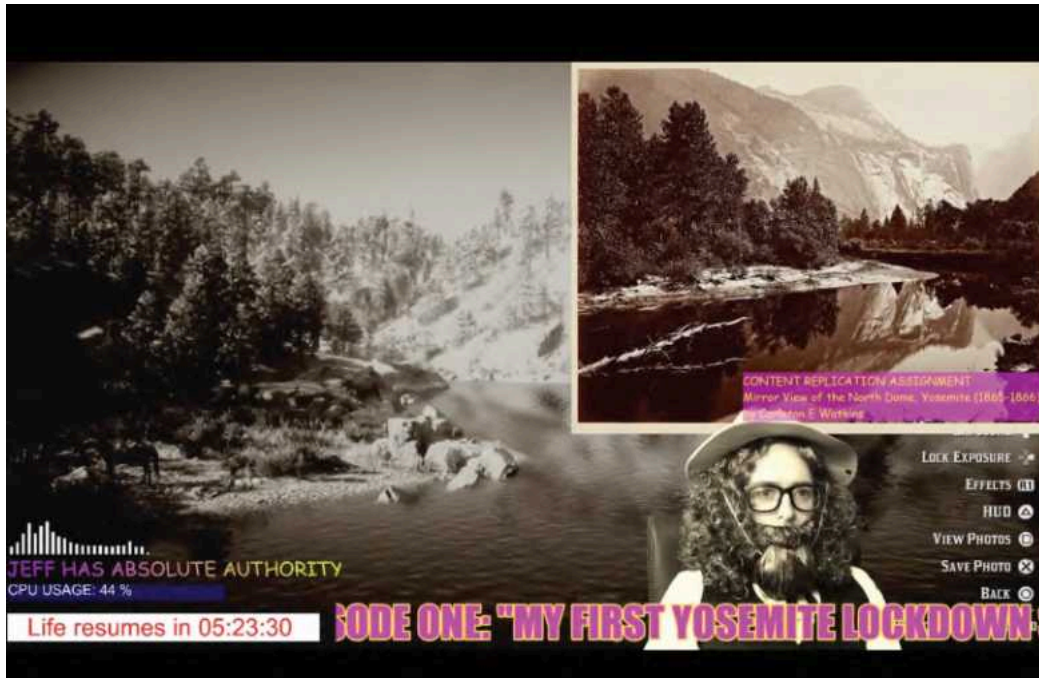


Fig. 9. Alan Butler, *Still from Witness to a Changing West*, 2020.

Curator Zaiba Jabbar shared her image live from her smartphone and took the audience through an exploration of augmented reality face filters, and the artists who are employing them as creative and critical tools to rethink the

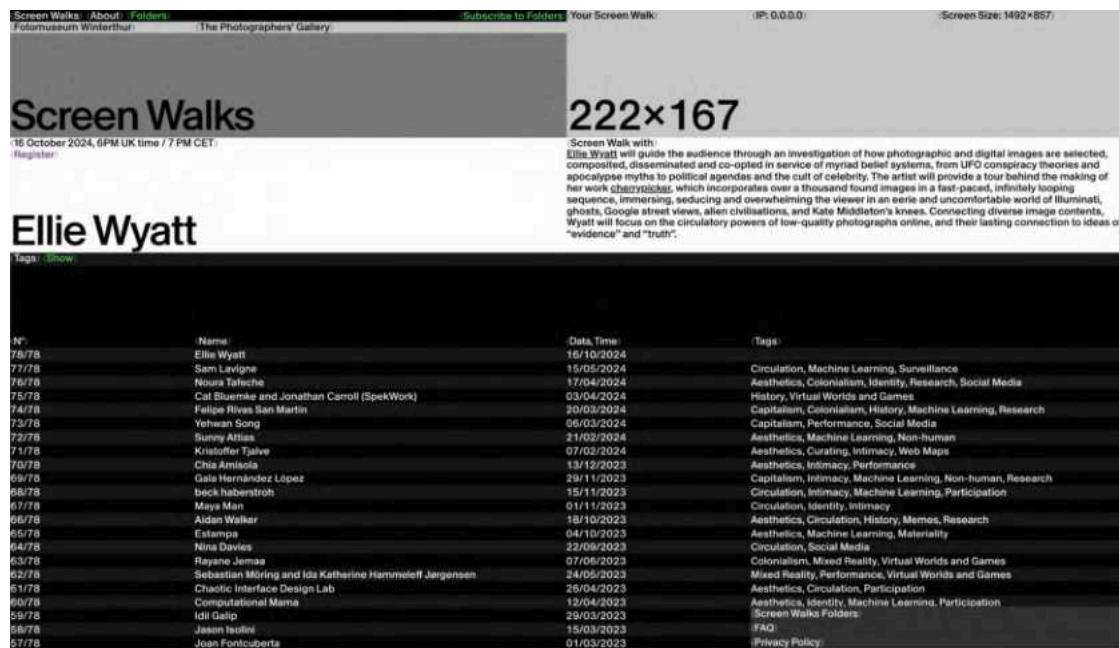


Fig. 10. Screenshot from Screen Walks website.

Moving between live spaces and archive platforms, Screen Walks also shows the possibility for collaborations among institutions outside of travelling exhibitions and joint publications, bringing together curatorial researches and joining forces in more structural and long terms projects.

## [PERMANENT BETA] (permanentbeta.network, 2022 – ongoing)

It's perhaps ironic that I am giving this keynote speech at a moment when Fotomuseum Winterthur is under construction, and quite literally incomplete. This renovation project – which started in July 2023 and will be completed in spring 2025 – was also the occasion to rethink the online museum in yet another time in which exhibition doors would be closed after the pandemic. [permanent beta] was created in 2022 together with director Nadine Wietlisbach as an online platform that would visualise the ongoing research of the curatorial team – with Research Curator Doris Gassert, Collection Curator Alessandra Nappo

and me as the core members<sup>3</sup> – in the field of algorithmic and networked image cultures. [permanent beta] derives its title from the idea of a platform that is meant to remain in a state of perpetual change, tracking the research process, turning it into a creative and performative act in

which knowledge around a specific thematic focus is collectively collected, (re-)arranged, edited and streamlined over time. Launched in August 2022, the online platform of [permanent beta] started with an empty page, which would get filled with posts around the first thematic focus of the project: "the lure of the image", which will eventually become a physical exhibition with the same name at the reopening of the museum next spring. The online space hosts the reflections of curators,

but also the process of artists who are invited to share their work developments and reflect upon the topic of

<sup>3</sup> Assistant curators Yulia Fisch and Gwendolyn Fässler, as well as Alfred Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach-Stiftung fellows Marie-Luise Mayer, Nadine Heinrich, Clara Bölin, Christopher Lützen and Sonja Palade also joined the project at different stages and for different periods of time.



Fig. 11. Screenshot of [permanent beta] The Lure of the Image website.

idea of portrait and representation of the self – applying filters in real time while discussing them within the same digital space. Artist Claire Hentschker led her Chaotic Interface Design Lab on a participatory re-imagining of Bosch’s *The Garden of Earthly Delights* using an open Miro board where all participants could recreate the painting using found images, emojis and AI generated pictures. Jason Isolini performed his work *The Ballad of a Laborer* within Google Street View, which he created by staging images of himself around a private dock – that was undocumented on Google’s platform – and then uploaded them, reclaiming both the urban space and Street View as sites for artistic interventions.

Game spaces, Facebook groups, virtual worlds, Internet marketplaces, Google Street View, Instagram face filters, dating app profile data, YouTube videos, these all become places to explore, inhabit and discuss through the invited tour guides of Screen Walks.

The programme continued after lockdown restrictions were lifted and each event’s documentation was added to the Screen Walks’ archive. Categorised through curated tags, the recordings of past events form an open and free archive, and a research tool for audiences interested in exploring the contemporary role of digital and networked images.



Fig. 12. Screenshot from “Similarity Considerations”, The Conversational Image, [permanent beta] The Lure of the Image.



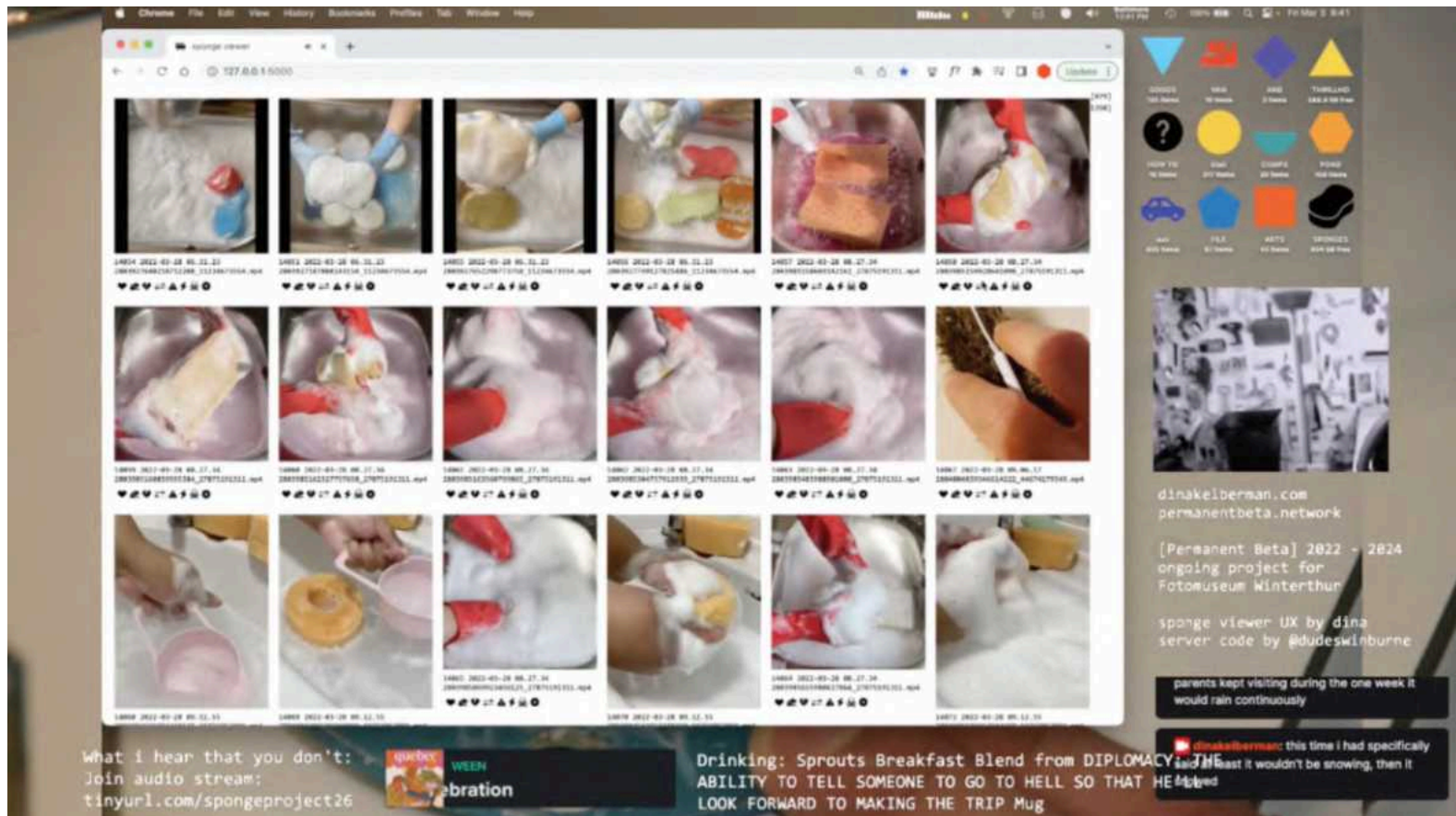


Fig. 13. Screenshot from Sponge Project by Dina Kelberman on [permanent beta] *The Lure of the Image*.

the lure of the image: why and how are we seduced by images today? What logic underpins this seduction and how does it influence current social, cultural and political developments?

To answer these questions, the platform plays with creative and experimental formats that once again would not be possible within the constraint of the exhibition space. The series *Cheated by an Image* features short audio contributions from artists, curators, researchers and experts from the field of photography and visual culture sharing their personal stories and intimate confessions about how images lure, seduce and deceive. Each voice message is accompanied by a soundtrack composed by the musicians Maria Chiara Argirò and Riccardo Chiaberta. The series of *Accidental Discoveries* is a collection of screenshots of definitions that help mapping the territory of the contemporary lure of the image, identifying terms and phenomena that are connected to it. Rather than attempting to define a coherent glossary, the curatorial team intuitively gathers terms, short reflections and quotes from various sources – from academic contributions to popular culture. The series *The Conversational Image* presents conversations on messaging apps between curators, artists or theorists that take an image as its

starting point. The format engages social media platforms not only for circulating images, but also for sharing thoughts and having conversations around them. It acknowledges the fact that all practices of photography have been transformed by smartphones and apps – from how we take images to how we encounter them, speak about and contextualise them.

A final example is the series *Sponge Project*, where artist Dina Kelberman was invited to visualise her work in progress for the final artwork that will be shown in the exhibition, and contains all of her weekly live streaming “office hours”. Every Friday for about six months, the artist has shared her process of categorising more than 5000 ASMR sponge videos appropriated from Instagram, while inviting viewers to interact with her through a chat.

[permanent beta] is able to offer a space for the unfinished museum to exist while keeping the physical exhibition as a connected and complementary form that is the culmination of a creative research unfolding over several years. It infiltrates online spaces – from podcast distribution platforms to messaging apps – and experiments with formats alternative to printed catalogues. It shows the process of exhibition making, or artwork creation, of

curatorial research, attempting to make the museum more transparent and accessible.

It invites viewers, researchers and artists to think of the museum outside of its finite boundaries and physical experiences – not denying them, but extending them. It embraces unfinishedness, it encourages openness and a sprinkle of messiness – and resists the logics of stability and objects-based systems of displaying knowledge and collecting art and culture.

I leave you with a lot of screen time, and possibly an overdose of “digitality”, but also with a heartfelt invitation to unfinish your institutions, and carve spaces of incompleteness in your museums.

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## BIOGRAPHY

Marco De Mutiis is a Digital Curator at Fotomuseum Winterthur in Switzerland where he leads the museum research on algorithmic and networked forms of vision and image-making. He leads and co-curates different projects and platforms expanding the role and the space of the museum. These include the collaborative live stream programme Screen Walks (developed and co-curated with Jon Uriarte, curator of digital programmes at The Photographers' Gallery in London), as well as Fotomuseum's current experimental platform [permanent beta] The Lure of the Image.

He is a researcher and doctoral candidate at the Centre for the Study of the Networked Image at South Bank University where he focuses on the relationship between computer games and photography. He co-curated with Matteo Bittanti the group exhibition How to Win at Photography – Image-making as Play, exploring the photographic act through the act of play and the notion of games. He has written, edited and contributed to several publications, including the recent book Screen Images – In-Game Photography, Screenshot, Screencast (co-edited with Winfried Gerling and Sebastian Möring). He lectures and teaches regularly in different institutions and schools, including Master Photography at ECAL and Camera Arts at Lucerne University of Applied Arts and Design.

## PANOPTIKUM – a Competence Center for Museums. Sustainable Solution to Museum Challenges

Paulina Florjanowicz, Ph.D.

National Institute for Museums, Warsaw

Poland

### Abstract

Museums in Poland have been developing rapidly throughout the past decade. Many magnificent new buildings were constructed, and hundreds of exhibitions were created. They attract millions of visitors every year and won numerous awards. Yet still, behind the scenes, museums keep struggling with same old challenges related to collections management that need to be taken care of in a sustainable manner. Polish museums store approximately 20 million objects, out of which only approximately 5% are exhibited, the rest remain in storage. Only the largest museums have climate-controlled storage space and only a few have their own conservation and digitization labs. The cost of creating such a professional space for each museum is very high and not always justified. Hence the idea of creating a common facility combining many types of high-level services available to all museums. *PANOPTIKUM - a competence center for museums* is inspired by similar facilities operating mainly in northern Europe. The first concept behind this project by National Institute for Museums (NIM) was created in 2016. In successive years numerous researchers, engineers and museum experts were involved in the development of the initial idea, introducing solutions that will balance high conservation requirements and environment-friendly standards, making the project both sustainable and cost-effective due to low energy consumption. Funding for the design and construction phase is secured by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, applying for EU funding for following stages is now in process. The construction works of PANOPTIKUM, located in central Poland, started in 2022 and the opening is scheduled for early 2026. The multifunctional facility will consist of storage space, conservation studios, diagnostic labs, as well as an educational and conference area. PANOPTIKUM, as a branch of NIM, will provide a wide range of services for museums and it can also serve as safe haven in times of crisis. The storage space will follow the RE-ORG methodology by ICCROM, which NIM is promoting

nationwide via its training schemes. PANOPTIKUM is aimed to meet the highest standards, and thus not only serve the museums' needs but also set a new point of reference for excellence in museum sector.

**Keywords:** sustainability, collections management, museum storage, environment-friendly solutions

“Panoptikum” is a word of Greek origin (pan = all; optikos = to see), used to describe a cabinet of curiosities or *Kunstkammer*. It was also used in a slightly different version of “panopticon” by an English philosopher Jeremy Bentham in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, to describe a model prison he designed - a circular construction with cells arranged around a central well, from which prisoners could at all times be observed<sup>1</sup>. The project I would like to present comprises both definitions: it refers to a variety of objects stored in museum collections and creates a perfectly safe environment for them – it is not a prison but a guarantee of their safekeeping for next generations.

This is the main concept behind the term of sustainability: “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” as it was defined by the United Nations Brundtland Commission in 1987<sup>2</sup>. Sustainability is therefore the ability to maintain or support a process over time. First used in reference to natural environment, it soon became adapted to many others sectors including protection of cultural heritage. Although the concept is still considered new or modern, the idea of protecting cultural assets in order to be able to pass them on to future generations is much older. For example this is how the Polish Ministry for Culture described the idea of historical monuments protection already in 1920: “Yet what are monuments, if not outward signs of the past? Historical monuments of art and culture link the past with the future. They are witnesses to the history of humanity. They tell us about the deeds of our ancestors, their lives, their endeavors, and their tastes. (...) Historical monuments are the precious possessions of the entire nation. No single generation has the right to consider itself solely their exclusive owner. It is merely their provisional depository.” (Zakrzewski 2007 [1920]), p. 17).

Despite this extremely innovative approach to historical monuments protection most of them were soon lost when in 1939 both the Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia attacked Poland and World War 2 began. In the years 1939-1945 Poland lost around 70% of its cultural heritage. Private, public and church collections were plundered and destroyed in an unprecedented way. Among the looted works of art are paintings of such masters as Rafael, Carracci, Breughel, van Dyck, Rubens, or Guardi – many of them, constituting Polish war losses, are still being looked for on the art market around the world and hundreds are retrieved every year.

These enormous losses to Polish cultural heritage shaped an extremely strict policy for protection of monuments and museum collections after the war. In 1989 Polish people overthrew the communist system imposed by the

Soviet Russia in 1945 and once again began to build an independent and democratic state. Among hundreds of issues that required new legal solutions, there was also heritage protection. The Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 1997 states in Article 5 that “The Republic of Poland shall safeguard the independence and integrity of its territory and ensure the freedoms and rights of persons and citizens, the security of the citizens, safeguard the national heritage and shall ensure the protection of the natural environment pursuant to the principles of sustainable development.”<sup>3</sup>. Sustainable protection of the natural and cultural environment is therefore the backbone of the entire heritage system, museums being an important part of it.

Museums in Poland have been developing rapidly, especially throughout the past decade. Many magnificent new buildings were erected, and hundreds of exhibitions were created. Priceless works of art were included in the public collections. Museum of the History of Poland, Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Museum of the Second World War or the purchase of the Princes Czartoryski collection for the National Museum in Kraków (which includes paintings by Leonardo da Vinci and Rembrandt, as well as thousands of items and historical documents priceless to Polish identity) are among the most significant achievements.

Polish museums attract millions of visitors every year and won numerous awards over the years, including the European Museum of the Year Award in 2016 and twice the Museum Prize of the Council of Europe (in 2016 and 2024). Yet still, behind the scenes, museums keep struggling with same old challenges related to collections management that need to be taken care of in a sustainable manner. Polish museums store approximately 20 million objects, out of which only about 5% are exhibited, the rest remain in storage. On top of it, only the largest museums have climate-controlled storage space and only a few have their own conservation and digitization labs. The cost of creating such a professional space for each museum is very high and not always justified.

Hence the idea of creating a common facility combining many types of high-level services available to all museums. In Poland there are approximately 1000 museums, both public and private. The majority of them is located in the province of Mazowsze in central Poland (it included the capital city of Warsaw and its surroundings) and Małopolska in the south (including the city of Kraków and its vicinity where such famous museums like Wieliczka Salt Mine and Auschwitz German Nazi Death and Concentration Camp are located). These two provinces also attract the vast majority of museum visitors and house most of the museum collections. A common center that would be

<sup>1</sup> Panopticon retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panopticon>

<sup>2</sup> *Sustainability* retrieved from <https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/sustainability>

<sup>3</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Poland retrieved from <https://www.sejm.gov.pl/prawo/konst/angielski/kon1.htm>



available to all museum would balance the opportunities nationwide and strengthen networking of museums.

The first idea was developed in the Department of Cultural Heritage of the Polish Ministry for Culture and National Heritage in 2016. The project was commissioned to the National Institute for Museums (NIM), state agency responsible for supporting museums. The main aims of NIM include: setting standards and sharing good practices for museums, especially on management

of museum collections and professional development of museum staff; supporting networking of museums as well cooperation with all their stakeholders indicating museums' positive impact on socio-economic development and ensuring safety of Polish museums and their collections. NIM further developed the project over the years and the Ministry arranged for a proper plot of land for the investment. [Fig. 1.]

In successive years numerous researchers, engineers and museum experts were involved in the development of the initial idea, introducing solutions that will balance high conservation requirements and environment-friendly standards, making the project both sustainable and cost-effective due to low energy consumption. The baseline study for the project was set on the following principles: high quality of protection is non-negotiable; one facility is less expensive than many (requires large plot and central location); one operator decreases administration costs; "green solutions" decrease energy consumption and lower exploitation costs (it was decided the obtaining a BREEAM certificate would assure this).

The project, finally called *PANOPTIKUM* - a competence center for museums is inspired by similar facilities



Narodowy  
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Muzeów

PANOPTIKUM

*Logo of Panoptikum, new branch of National Institute for Museums  
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operating mainly in northern Europe. In 2023 we arranged study visits to Conservation Centre Vejle in Denmark and National Museum of Finland - Kansallismuseo, which maintains an impressive collections center in Vantaa, that many Finnish museums profit from. The knowledge and experience gained from our colleagues in the north are priceless. [Fig. 2.]

PANOPTIKUM, with usable area of 21 000 m<sup>2</sup> will constitute one building with multi-storage facilities. It is both practical and economically efficient. Simply a sustainable solution. It is located on a plot of land of 18 hectares located in Lesznowola in central Poland, less than 20 km from the Warsaw city center. Other major cities are also at a convenient distance with a good train and highway connection: Kraków at 275 km, Gdańsk and Wrocław both at 350 km. Warsaw's main international airport is only 15 km away. The area allows for further development of the center, which makes the building now under construction just stage one.



*Fig.1. Panoptikum under construction as of August 2024. Photo by Paweł Natkaniec.*

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Fig.2-3. Panoptikum's Interim BREEAM certificate for the design stage. Copyright © by National Institute for Museums, 2024

The location of the site was also analyzed security-wise. Factors that were taken into account included: historical outline of the town (war risk, development, etc.); traffic and transportation (roads, railway, airport); technical infrastructure (water, power, IT, environmental impact, etc.). The security analysis focused also on geopolitical location (proximity of war-zones, political alliances, etc.); natural threats, including such low probable ones as earthquakes (last reported in Warsaw in 1680); risk of technical disaster (near the storage); criminality rate; terrorism and sabotage. After Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014 and again in 2022 the risk of war became a real one. Poland, as NATO member is safe, yet in direct proximity of a war zone in Ukraine. The location in Lesznowola is however as safe as possible - on the left bank of Vistula river dividing eastern and western Poland, and in a rather remote area. Any attack on the site, be it caused by missile or drones, would have to be a deliberate one, which would immediately qualify it as a war crime under the Hague convention. The center can also serve as a safe haven for countries in need, especially Ukraine, or - if needed - the Baltic states but we hope it never comes to that.

The next stage was analysis of demand conducted among the Polish museums: primarily the state museums that house the largest collections and other public museum located in the vicinity of Lesznowola. Overall, nearly 70 museums responded to our survey declaring that museums are primarily interested in conservation (46%), workshops (45%), digitization (37%), storage (25%), conferences, diagnostics, analyses and disinfection. Later on some non-museum institution also expressed their interest, mainly regarding storage possibilities: the national archives and national film archives. Private enterprises also reach out, including banks that invest in art collections.

The multipurpose facility will consist of storage space, conservation studios, diagnostic labs, as well as an educational and conference area. The reception and storage units will include a reception and temporary collection unit, contaminated unit, clean unit, cool storage, cold storage, dry storage, treasury and will cover a total area of 15.000 square meters. The area for educational and specialist purposes will include diagnostics labs, research and study rooms, reception area, and a conference center covering in total 5.000 square meters.

PANOPTIKUM will therefore serve many different purposes:

- storage (passive, high and low level storage systems, divided into sections: cool, cold, dry and treasury)
- conservation (labs for the conservation of wood, paintings and painted sculpture, metals and composite artefacts, paper, leather and textiles), preventive conservation
- fumigation chambers
- digitization and X-ray
- education space
- conference venue for up to 150 participants

equipped with simultaneous translation cabins, and audio and video facilities

- educational rooms, IT workstations, administration

Total usable area of the building is 19.164 square meters and the dimension of the rectangular building are 141m x 104.4m x 9,4m (7% of plot area, 1-2 stories). It is divided into two segments: A (storage and delivery): 104.40 x 90.00m; and B (services: conservation/diagnostics/study/educational space and area open to the public): 104.40 x 51.00 m.

The storage (segment A) will offer stable climatic conditions:

- Cool storage - 9000 m<sup>2</sup> (10°C-15°C, <55 RH[%])
- Cold storage - 1000 m<sup>2</sup> (2-6°C, <30-35 RH[%], freezer-20°C, <35 RH[%])
- Dry storage - 1000 m<sup>2</sup> (>10°C, <40 RH[%])
- Treasury - 100 m<sup>2</sup> (>10°C, <40 RH[%])

PANOPTIKUM storage will be organized according to the RE-ORG methodology on the ergonomics of museum storage. NIM promotes the ICCROM developed RE-ORG method in Poland through training schemes prepared in cooperation with National Museum in Poznań. Polish museums declare the need for storage space for the following types of items: sculptures, large-scale objects, artistic installations, furniture, maps, textiles, archives, film reels and negatives.

PANOPTIKUM is expected to provide solutions allowing it to be certified under the BREEAM scheme. The project has already obtained the Interim BREEAM certificate for the design stage, meeting all the guidelines of the British Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method system - the facility follows sustainable construction to the maximum extent. [Fig. 3.]

The "green" solutions of the project include:

- Simple form of the building (compactness)
- Use of glazing with increased parameters in relation to standard requirements
- Applied automatic temperature control systems in individual rooms or designated heating zones
- Achieves low heat transfer coefficient (U [W/m<sup>2</sup>\*K]) for walls, roof, windows, doors
- Use of mechanical ventilation with heat recovery
- Selection of a low-carbon main source of heat - heat pumps
- Installation of renewable energy sources - photovoltaic panels
- Ensuring high acoustic quality of the facility
- Inclusive and accessible project for people with disabilities
- Energy-efficient lighting
- Reduction in potable water consumption for sanitation by 81,15%
- Rainwater will be used for flushing toilets and watering greenery

- Providing alternative modes of transport: spaces for carsharing and electric recharging stations
- Anticipated recovery of construction waste is 95%
- Ensure biodiversity of flora through planting and sowing a flower meadow
- In the area of the investment 5 insect hotels have been designed

The surrounding of PANOPTIKUM will also be environmentally friendly and offer recreational facilities to the local community such as bicycle paths and shelters, electric car charging point, kids' playground and thematic enclaves related to regional vegetation. The park will be open to the public free of charge. [Fig. 4.]

Funding for the design and construction phase of PANOPTIKUM, which will be a branch office of NIM is secured by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. Equipment for the storage is also financed by the state budget. We are now in the process of applying for EU funding for following stages of the projects. Total value of the project is approximately 60 million euro. The construction works of PANOPTIKUM started in 2022 and the opening is scheduled for early 2026.

Main challenges the projects faces are the following: Political changes resulting in difficulty of projects' continuity;

- Insufficient funding or rather risk of failing the accounting liquidity;
- Lack of vision of some of the decisionmakers along the line;
- "Gollum syndrome" or curators' fear of passing the responsibility for their collections to a third party.

All these can be overcome with proper reasoning, time and patience. Change takes time. But achieving sustainable goals is worth it. PANOPTIKUM project aims to meet the highest standards, and thus not only serve the museums' needs but also set a new point of reference for excellence in museum sector.

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Sustainability retrieved from <https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/sustainability>



Fig 4. Overview of Panoptikum under construction as of July 2024. Panorama of Warsaw city, center in the back. Copyright © by Polimex-Mostostal S.A., 2024

## BIOGRAPHY

Graduated from the Warsaw University (M.A.) and Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PhD), since 2023, Paulina Florjanowicz works as a National Institute for Museums director. She was previously director of the Cultural Heritage Department of the Ministry for Culture and National Heritage (2016-2022).

She has over twenty years of experience in the heritage sector, working for NGOs and public institutions (including National Heritage Institute – director in 2011-2013). Mrs Florjanowicz is a current and former member of national and European expert panels, including Reflection Group "EU and cultural heritage", expert of the European Archaeological Council (EAC), jury member for European Capital of Culture, currently member of the Expert Panel for European Heritage Label, member of the ICOM (ICMS & INTERCOM), European Association of Archaeologists and Board Member of the Network of European Museum Organizations (NEMO).

Researcher in the field of theory of archaeology and its relation to politics. Evaluator in EU programs on education and culture since 2003, academic lecturer in heritage management and museology, and expert in cultural and remembrance policy, museum management, fighting crime against heritage and socio-economic aspects of cultural heritage.

# PAPER SESSIONS

# Sub-theme #1 – Cross-Cultural MUSEUM ARCHITECTURE

GONCA Z. TUNCBILEK DINCER

LANGUS LAVALIAN (MENG-PING CHIU)

GEUNTAE PARK

MEI-FANG KUO, HSIAO-TUNG "CHARLOTTE" SU

DAONG CINCENG

ANDREA SARTORI

ISAIAS RIBEIRO

YATIN SINGHAL



# (Re)presenting Philadelphia from the Centennial International Exhibition to the Emergence of the Museum-City

Gonca Z. Tuncbilek Dincer, Ph.D.

University of Pennsylvania

USA

## Abstract

In the literature on architecture and exhibition studies, museums have largely been evaluated as individual architectural structures. However, a museum is not a space that exists in a vacuum. Rather, it can and in fact must be perceived as enriched by becoming a part of a larger urban context by establishing a network of relationships with other cultural and exhibition spaces. I conceptualize this network of relations as a museum-city: an urban fabric where a living historical city is viewed as an exhibition space on an urban scale on which its natural, cultural and architectural heritage are displayed. This conceptualization also allows us to theorize museums and exhibitions as organic entities that can be expanded, altered, (re)organized and transformed. I propose to this network concept within an urban context framework that analyzes the (re)presentation of natural, cultural and architectural heritage in relation to one another as a “museum-city” concept.

**Keywords:** Exposition, Museum-City, Museum-Scape, Museum Network, and Museum Architecture

The city of Philadelphia provides excellent canvas to illustrate the value of this conceptualization. From the international expo in the mid-19th century to several organizing and reorganizing efforts of its glamorous Benjamin Franklin Parkway in the 20th and 21st centuries, the city has constantly altered its urban space as exhibition space. In this presentation, I will examine Philadelphia as a museum-city, which involves understanding its historical and contemporary exhibition sites, starting from the legacy of the Centennial International Exhibition of 1876. This historical expo serves as a focal point for analyzing the urban development of the Fairmount Museum District and its extension to Benjamin Franklin Parkway. As Philadelphia prepares to celebrate its semi-quincentennial in 2026, the redesign of Benjamin Franklin Parkway becomes pivotal for the continued existence of the museum network. This redesign offers an opportunity to explore the transformation of the urban context into a dynamic “museum-city,” showcasing the city’s commitment to preserving its cultural heritage and promoting exhibition spaces as integral components of urban life.

This research reconceptualizes museums as more than exclusively standalone architectural entities, but as an integral part of an interconnected urban network that includes exhibition spaces as well as the city itself. By focusing on museum clusters and their networks, the study explores their role in shaping urban development, which I conceptualize as the “museum-city.” This notion redefines public space, enhancing the social, cultural, and economic (re)development of urban areas, with museums playing a pivotal role in defining the city’s image.

Museums have historically evolved across different periods, actively shaping social hierarchies by organizing and displaying cultural distinctions, which has prompted sociological analyses (Bourdieu, 1979; DiMaggio, 1986). In addition, they have been linked to the construction of national identity, reflecting a common history and geography (Weber, 1978), and serving as key institutions in nation-building. In the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, museums became commodified through cultural tourism, driven by increased human mobility and the rise of the middle class (Trachtenberg, 1982; Blau, 1995). The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a global surge in museum establishments, marking what Macdonald (2006) refers to as the “museum phenomenon.”

The 21<sup>st</sup> century, identified as an “urban era” (Orloff, 2008), sees museums becoming central to urban development, contributing to global competition for tourism and economic growth. The concept of the museum-city emphasizes the dynamic and evolving relationship between museums and their urban surroundings. This study focuses on Philadelphia as an exemplary museum-city, not only due to its growing number of museums but also because of the active interplay between these institutions and the urban fabric. Although the spatial relationship between museums and cities is not new, it is now more diverse and complex from architectural and museological perspectives.

Traditionally tied to their architectural space, museums now have the potential to transcend physical boundaries and engage more broadly with their surroundings. The distribution of museums across a city fosters (in) tangible cultural values, forming the museum-city network. In Philadelphia, this network operates as a system of interconnected nodes without a strict hierarchy, facilitating connections between museums and enriching the city as a whole (Otlet, 1907). Drawing on Latour’s (1999) actor-network theory, this research emphasizes that networks between museums as significant as the institutions themselves. It also diverges from Tim Ingold’s (2007, 2008) “meshwork” model, suggesting that what is excluded from the network can be just as important as what is included (Strathern, 1996).

Building on these theoretical frameworks, this research explores the museum-city as a vital space for collective urban

consciousness and cultural representation. Specifically, it investigates the evolving architectural and spatial relationship between exhibition spaces and Philadelphia over three phases: the 1876 Centennial International Exhibition and its urban context; the development of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway as a museum-city; and the upcoming 2026 U.S. Semi-quincentennial Project, which will introduce new cultural institutions/museums into this dynamic network.



Figure 1. The 1876 Centennial International Exhibition  
Source: Library of Congress Geography & Map Division ([www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov))

## 1. The 1876 Centennial International Exhibition: Origins of the Museum-City in Philadelphia

The concept of a museum-city, both as a tangible and intangible entity, can be traced back to the 1876 Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia. This event was significant, not only because it was the first official world fair held in the United States but also it was to celebrate the centennial anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Held in Fairmount Park, the Centennial Exhibition marked the beginning of a series of world expos that would leave a lasting impact on their host cities, both culturally and architecturally.

The world expos, starting with the Great Exhibition in 1851 in London and continuing through the 1933 International Exposition in Chicago, were instrumental in the development of cities, particularly in terms of museum planning and urban transformation. These events often reclaimed “lost spaces” -areas that had fallen into disuse or disrepair- and transformed them into public parks and multifunctional spaces. In the case of Philadelphia, the post-expo landscape was particularly notable for the way it created new cultural environments, offering not just public spaces but also eco-systemic benefits. The Centennial left behind iconic structures that became symbols of the city, such as Memorial Hall, now home to the Please Touch Museum, and Horticultural Hall, which still stands today.

The golden era of world expositions spanned the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Meller, 2016). These events were closely tied to their urban contexts, as cities like Philadelphia were large enough to host the enormous influx of visitors and infrastructure required by such global spectacles (Geppert, 2013). Hosting world expos was not just a matter of pride but also a means for cities to project their progress and modernity. The expos played a critical role in shaping public awareness of urban development and helped nurture the international town-planning movement in Europe and the United States (Meller, 2016).

One of the key innovations of the 1876 Centennial Exhibition was the shift in how expositions were organized spatially. Instead of centralizing exhibits in a single building, as had been the norm, the Centennial scattered its pavilions across a large area of West Fairmount Park. This approach allowed for greater diversity in the exhibition spaces and set a precedent for future expos. More than 200 buildings were constructed for the event, with five main structures: the Main Exhibition Building, Memorial Hall, Machinery Hall, Agricultural Hall, and Horticultural Hall (Mattie, 1998). These buildings represented two architectural types: traditional masonry monuments and structures featuring iron and steel frameworks, reflecting the latest trends in contemporary architecture.

Expos should be seen as pro-development projects that leave behind a lasting legacy, serving as catalysts for urban transformation and the creation of museum-city networks. Philadelphia's Centennial Exhibition is an early example of this, as it revitalized public spaces, created new cultural institutions, and contributed to the city's environmental landscape. Other examples of expos driving urban transformation include Chicago (1893, 1933), New York (1853, 1939, 1964), and other expos in Buffalo (1901), Saint Louis (1904), and Cleveland (1936). These events contributed to urban change in various ways: by integrating into the city's fabric and supporting the museum-city concept, by remaining isolated within the city, or by creating green spaces for recreation outside the city.

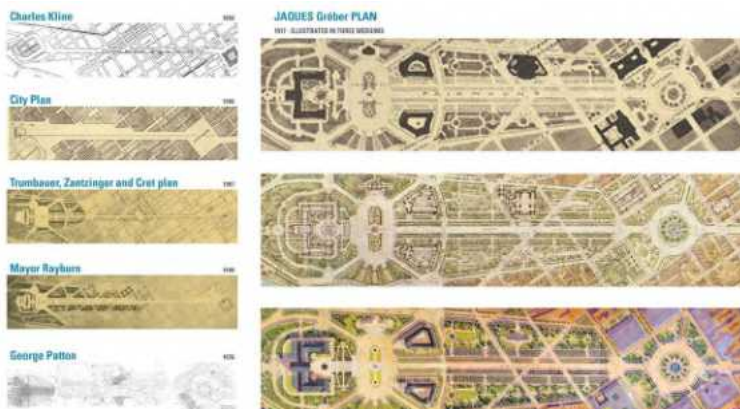


Figure 2. Historic Iterations of The Benjamin Franklin Parkway  
Source: Reimagine the Benjamin Franklin Parkway ([arcg.is/ny1fq](http://arcg.is/ny1fq))

## 2. From Fairmount Park to The Benjamin Franklin Parkway Project: Development of the Museum-City in Philadelphia

The 1876 Centennial Exposition instilled a new sense of pride in Philadelphia's industrial and urban identity, which helped motivate the development of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. The exposition serves as a key moment in the city's urban evolution, linking the growth of Fairmount Park to the creation of the Parkway, a grand 1.5-mile avenue that connects City Hall to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. This project, conceived as a continuation of the urban diagonal axis, was an extension of Fairmount Park on the left bank of the Schuylkill River. It commemorated both the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United States and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Centennial Exposition, creating a unified design that blended parkland, civic institutions, and museums into a cohesive urban form.

Philadelphia was proud of its accomplishments in urban planning, standing out in comparison to other American cities. Between 1871 and 1929, the Benjamin Franklin Parkway was constructed, diagonally crossing the city's existing grid layout. The design, planned by Jacques Gréber in 1917, was influenced by the City Beautiful Movement, a progressive movement aimed at beautifying cities to promote civic virtue. This project became a defining achievement in American urban planning history (Brownlee, 2017). Stretching from City Hall to the monumental Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Parkway provided a cultural axis that connected the city center to Fairmount Park, creating an urban context for the public diffusion of culture. The vision was for educational and cultural institutions to line the boulevard, framing and reinforcing the connection between the park and the heart of the city.

While the Philadelphia Museum of Art opened in 1928, not all of the civic structures proposed along the Parkway were realized. West of Logan Circle, only the Rodin Museum (1928), a juvenile detention center (1952), and later became the Barnes Foundation (2004) were the only ones that were built. A cluster of civic buildings emerged around Logan Circle such as the Free Library (1927), the Franklin Institute (1934), and the Municipal Court (1941), joining earlier institutions as such the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul (1864) and the Academy of Natural Sciences (1873). Later, commercial buildings and a hotel were added on the east side of Logan Circle. By the 1960s, the block closest to City Hall was transformed into a plaza, later adorned with Robert Indiana's famous "Love" sculpture. The constellation of these museums/institutions made this urban context as a cultural hub, and they have established a dialectical relationship by promoting each other's programs.

In its early years, the Benjamin Franklin Parkway was primarily used as a pedestrian way, but evolving as a scenic



automobile route, connecting the park drives to Center City. However, later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Parkway evolved into the city's primary venue for ethnic festivals, parades, and public celebrations. This transformation marked its shift from a car-dominated space to a vibrant cultural and social hub. In anticipation of the 2026 semi-quincentennial, the reimagining of the district extends beyond its original boundaries, reinforcing the concept of the museum-city by emphasizing its cultural and urban context. This is achieved through the pedestrianization of key areas and the design or relocation of (new) cultural institutions within the city.

as part of Philadelphia's semiquincentennial legacy. In 2021, the international planning firm Design Workshop was selected to lead the project. Working with technical experts and stakeholders, they developed a data-driven, functional plan designed to be both achievable and responsive to public feedback. Their approach adheres to design principles established by earlier Parkway designers, such as Jacques Gréber, in preserving historic viewsheds and maintaining important spatial relationships.

The renovation also includes several key developments: the creation of Calder Gardens, the relocation of the

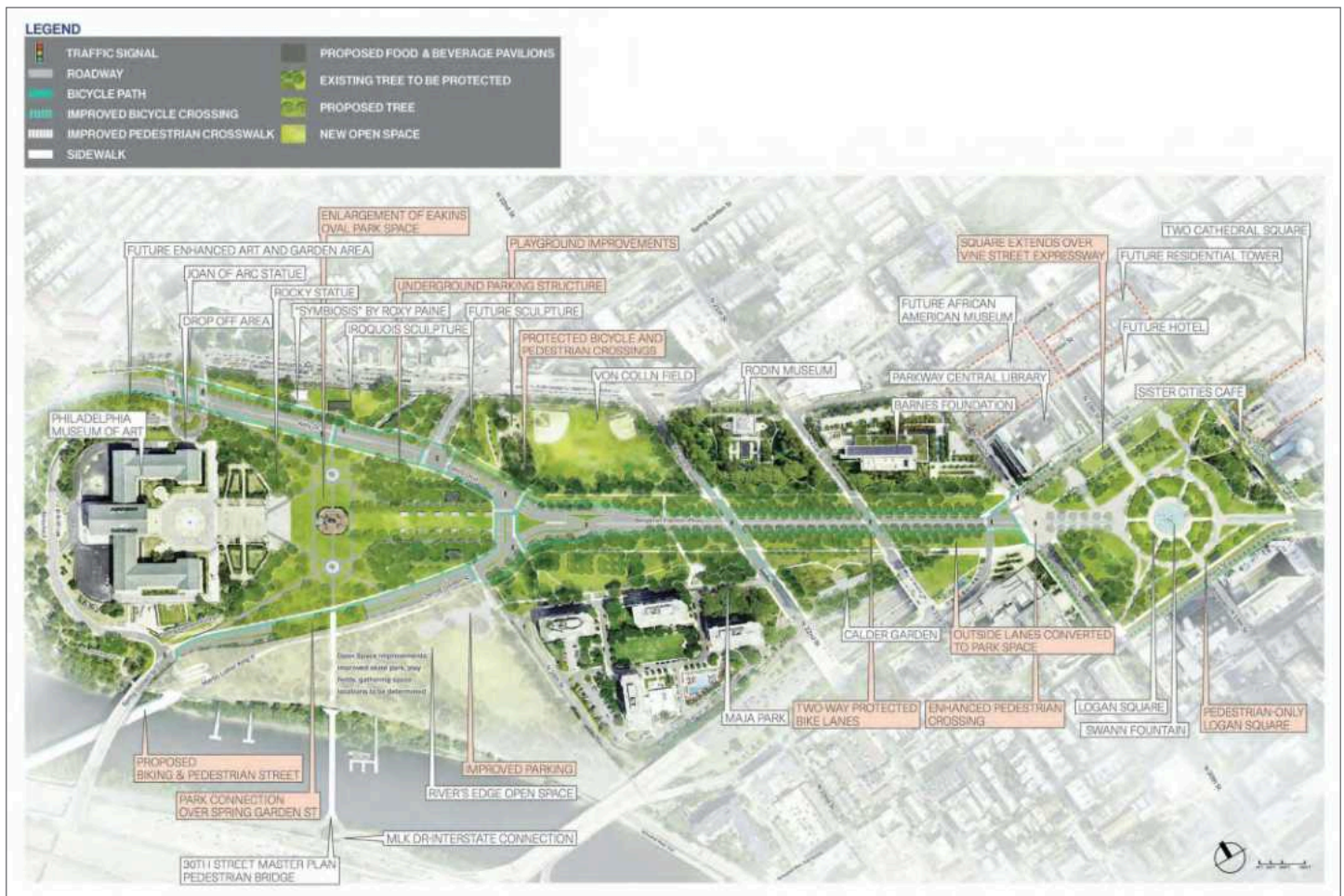


Figure 3 Reimagine the Benjamin Franklin Parkway for the 250th Anniversary. Source: Reimagine the Benjamin Franklin Parkway ([arcg.is/ny1fq](http://arcg.is/ny1fq))

### 3. Re-imagining Museum-City in the 21st Century: The 2026 U.S. Semi-quincentennial Project in Philadelphia

In preparation for the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States, the City of Philadelphia and the Parkway Council are planning a new expo. This project follows the vision set by the "More Park, Less Way" initiative launched in 2013, which aimed to enhance public spaces along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. The "Reimagine the Parkway" project builds upon these efforts, striving for a more vibrant, equitable, and inclusive future for the Parkway

African American Museum, and the construction of a new residential tower and hotel. These additions aim to enhance the flexibility and efficiency of the Parkway's design. By reducing the impact of vehicular traffic, the project strengthens the connection between the Parkway and its surrounding urban context. The design encourages alternative modes of transportation and improves pedestrian access, making the Parkway more accessible to all users, including those traveling to Center City and neighboring areas. Additionally, the project connects the Parkway to the Schuylkill River and integrates it into the broader park and trail system. To achieve this vision of an

accessible, high-amenity public space, the design team has outlined four key strategies for implementation over the next two decades:

- Establish a seamless pedestrian connection from Eakins Oval to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, enhancing pedestrian accessibility and strengthening the relationship between Parkway institutions and the public realm.
- Convert the outer traffic lanes into park space, allowing for the creation of a maintained, programmed pedestrian promenade.
- Restore Logan Square as a pedestrian-only space by rerouting traffic to the perimeter of the square.
- Improve connections to the Schuylkill River, making it a key element of the park experience. These improvements will provide new opportunities for visitors to relax along the river and engage with its natural setting.

This project aims to create a more connected, sustainable, and inclusive Parkway that serves as both a cultural and recreational space for residents and visitors alike. By transforming the Parkway into a pedestrian-friendly, multi-use environment, the 2026 Semi-quincentennial Project promises to leave a lasting legacy for the city, reflecting Philadelphia's historic and ongoing role as a center for civic life and cultural exchange.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study set out to explore the multifaceted role of museum networks, particularly following major expositions, and how they influence social, economic, and cultural dimensions of urban development. The Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia played a pivotal role in establishing the city's museum network—what can be conceptualized as the “museum-city.” This concept, further reinforced by subsequent expositions, exemplifies how post-expo parks and remaining buildings contribute to the cultural fabric and long-term urban growth of host cities. The impact of American world fairs on the formation of museum networks is particularly pronounced in the case of Philadelphia, where these events catalyzed the evolution of the museum-city and the transformation of public spaces.

The museum-city concept redefines urban public spaces, serving as a catalyst for social, cultural, and economic development. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, cities have increasingly focused on creating museum clusters that enhance not only public spaces but also act as economic revitalization tools. These clusters, which consist of adjacent museums interwoven with thoughtfully designed public spaces, require large-scale urban interventions and encourage collaboration between cultural institutions. The Benjamin Franklin Parkway exemplifies this idea, becoming both a

cultural axis and an educational landscape for the city. Such museum clusters contribute to the evolution of cities, reshaping the public sphere and reflecting a shift from isolated public institutions to integrated public spaces.

In conclusion, the museum-city concept did not emerge fully formed; it evolved gradually, shaped by historical and urban challenges. Over time, the concentration of cultural institutions in a single location emerged as a living organism within the urban fabric. This long developmental process, often spanning more than a century, is characterized by sequential shifts in how museums are perceived in relation to urban planning. Consequently, the museum-city may lack morphological and structural unity, with each city's museum cluster offering a unique spatial system and experience for both citizens and visitors. Despite this diversity, museum-cities fundamentally transform urban spaces by adding a cultural dimension and fostering a new type of network between museums and cultural institutions. The museum-city concept continues to play a significant role in shaping urban landscapes, particularly in Philadelphia, where it has grown from the legacy of world expositions. This model offers valuable insights into the future of urban planning, cultural development, and the creation of vibrant, interconnected public spaces.

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## BIOGRAPHY

Gonca Z. Tuncbilek Dincer, PhD, is a museologist and architect with a deep passion for exploring the intersection of art, history, museology and architecture. She earned her doctoral degree in architecture from the prestigious Middle East Technical University in Turkey, where she developed a profound understanding of architectural theory and design principles.

Currently serving as a visiting scholar at the esteemed History of Art Department at the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Tuncbilek Dincer delves into the intricate realm of museum studies, focusing on representational methods and curatorial practices. Her expertise extends to museum design, where she applies her architectural prowess to create immersive and engaging spaces for cultural exploration.

Dr. Tuncbilek Dincer has worked in renowned institutions worldwide, including her contributions to the innovative Serpentine Galleries in London and Paul Otlet's Mundaneum Archive in Belgium. Currently, she channels her creative energies into the design and development of the City Museum in Kayseri, situated in the captivating landscape of Greater Cappadocia. With each project, she continues to redefine the boundaries of museum architecture, leaving a lasting legacy in the cultural landscape.

# Shaping Indigenous Taiwan: Spatial Imagery of Local Museums for Indigenous Peoples in the Early 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Langus Lavalian (Chiu, Meng-Ping)

Bunun Cultural Museum of Haiduan Township, Taitung  
Taiwan

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## Abstract

In the post-martial law era of the 1990s, Taiwan experienced a cultural resurgence that redefined national identity, placing greater emphasis on diversity and inclusivity. Indigenous peoples, long marginalized, emerged as pivotal symbols within this evolving narrative. The government's "Community Empowerment/Development" policies further catalyzed the creation of local cultural museums, which became key sites for both cultural preservation and tourism development. By the early 2000s, 29 Indigenous cultural museums had been established, fulfilling core functions of research, collection, exhibition, and education, while also integrating Indigenous imagery into their architectural design. This paper examines the Bunun Cultural Museum of Haiduan Township in eastern Taiwan, exploring the specific historical context and multiple influences reflected in its architectural design and construction process. It analyzes how Bunun cultural imagery is shaped and presented in the museum space. Furthermore, it investigates the development of museum spaces as cultural governance institutions. This study aims to provide valuable insights and references for the future design and planning of indigenous museum buildings.

**Keywords:** Local Indigenous Museums, Architectural Imagery, Taiwan Indigenous Peoples, Bunun, Cultural Governance



## Introduction

Following the lifting of martial law in the 1990s, Localization/Taiwanization gained momentum, foregrounding the development of Taiwanese identity and consciousness. Within this broader movement, the indigenous movement acted as a subtle yet potent force, seeking to counter the hegemony of the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, KMT) and Han cultural dominance, while reclaiming the marginalized position of indigenous peoples (Ch'en, 1995). Concurrently, under “社區總體營造” (Community Empowerment/ Development) policies, local museums became pivotal sites for cultural representation, leading to the establishment of over 30 indigenous cultural museums (ICM) around 2000. In contrast to large, state-run museums, these smaller, community-based ICMs prompt critical questions regarding their role in shaping emerging national narratives and the ways in which indigenous identities are constructed and expressed through their architectural forms.

This paper examines the Bunun Cultural Museum (BCM), located in the Bunun region of eastern Taiwan, employing image analysis and key informant interviews to uncover the historical contexts and multifaceted influences that inform its architectural design and construction. It explores how the architectural space of the BCM embodies and communicates Bunun cultural imagery. Through an analysis of museum development and their function as instruments of cultural governance, this study offers insights and recommendations for the future design and planning of indigenous cultural museums. Furthermore, it evaluates the symbolic role of ICM in the construction of Taiwan's national narratives. The following sections will first provide a concise review of the indigenization discourse within the indigenous movement and the evolution of ICMs, followed by a detailed case study of the BCM to further explore these research questions.

## The Localization/Taiwanization Movement in the Early 21st Century and the Development of Indigenous Cultural Museums

(the Chinese nation) based on the premise of assimilation has neglected the diversity and unique experiences of Taiwanese society, particularly the presence of Indigenous peoples. Decades of such suppression catalyzed resistance from opposition movements, which critically questioned the legitimacy of KMT governance, fostered the reawakening of Taiwanese identity, and cultivated a broad consensus around democratization and localization. For indigenous peoples, however, the movement was not solely about dismantling KMT autocracy through political and localization reforms; it also involved a concerted effort to resist the existential threats posed by the dominant Han Chinese majority, particularly regarding cultural

disintegration and human rights violations (Huang, 2015). The persistent advocacy of indigenous intellectuals and activists during the 1990s led to a series of significant policy reforms, rights-based movements, and initiatives aimed at cultural revitalization.

At the same time, in the 1990s, the Taiwanese government implemented its Community Empowerment/Development policies, providing both guidance and financial support to local townships for the creation of local museums and performance venues (Su, 2010. Ma, 2012). These institutions were intended to function as cultural centers, aimed at showcasing local heritage, fostering community cohesion, increasing civic engagement, and promoting the preservation and transmission of local historical records (Huang & Guan, 2005). As for the origins of ICMs<sup>1</sup>, can be traced back to the 1989 “臺灣省山胞（原住民）社會發展方案—提升山胞生活素質計畫” (The Mountain Administration Reform Project—Improving the Quality of Life for Indigenous Peoples), which approved the establishment of 38 ICMs<sup>1</sup>, the majority of which were completed and operational by around 2000 (Wang, 2017: 1-2). Beyond their conventional roles of exhibition, research, collection, and education, Indigenous cultural museums are entrusted with the mission of cultural preservation and the reinforcement of ethnic identity (Tsai, 2019). The Bunun Museum, the subject of this study, is one such example.

What, then, does the exterior of museum architecture reveal? Yin (2015) argues that museum architecture serves as a tangible manifestation of cultural governance processes. Through the analysis of architectural forms, one can discern how the ideologies of various historical periods have influenced the shaping of spatial culture. The author survey of the architectural exteriors of 29 ICMs in Taiwan (Appendix 1) reveals that many structures incorporate features such as watchtowers, ancestral house-posts, weaving patterns, and totems, or utilize natural materials like slate, thatch, and wood. These architectural symbols reflect the local governments' perceptions of “indigeneity” at the time, conveying a distinctive cultural image of indigenous groups through the architectural design and symbolic codes embedded in the structures. The following section will present a more detailed analysis of the BCM as a case study.

## The Architectural Imagery of the Bunun Cultural Museum

The Bunun Cultural Museum is situated in Haiduan Township, Taitung County, in southeastern Taiwan, a region that serves as one of the primary settlements of the Bunun people, with over 90% of the local population identifying as Bunun. With a population of approximately

<sup>1</sup> Currently, a total of 29 indigenous cultural museums are actually open for operation, while the remaining buildings are overdue for construction or have been converted into buildings for other uses



61,000, predominantly residing in the highland areas along both sides of the Central Mountain Range at an altitude of about 1,000-1,500 meters. From the perspective of living space, the Bunun settlement presents a concentric spatial structure consisting of the house, cultivated land, and hunting areas. The houses are primarily constructed with slate and other natural materials. The cultivated land is mainly planted with millet, it occupies a central role in both the cultural and spiritual life of the Bunun people, with numerous annual rituals aligned with the millet planting cycle. The outermost hunting areas reflect the Bunun's deep connection with the mountain environment, fostering a distinct hunting culture and an extensive ecological knowledge system. Traditional Bunun settlements are organized around clan units and lack a designated public space. The establishment of the BCM not only serves to preserve and showcase Bunun culture but also introduces a communal public space.

The planning process for the Bunun Cultural Museum commenced in 1996 (Ma, 2012), under the leadership of then Haiduan Township Mayor Yu Meng-die, who actively sought financial support from the central government.

*"Around 1998, the government promoted the initiative of 'One Indigenous Township, One Cultural Museum. I saw this as an opportunity to preserve and pass on our culture.'"*  
(2018.11.19)

The museum was completed and officially opened in 2002, initially conceptualized as the "Bunun Culture Center" (Haiduan Township Office, 1997), the project adopted the eco-museum model, aiming to integrate the living spaces and natural ecology of Xinwu Village in order to create a comprehensive cultural and ecological site. However, due to political and economic limitations, as well as complications related to land acquisition, the museum was ultimately constructed at its current location in Haiduan Village. Today, it functions as an essential hub for the promotion and preservation of local cultural heritage.

Next, we examine the architectural design and exterior of the BCM. The three-story structure features large aluminum-framed glass windows and doors, allowing for an abundance of natural light within the interior. The ascending zigzag corridors echo the mountainous terrain, while the dark gray pebble-wash facade seamlessly integrates with the surrounding landscape of the Central Mountain Range, evoking the rugged aesthetic of mountain forest culture. Four relief sculptures on the exterior depict traditional Bunun practices, although these representations lean towards a "primitive" portrayal of indigenous life, which may not fully align with the nuances of Bunun culture. The circular plaza at the museum's entrance, adorned with totemic tiles, serves as an outdoor performance venue. The skyward-shooting bow and arrow

design of the bridge symbolizes the Bunun legend of shooting down the suns and has become a landmark for the eastern section of the Southern Cross-Island Highway. In the park area below, the museum further develops the concept of the Bunun Cultural Center, with local Bunun people constructing traditional houses representing the five major Bunun subgroups<sup>2</sup>. This feature distinguishes it as one of the few indigenous cultural museums in Taiwan to include traditional houses within its premises.

### **What Role Does the ICMs Play in Localization/ Taiwanization Discourses, and How Does It Represent Indigenous imagery?**

Returning to the question of this article—firstly, "What role does ICMs buildings play in the formation of new national narratives?"—it is evident that museum architecture and spaces are shaped not only by legal frameworks and policy decisions but also by the broader contestation within civil society regarding cultural heritage and the educational function of public institutions. These elements profoundly influence both individual and collective memory, as well as the politics of cultural identity (Yin, 2015:11).

A review of the five stages of transformation in Taiwan's museum architecture and their cultural governance (Su, 2010. Yin, 2015) provides further insights: The first phase is the Japanese colonial period (1895-1945), during which museums functioned as instruments of colonial rule, facilitating the dissemination of modern knowledge and showcasing governmental accomplishments. A notable example is the Taiwan Governor Museum, established in 1908 (now the National Taiwan Museum). The second phase, spanning the postwar nationalist era (1950s-1970s), saw museums primarily tasked with preserving and displaying artifacts brought from mainland China, thus foregrounding Chinese civilization. The National Palace Museum, constructed in 1965, serves as a prime example. The third phase, occurring in the 1980s, is marked by the construction of museums during Taiwan's modernization drive, with a focus on national education and the enhancement of civic literacy. The Taipei Fine Arts Museum, opened in 1983, exemplifies this period. The fourth phase, during the 1990s, witnessed a shift towards decentralization and the construction of local identities, emphasizing multiculturalism and local economic revitalization. The Lanyang Museum, initiated in 1999, is representative of this phase. The fifth phase, beginning in the 2000s, reflects the dual forces of globalization and the rise of local cultural industries, positioning museums as central to city branding and cultural tourism. The National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts, opened in 2018, epitomizes this trend. These five historical phases delineate the evolution of Taiwan's museum architecture and its intertwined relationship with cultural governance.

<sup>2</sup> The Bunun people can be divided into five major subgroups: Isbukun, Takbanuaz, Taki-vatan, Takibakha, and Takitudu.

During the aforementioned fourth phase, ICMs, as a type of local museum, were distinguished by their uniquely Indigenous focus. The construction of ICMs was profoundly influenced by the localization movement that gained momentum after the lifting of martial law in the 1990s, as well as by the government's promotion of the Community Empowerment/Development policies. On one hand, Indigenous peoples, positioned as a counterpoint to "Chinese culture," occupied a distinct discursive space within the localization movement. On the other hand, the government policy spurred the widespread construction of local museums. Within this framework, Indigenous peoples emerged as key symbolic figures in the new national narrative, and the creation of ICMs further underscored their cultural distinctiveness and agency, challenging the marginalized socio-cultural position they had been relegated to during the colonial era.

Secondly, another question is, "How does indigenous imagery represented in the spatial design of museum architecture?" The construction and design of museum buildings are often shaped by a confluence of factors. In the case of the Bunun Cultural Museum, first of all, the input of the local township mayor played a pivotal role in shaping its architectural vision. According to interviews, the mayor sought to convey indigenous imagery to the public through the museum's diverse functions, including the display of cultural artifacts, the recreation of traditional house spaces, performances of music and dance, artisan residencies, and the incorporation of indigenous cuisine as a cultural attraction. Another critical factor lies in the construction process of public buildings in Taiwan, which is typically initiated by the sponsoring organization through outsourcing and subsequently reviewed by a committee. This process is not always driven by local leadership, and as a result, the final outcome may not fully capture or accurately reflect the perspectives of the Bunun community.

From this, does this form of cultural representation authentically interpret indigenous cultures? And does the architectural design align with the functional and professional requirements of a museum? These are important questions that merit deeper consideration. For instance, the circular plaza in front of the Bunun Museum, designed in the manner of a theater or arena, positions the audience to face the performers at the center, creating a space intended for spectacle. This setup symbolizes the exhibition and observation of indigenous culture; however, the performances presented within this space are often fragmented and perpetuate stereotypes. A notable instance of modification occurred in 2020, when the outdoor circular plaza's tiled flooring was replaced with grass following complaints from local residents that the tiles absorbed heat, causing discomfort to barefoot performers. This change exemplifies how local input has shaped and influenced the transformation of the museum's physical





















structures. Additionally, the indigenous-themed reliefs surrounding the museum—depicting traditional clothing, dance postures, house structures, and weaving tools—fail to accurately represent Bunun culture, highlighting the misplacement and misinterpretation of cultural symbols. These examples underscore the necessity for a more precise and culturally sensitive architectural design that can more authentically convey indigenous cultural identities.

## CONCLUSION

Architecture is far more than a mere assembly of bricks and stones; it embodies the transformation of societies, safeguards cultural legacies, and serves as a witness to the unfolding of history. This process extends beyond the physical alteration of structures to encompass the perpetuation of culture, the advancement of society, and the recording of history. The Bunun Cultural Museum through its distinct role, has both witnessed and contributed to this historical continuum, establishing itself as a vital component of cultural governance. By examining the shifts in the BCM's architectural design and spatial use, we observe not only the local government's multifaceted interpretations of culture but also the intricate dynamics between policy implementation, social needs, and cultural identity. In this context, the BCM transcends its function as a repository of Bunun culture; it stands as an important emblem of local identity, collective memory, and historical transformation.

With the advent of the Localization / Taiwanization movement and community development policies in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the establishment of 29 indigenous cultural museums has provided crucial platforms for showcasing indigenous cultures. These museums symbolize not only Taiwan's political localization and democratization but also reflect local governments' evolving approaches to public architecture and the management of indigenous cultural heritage. This paper, using the BCM as a case study, explores the representation of Bunun cultural imagery through the museum's architectural planning and spatial utilization. Yet, the issues of symbolic misrepresentation and misapplication in cultural displays highlight the discrepancy between authentic cultural expression and symbolic representation. Through these reflections, this paper aspires to provide meaningful insights for future museum design, particularly in ensuring the faithful transmission of cultural symbols within architectural spaces.

## Appendix 1: Overview of the Architectural Exteriors of 29 Indigenous Cultural Museums in Taiwan

 <p>Ketagalan Culture Center</p>	 <p>Taoyuan City Indigenous Culture Center</p>	 <p>Keelung City Indigenous Cultural Hall</p>	 <p>Wulai Atayal Museum</p>
 <p>Nan'ao Atayal Aboriginal Cultural Hall</p>	 <p>Atyal Life Muzeum</p>	 <p>Tayal Museum</p>	 <p>Museum of Saisiyat Folklore</p>
 <p>Taichung Indigenous Cultural Center</p>	 <p>Changhua County Indigenous Peoples Activity Center</p>	 <p>Jianshi Township Cultural Center</p>	 <p>paSta'ay Artifacts Exhibition Hall of Saisiat tribe</p>
 <p>Tsou Culture Exhibition Hall</p>	 <p>Cha-Ha-Mu Aboriginal Park</p>	 <p>The Indigenous Cultural relic Museum of Tainan City</p>	 <p>Namasia For Aboriginal Cultural Museum</p>
 <p>Bunun Cultural Exhibition Center of Taoyuan District</p>	 <p>Pingtung Indigenous Peoples Museum (Pingtung 1936 Tobacco Culture Base)</p>	 <p>Rukai Culture Museum</p>	 <p>Sandimen Indigenous Museum, Pingtung County</p>



			
Laiyi Indigenous Museum, Pingtung County	shizi township heritage museum	Bunun Cultural Museum of Haiduan Township	Chenggong Township Museum of Formosan Aborigines
			
Chimei Aboriginal Heritage Museum, Ruisui Township, Hualien County	Wanrong Township Indigenous Cultural Museum	Shoufong Indigenous Museum	Jian Township Amis Museum
			
Hualien County Indigenous Museum			

Image source: Each ICM's Facebook fan page and official website, or ICMs website(原展群博) or Museum Island website(博物之島).

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## BIOGRAPHY

Langus Lavalian (Chiu Meng-Ping) is a member of the Bunun people, an indigenous group in Taiwan. He currently works at the Bunun Cultural Museum in Haiduan Township, where his primary responsibilities include exhibition planning and collection research. Additionally, he's pursuing a doctoral degree in Ethnology at National Chengchi University. Langus Lavalian's research focuses on how to represent indigenous subjectivity in museum work, including knowledge system, research, community engagement, and educational outreach.



# How we work together in China to create museums<sup>1</sup>

Geuntae Park

BNU-HKBU United International College, Zhuhai  
China

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## Abstract

It is not surprising that new museum projects are complete daily in China. China has witnessed amazing museum growth over the last decade, owing to its economic development and policy support. China has obviously been a museum platform for architects and designers. In particular, the collaboration between European and Chinese professionals (architects, designers, consultants, etc.) is certainly a distinctive feature of the phenomenon.

This article explores the collaboration through three interviews with European professionals: two with architecture firms and one with a founding director for a museum. It identifies the contribution and challenges of this collaboration in museum architecture.

**Keywords:** Chinese museum development; Collaboration between Chinese and European professionals in museum architecture; Bao'an Public Culture and Art Centre; Zhuhai Museum; Sea World Culture and Arts Center

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## Introduction

It is not surprising that new museum projects are complete daily in China. China has witnessed amazing museum growth over the last decade, owing to its economic development and policy support. According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China, the number of museums in China has increased from 3,069 in 2012 to 6,091 in 2022. It is 302 new museums per year, which means a birth of new museum almost every day during this period. China has obviously been a museum platform for architects and designers. In particular, the collaboration between European and Chinese professionals (architects, designers, consultants, etc.) is certainly a distinctive feature of the phenomenon. The presentation will explore this collaboration through three interviews with European professionals: two with architecture firms and one with a founding director for a museum. They are from Bao'an Public Culture and Art Center (Shenzhen), Zhuhai Museum (Zhuhai) and Sea World Culture and Arts Center (Shenzhen). Through the conversations, the challenges in creating partnerships and contributions from European side would be unveiled. For example, the European professionals indicated that fundamental difference in design, taste, vision, communication problems, language barrier, and budget handling are some challenging issues. At the same time, aesthetic quality and further (and more professional) knowledge of institutional programme are discussed as their contribution. It is commonly highlighted that open discussion and appreciation of different perspectives are critical for a successful delivery of the collaborative museum project in China.



Figure 1. Bao'an Public Culture and Art Centre, Drawing by Coldefy.

## Bao'an Public Culture and Art Centre, interview with Zoltan Neville, Partner at Coldefy

### ***Please introduce Bao'an Public Culture and Art Center briefly for the audience.***

Bao'an Public Culture and Art Center is a 90,000 square meter complex to be built at the heart of the Bao'an District, Shenzhen. The center would house a museum, gallery, and art gallery. Each program functions independently, with its own public, administrative, and logistic spaces.

### ***Could you please tell me how you began the project? Also, it would be great to hear about its entire structure.***

The project began as a two-stage international call for proposals in 2016, with a pre-qualification stage and a design competition. Surprisingly, more than 70 teams pre-qualified, and we had the chance to win the design competition. From the initial phase, we collaborated with the Shanghai-based Chinese firm ECADI and continued this collaboration in a more structured way once we were under contract and had developed the building plans. After the overall approach and concept were fixed, our role as a foreign design firm particularly focused on guaranteeing the quality of the façade envelope, interior design, and exhibition-space/cultural planning. Meanwhile, the local firm particularly carries out all the main architectural and engineering work required to obtain permits and regulations. Although our roles are defined, we continue to share and validate ideas as the project develops. This ensures that the project is the best possible, in the opinion of both the firms.

### ***What challenges did you experience when working on this multi-cultural partners' project? Could you please provide with me an example showing how you have figured them out?***

There can be many challenges in multi-cultural partnerships. Probably the most difficult is when there is a fundamental difference in design, taste, and vision. Fortunately, we did not have this problem with this project. However, each firm had different expectations regarding how the architectural process should work. For example, the Chinese firm, particularly on the engineering side, expected to implement a method similar to the one used for commercial buildings, where they receive an architectural design in which they implement their technical constraints based on code requirements. We, as Europeans, expect that the technical teams will collaborate very early on in the project to find special solutions, working with the design in service of the cultural institution's ambitions. There was no specific solution; we just needed to exercise patience and

continuous dialogue, to follow the process together and bridge gaps in expectations.

***What do you think is the most important contribution to this Chinese project, as a professional from Europe?***

I think that our contribution, as a European firm, made the project stand out in its aesthetic quality, as well as its generosity to the urban and public spaces. As a French studio, our approach is very sensitive to the urban environment. In this project, the cultural centre was to be built in an open site in the heart of the district. We tried to open up the site as much as possible with the design, giving back to the public space of the district. In this project, we were particularly interested in the traditional relationship of a European city between Plaza and Institution, and the reinterpretation of this in the morphology of a Chinese city created a very interesting result.

***Any advice for successful future collaborations of this kind?***

My advice, in general, for successful multicultural collaborations is to communicate openly, and try to listen to and understand different points of view. In my opinion, everyone has something to contribute from their perspective and experience, and the best projects combine all these positive elements. It is much more fluid to begin with the assumption of 'learning from others', than to be protective of one's own interests or ideas. Additionally, the collaborative

process is naturally slightly slower than working alone. Thus, patience and persistence are required throughout the whole process, which in architecture can be quite long, to finally encounter the realization of the final product.

***Zhuhai Museum, interview with Nicolas Pområnke, Partner, and Clemens Kampermann, Director and Project Lead, at the Architects von Gerkan, Marg and Partners (gmp)***

***Please introduce Zhuhai Museum briefly for the audience.***

Located on Zhuhai's coastal road, this museum benefits from its proximity to the water, mountains, and a park in the background. The conceptual design is a spatial spiral. The design of the Zhuhai Museum comprises a vertical and horizontal tract based on rectangular footprints. Together, they combine to form a sculptural ensemble. This contrasting duality reflects both the local situation between the mountains and the coast, and also, the museum program-the exhibition areas provide visitors with a view of the past and the future of the city. The design synchronises these aspects to create a uniform architectural gesture with a light-coloured façade band.

***I understand that you have won the international competition for this project. Is it a common way for European firms to embark on projects in China? It would also be great to hear the entire structure of the project.***



Figure 2. Zhuhai Museum. Photo by CreatAR\_Images.



In 2009, we won the competition with the China Academy of Building Research (CABR). At that time, we had already been active in China for over ten years and had established offices in Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen. Competitions in China are a common way for us, as well as for numerous other international architectural offices present in the country, to acquire contracts. With the conversion and extension of the Chinese National Museum in Beijing, gmp was already able to present an excellent reference for museum buildings in China, which at the same time aroused our interest in other cultural buildings. Here, too, we had already co-operated with CABR and were able to draw on a well-rehearsed team, because of several years of close co-operation in Beijing. The design planning was done in our Berlin office, while CABR was responsible for execution as a local partner. In addition, our colleagues from the gmp location in Shenzhen accompanied the construction. They are usually on site as contact persons and are in close contact with the clients. This local presence is very important for our day-to-day work, because our employees are rooted in Chinese culture and know the local conditions. This is the only way to ensure the quality of the projects.

***What do you think is your most important contribution as a professional from Europe to this Chinese project?***

Through our experience in cultural construction, especially with the Chinese National Museum, which was nearing completion at the time, we not only implemented an idea, but were also able to provide expert advice: What is functionally necessary; how can operational processes be optimised; what is the best dramaturgy to guide visitors through a museum? In this way, we further developed the project in dialogue with the client.

***Recently, there have been many Chinese-European collaboration museum projects. Any advice for mutual benefits, successful future collaborations of this kind?***

In the last 20 years, the trend of large museum buildings in China has indeed often been towards international 'star architects', but we see it as very positive sign that more and more local Chinese offices are also getting the chance to realise relevant museum projects. It is important to immerse oneself in Chinese culture and to see oneself as an equal partner developing a project in dialogue with each other. As European architects, we can only achieve a special architectural quality in China if our responsibility does not end with the preliminary design, but if the planning remains on one hand until completion. In our experience, this only works with a local presence.

**Sea World Culture and Arts Center (commonly known as Design Society), interview with Ole Bouman, a founding director.**

***Could you please tell me how the project began? It would also be great to hear the whole structure of the project. In particular, I would like to understand your role as a founding director.***

When I started my work as the founding director, the conditions were great. China Merchants' pioneering engagement with a new industry, design, had just taken off, and the Victoria and Albert Museum was planning its innovative and collaborative flagship project for China. The architect Fumihiko Maki was using his vision to amplify the best qualities of the museum's location in Shekou, by designing an urban landmark.

Speaking for myself, there was a fresh experience of working as the 5th Shenzhen Urbanism/Architecture Biennale's creative director, in one of the most vibrant cities I have ever worked for. Grateful for the opportunity, I began by mapping out the work needed to transform these conditions into an actual institution. The result was a founding document describing the vision and the actions needed to realise it. Then we started.

We have coined the name 'Design Society' to represent our spirit and drive for a positive change. We identified our audience. We have prepared a multi-faceted program of exhibitions, events, courses, and other formats for them. A team was built to implement this program. We conceived an entrepreneurial model to ensure sustainability. We began to establish numerous partnerships to develop our network. We have developed a long-term campaign focused on engaging the public with the Design Society project.



Figure 3. Design Society. Photo by Geuntae Park.

***I do not think it is common in China to have a director before the museum is physically built, which makes your case unique. What do you think is your most important contribution as a professional from Europe to this Chinese project?***

The Design Society project brings together the drive and culture of very different institutions. A Chinese state-owned enterprise, a British public institution, and a famous Japanese architect come together, at a location that is highly significant, in symbolic terms, to Chinese history and its current position in the world. Hence, the project had incredible potential, but only by combining all these things to create something more than the sum of its parts. I think my contribution would be to identify this surplus value, translate it into a robust narrative, build a team to execute it, and program and manage this to make it a reality rather than a promise. It was the vision of China Merchants to ensure that this process was conducted alongside the building construction, and to be ready with both the moment we could open the doors.

***What kind of challenges did you experience during this special journey?***

Whatever productivity, there were always challenges along the way. Finding skilled and dedicated people who believe in this unique project and are willing to commit years to it is by no means easy. Embedding a cultural initiative in a state-owned company culture with no previous experience in creative industries has been a process with a learning curve. Navigating, mediating, and ultimately transcending eastern and western cultural practices to something relevant and urgent for international design is an ongoing process.

Such platform creation is full of compromises—new insights, new team members, shifts of leadership, changing forms of accountability, communication problems, language issues, budget cuts, typhoons, and so on. However, there are a few qualities that were maintained throughout, which I think are important clues. The ambition level remained high, the deadline remained constant, and the talent pool remained impressive. The urban and social context of the place (local, regional and national) remained an important resource to the story and project motivation. But what I personally always found inspirational enough to overcome any setback was the mentality and stamina, or in one word the resolve in everyone involved. I could dwell upon personal techniques to address certain situations, but nothing would have worked without the good faith to complete this project as an exemplary one.

## CONCLUSION

Through the conversations, the challenges in creating partnerships and contributions from European side have been unveiled. European professionals indicated

that fundamental difference in design, taste, vision, communication problems, language barrier, and budget handling are some challenging issues. At the same time, aesthetic quality and further (and more professional) knowledge of institutional programme are discussed as their contribution. Meanwhile, it is commonly highlighted that open discussion and appreciation of different perspectives are critical for a successful delivery of the collaborative museum project in China, which should be a contribution of these interviews to the field.

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# Limitations of Reusing Old Buildings as Museums—the Case of the National Cheng Kung University Museum

Mei-Fang Kuo, Hsiao-Tung “Charlotte” Su

National Cheng Kung University Museum, Tainan City  
Taiwan

## Abstract

During the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, Taiwan has experienced a trend of preserving and repurposing historic sites and buildings as museums. Similar practices can be seen in the city of Tainan with buildings such as the National Museum of Taiwan Literature (Tainan Prefectural Hall), the Tainan Judicial Museum (Tainan District Court), and the Tainan Art Museum (Tainan City Police Department). Following this trend, the National Cheng Kung University Museum was established in 2008 by utilizing the former administration building of the Tainan Technical College (the predecessor of NCKU), which is also a municipal historic site.

Given its historic background and rich history, various constraints would be expected when utilizing the building's interior space for exhibitions. Issues include the complex network of electrical wiring installed in the ceilings, the preservation of integrity for most of the architectural elements, including both interior and exterior walls, doors and windows and flooring, and compromises made during the installation of air conditioning systems.

Recently, as the building of NCKU Museum is undergoing renovation, other campus spaces such as the old Main Library Building established in the 1960s, which is also a historical building, have been borrowed to host exhibitions, which the curatorial team had to overcome several complex challenges ranging from retaining the “form follows function” architectural principle of the building to making compromises with the regulations and policies of the institute currently resides and manages the building.

In this article, we wish to discuss the strategies and responses of our curatorial team in dealing with exhibition spaces within these two different types of buildings.

**Keywords:** Museum exhibition, Historical building, reuse and reeneration/ revitalization, Building form and function

## **I. Background: the regeneration of historical buildings in NCKU**

Starting in the 1980s, a rise of conscious effort to preserve and reuse old buildings from a cultural heritage perspective in Taiwan, although the trend of repurposing historical landmarks and buildings as museums hasn't started until the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As the oldest settlement and city of Taiwan, Tainan is known for its many historical heritages, including landmarks and buildings, such as the Tainan Prefecture Hall, the District Court, and the Police Station, all have been repurposed into various national and municipal museums. Similarly located in Tainan City, National Cheng Kung University (NCKU) has repurposed its old administrative building as a museum in 2005, launching its first self-curated exhibition "The Divine Quartet", featuring the works of traditional craftsmanship of Taiwan.

The NCKU's main campus in Tainan City is comprised of nine campuses, with the present-day Cheng-Kung Campus being the only one that was initially designated as school grounds. After WW2, the school evolved from a higher technical school to the college of engineering, and eventually to a university. Driven by the increasing number of faculty, students, and colleges, the university began to systematically purchase the adjacent blocks to expand its main campus. Hence the lands which have become the present-day eight campuses surrounding the Cheng-Kung Campus were gradually acquired from the Ministry of National Defense, while many of the existing structures in these areas, including city wall remnants from the Qing Dynasty and various barracks and military facilities from the Japanese Colonial Period. These buildings have become the backbone of NCKU's effort to preserve and repurpose historical buildings.

## **II. Between the cost for preservation versus new construction**

Currently, NCKU is known for a campus rich in history—represented by various historical buildings, as well as both national and municipal heritage sites and buildings, which is the fruition of decades worth of effort in preserving and reusing of old buildings, especially through maintaining or restoring the craftsmanship integrity and historic architectural element of these historical structures, including city gates and walls of Qing Dynasty, military barracks and hospitals from the Japanese Colonial Period, and Modernism buildings constructed post-WW2 in collaboration with Purdue University during the U.S. Aid Period, such as the Main Library, several department buildings, and student dormitories. On the other hand, despite the higher expenses for preserving these historic buildings compared new construction projects, the NCKU has always strive in commitment to ensure the buildings that are of historical significance would continue to exist

as irreplaceable entities of the campus's unique cultural landscape. Not only does the accumulative architectural image of these buildings define the landscape of the NCKU's campus, but can also be regarded as a microcosm of Tainan's urban development. These preservation efforts have shaped the NCKU campus with a distinctive cultural and historical character, marking its unique presence among Taiwan's university campuses.

## **III. Spaces reused by the NCKU Museum**

Since NCKU Museum's establishment, several old buildings around the main campus have been reused as museum space, which can be categorized as follows:

### **1. Campus buildings built during the Japanese Colonial Period:**

These buildings are predominately located on the Cheng-Kung campus, which includes the old administration building, the original Physics Department building, and the Ge-Zhih Lecture Hall. These three sites are also designated municipal heritages by the Tainan City Government. As part of the original Tainan Higher Technical School established in 1933 by the Taiwan Governor-General's Office during the Japanese Colonial Period, the old administration building currently serves as the main building of the NCKU Museum. Overall, the scarcely ornate architectural style during the decade between the 1920s and 1930s represents a transitional period from traditional to modern architecture. While the Ge-Zhih Lecture Hall still features simplified reliefs of basket capitals and minimal decorating elements, the NCKU Museum building has almost no decorations, except for two square carvings of poinciana blossom motifs featured on the front archway above the main entrance. Despite its lack of ornateness, the building is rich in material context—it was constructed with reinforced brick, load-bearing walls, and steel trusses imported from Germany. The windows, designed to withstand the tropical weather, are tall and narrow, featuring rectangular wooden frames with small glass panes, while the exterior is covered with 13-groove tiles invented to reduce glare from the sunlight as a defensive measure against airstrikes. As one of the oldest buildings of the university, corrosion and related aging issues have surfaced since the recent decades, such as water leakage and pests. In order to extend its longevity, the building is currently undergoing a comprehensive renovation process, which began since mid-2023. Consequently, the vital functions as a museum, including hosting exhibitions, conducting historical research, and general administration, have all been temporarily removed from the space. With the NCKU museum's primary function as an exhibition space and educational institution being

dispersed due to the lack of a dedicated space, this reality has also resulted with a few challenges and criticisms especially from within the university, as some within the university's management have mistakenly presumed that the university museum no longer serves a functional purpose as an institution.

Meanwhile, the original Physics Department building, which is another space repurposed by the museum, remains in poor condition and awaits restoration as well. Not only is the building yet able to meet the necessary standards for collection storage, due to the lack of proper storage design within the space, the building can only be used as a temporary storage area for the museum's furniture, educational props, and display cabinets, which are often stacked directly on top of the floor's surface.

## 2. Military facilities built during the Japanese Colonial Period

The NCKU Museum also repurposed a building located in the Li-Xing Campus, originally built in 1919 as part of the Former Japanese Army Tainan Garrison Hospital. After WW2, the facility was renamed as the 804 Military Hospital and designated as a municipal heritage. Among the buildings built, this is the only two-story red-brick structure, making it particularly unique among the rest of the single-story facilities. Between 2010 and 2019, the building was briefly under the management of the NCKU museum, which the museum has intended to display its collections while simultaneously using the building as a storage space. Hence the building was mindfully repurposed into a visible storage space, taking full advantage to preserve and utilize its architectural characteristics, such as the large arched windows, which allows a clear view from the outside into the interior. Notable artifacts once displayed here included the intricately carved Qing Dynasty red wedding beds, master chairs, and other 19th-century Western-style furniture. Also, stone hitching posts were lined up along the hallway of the first floor, inviting visitors to experience via touch and explore their histories.

Eventually, the building was transferred to the newly established Institute of Archaeology, and most of the artifacts stored within were relocated to the An-Nan Campus, located outside the city center, where the museum utilized the exhibition lobby once owned by the Marine Biology and Cetacean Research Center for storage. While the lobby is quite spacious thanks to its large and open-span structure, the weight-bearing capacity of the floors was insufficient for heavy objects. To cope with this difficulty, artifacts that are mainly carved stones, such as the stone hitching posts and guardian lion statues, had to be

stored in shipping containers placed in outdoor space adjacent to the building until more suitable storage solutions could be found.

## 3. Buildings built during post-WW2 and U.S. Aid period

Located in the Sheng-Li Campus, the former Main Library was constructed during the U.S. Aid period, during the university's collaboration with Purdue University. This building, completed in 1959, was designed by faculty and students from the Department of Architecture and was approved by Professor Friel, a Purdue University representative stationed at the university. During the period, various departments of the university have undergone a shift in curricular structure, taking influence and inspiration from Western architectural education principles from the U.S., such as "form follows function", and Mies van der Rohe's concept of "less is more".

Shaped by the new teachings, a prominent exterior feature of the main library is the large glass panel windows and the smooth concrete facade. This design of a "curtain wall" façade, newly introduced in the Tainan region at the time, is optimized to meet with the library's need for natural lighting and ventilation as not only a storage space for books but also a comfortable study space for the students, especially because air conditioning facilities were a luxury at the time. In order to cope with Taiwan's subtropical climate, the library also incorporated an innovative ventilation system—windows at different heights could be pushed outward to enable more efficient airflow and cooling through natural air circulation, which is an advanced feature even among the buildings constructed during the period.

In respect to its historical significance and architectural narrative, the building is officially registered as a Municipal Historic Building by the Tainan City Government. The NCKU museum was able to repurpose the building's east wing on the first floor to serve as a standard storage room with full temperature and humidity control, and is the only museum-standard storage facility at NCKU, equipped with specialized cabinets for artifact preservation. However, due to its repurposed function as a storage room, the original "form follows function" principle was inevitably compromised. The large curtain wall windows, once vital for light and ventilation, had to be sealed with a dust-proof storage system, which negates their original purpose. Meanwhile, as the main library is located directly across the main building of the NCKU museum, the two can be seen as each other's counterparts in terms of their original design intent through their function, form, and type.

#### IV. Limitations and challenges of reusing non-museum spaces for exhibition

The NCKU Museum has long struggled with insufficient space for exhibitions, which often required compromising with constraints required by other departments and institutes. In 2011, in celebrating the university's 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the museum borrowed the lobby space of the new main library. While the space is spacious and bright, which allows the curator to design an expansive exhibition plan utilizing the museum's first collection of traditional Qing Dynasty wooden furniture as display cabinets and platforms, guided tours for distinguished guests, including the presence of several former university presidents, had to be cancelled due to the main library's rigid regulations set to ease noise disturbance on behalf of the students studying in the library. Also, the public's lack of knowledge on the historical narratives and exhibition context has caused some misunderstandings, for the exhibition itself was also criticized for using "old" and "worn-out" display cabinets.

In 2021 to celebrate the NCKU's 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the NCKU Museum has curated a special exhibition series held across multiple venues on the main campus, which were simultaneously opened to the public. One of the venues was the narrow display windows outside the NCKU Art Center, which the particular exhibition has showcased the history of university student's lifestyle over the past 90 years, including interior models to represent the progression and development of student dormitory designs. Despite its limited exhibition space, the Art Center itself, located on the first floor of the Student Activity Center building, has been a popular gathering place for extracurricular activities in the evening. Hence, the exhibition was received positively, sparking discussions among students about the changes in student housing.

In 2022, the museum has once again borrowed the same venue for the 5<sup>th</sup> exhibition of the long-going serial exhibition "The History of Engineering Education in Taiwan", focusing on Architecture and Urban Planning. Due to the venue's limited availability, the exhibition was relocated back to the museum's main building after 3 months, where the narrative materials and artifacts were displayed in the room dedicated to the serial exhibition. The museum space allowed more flexibility in the lighting and placement for display cabinets, which were designed in a modular fashion to fit for different spatial needs. As such, while the indebted support of the Art Center's management is gladly appreciated throughout the exhibition's planning process, having an exhibition space tailored to the needs of curatorial planning and management is essential for creating a wholistic exhibition experience.

In 2023, as the NCKU Museum's main building is closed for renovation, finding a proper venue for the 6<sup>th</sup> installment

of the same serial exhibition has led to unprecedented challenges. Eventually, the southern extension of the old main library became the only option suitable for the exhibition for its spaciousness. However, the space was in poor condition due to neglect, and lacked all basic exhibition necessities, such as electrical system, interior lighting, and air conditioning system. To complicate matters, built during the U.S. Aid period, the old main library building is a designated Municipal Historical Building, which severely limits the flexibility for modifications. To prepare the space for the exhibition, not only the lighting and power circuits had to be designed to prevent damaging the walls and ceilings, but to also cope with the effect of global warming, which causes the indoor space to occasionally reach up to 30°C in Southern Taiwan. The planning for this exhibition has presented some of the most challenging conditions the museum had faced in over a decade, which the curatorial team had to invest considerable effort to overcome constraints and obstacles, while adhering to heritage preservation laws and meeting the specific needs of a museum-quality exhibition.

#### V. Conclusion

While repurposing old buildings into new facilities holds its merits for help promoting historical appreciation and shaping cultural identity by preserving the historical landscape, underlying challenges must also be treated with attentiveness, including the restrictions and constraints required to be adhered to. According to the "Regulations Governing the Restoration and Reuse of Monuments" published by the Ministry of Culture, any construction on buildings designated as historical buildings, monuments, or heritages must go under an assessment period, which an application must be submitted to higher administration and governing agencies, often to then be pushed through a meticulous screening process hosted by a board of committee. Explicably, the application and assessment are known for their notoriously lengthy process, which, as a result, most repurposing projects would take initiatives to avoid modifying the building's structure.

Nevertheless, because outdated facilities often struggle to meet present-day architectural standards or specialized needs, such as the basic functions of a museum for hosting exhibitions, maintaining collections, and hosting educational outreach events, old buildings would usually undergo reconstruction to update and reinforce its structure, or add in new components to ensure its longevity and sustainable functionality. Curators who intend to host exhibitions in historical buildings that have been reconstructed without the incorporation of museum planning would more likely be facing more limitations, such as having to cope with the old electrical and internet wiring systems, walls and pillar surfaces that cannot be drilled or apply adhesive materials to, the lack of air conditioning systems, and in some cases, worn-out flooring that is potentially hazardous to visitors.

Additionally, as preservation to the integrity of the building's interior space, including windows and entrances, must be prioritized, which leads to the space unit becoming less flexible to customization and interior decoration. Not only is it difficult to adjust the luminance and design visitor flow for exhibitions of different themes and content, the lack of flexibility often hampers the opportunity to plan for more comprehensive and inclusive exhibitions.

As the large-scale renovation project for the NCKU Museum's main building is going underway, starting in 2022, the museum has had to borrow spaces from other campus buildings for hosting exhibitions. Consequently, not only the museum would have to cope with the physical constraints presented by these spaces, including planning exhibitions, maintaining collections, and shaping visitor experience, but also must operate under the constraints of the university's primary focus on teaching and research. Meanwhile, the policies and stances of different university presidents in regards to the school's cultural heritage have also played a significant role, which the apportioned resources and budget have also limited the museum's capability to maintain consistent presentation quality and visitor experiences.

## BIOGRAPHY

*Dr. Mei-Fang Kuo* received a PhD in Architecture History and Theory from National Cheng Kung University (NCKU) in 2007 and has worked at the University Museum since then. She is currently an associate curator.

Based on these studies, has completed more than 16 exhibitions. Two are international cooperation - with the Museum of Asian Art, the University of Malaya, and three major Czech Republic museums. This exhibition won second place in the UMAC AWARD 2017.

She worked as an assistant curator at the National Museum of Natural Sciences (NMNS), Taiwan, from 1986 to 1993. she had been involved and in charge of the permanent exhibition of the NMNS Phase 1 Exhibition Hall. She also led the project of studying and reconstructing the "Astronomical Water Clock", which has become the major exhibition item in NMNS.

Since joining NCKUM, Dr. Kuo has been responsible for a variety of research and exhibition projects and collections. She is currently an associate curator and offers a few courses, including "Method and Theory in Museology", "Introduction to Museology", and "Guiding to Tainan History and Landscape".

Her research interests include museum architecture and exhibition, cultural heritage, Taiwanese aboriginal architecture, and traditional Chinese architecture.

*Ms. Hsiao-Tung "Charlotte" Su* received an M.A. Degree from the Institute of Creative Industries Design, NCKU, in 2013 and participated in the Rijksmuseum Summer School Program (the Netherlands) in 2018. Having worked closely with Dr. Mei-Fang Kuo on various curatorial and exhibition projects since 2011, including "I C Taiwan" held in the Czech Republic, which won second place in the UMAC AWARD 2017. She is currently working at the NCKU Museum as a project assistant for the museum's ongoing serial exhibition: The History of Engineering Education in Taiwan.



# "Silangaw i Katangka: buds of the Bishopwood" display and the spatial metaphor of "*luma*"

Daong Cinceng

National Museum of Prehistory, Exhibition and Education Division

Taiwan

## Abstract

This article is based on the author's multiple identities as a member of the Sakizaya people, a former member of the presidential palace and a curator of the Sakizaya people, to introduce "Silangaw i Katangka: buds of the Bishopwood" – the Katangka indigenous communities of the Sakizaya people in Hualien County Curating experience of "Cultural Relics Census Project Achievements Exhibition".

In the early 1980s, the Katangka indigenous communities of the Sakizaya people was relocated and abolished due to the construction of the JIASHAN Air Force Base due to national defense policies. In 2016, President Tsai Ing-wen announced the establishment of the "Presidential Commission on Historical Justice and Transformational Justice for indigenous Peoples". The Sakizaya people called on the government to pay attention to the issue of forced relocation of the Katangka indigenous communities. In 2022, through the work of the "Katangka Tribal Cultural Relics Census Preliminary Project", the Sakizaya people investigated more than 63 cultural relics and organized the "Silangaw i Katangka: buds of the Bishopwood" exhibition. Through cultural relics and oral stories, Let the audience understand the modern history of the Sakizaya people and the life memories of the Katangka indigenous communities.

"luma" means "house" in the Sakizaya language. Its meaning can also be extended to many meanings such as home, family, family, hometown, etc. The semantics of "luma" are integrated into the design of the exhibition space. Form a spatial metaphor. By introducing the metaphor of exhibition space, this article attempts to explain how the exhibition can achieve a collective healing effect on the audience of the Katangka indigenous communities.

**Keywords:** Sakizaya people, Home, Display space, Metaphor, Collective healing

## 1. About My Writing Perspective

This study utilizes the anthropological method of “participant observation” to collect data. Before delving into the main topic, I believe it is necessary for readers to understand the identity with which I participated in the entire process and the “Silangaw i Katangka: buds of the Bishopwood” exhibition. This serves to establish the credibility of the article’s data and to help the audience understand the limitations of my writing perspective.

Firstly, I am a member of the Sakizaya people, specifically from the Maibul community located further south. Due to my long-term involvement in public affairs within the tribe and ethnic group, I gained the trust of my people and was elected as a Sakizaya representative on the Presidential Office’s Indigenous Transitional Justice and Historical Justice Committee during its third term. During my tenure as a committee member, I continued to focus on the transitional justice issues of the Katangka community, which led me to propose a cultural relics investigation project. The aim was to reconstruct forgotten histories and life stories through these relics. One of the outcomes of this project was to organize an exhibition to raise public awareness of these issues. The project executors believed I had relevant exhibition planning experience and invited me to be the curator of the “Silangaw i Katangka: buds of the Bishopwood” exhibition.

This study is based on my participation and observation in three different roles: as a Sakizaya person, a committee member, and a curator. These roles triggered reflections at different stages of my participation, which form the content of the following article.

## 2. The Migration and Dispersion of the Katangka community

The word “sakul” in the Sakizaya language means “bishopwood.” The original location of the Sakul community was within the largest Sakizaya people, the Takubuwan tribe, which corresponds to the area around Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital and Minglian Elementary School today. The tribe was named Sakul because bishopwood s were abundant in the area at that time. However, after the “Battle of Takubuwan” in 1878 (also known as the Karawan Incident), the Takubuwan tribe disintegrated and was renamed “Guihua Village.” During the Japanese colonial period, the Sakul community was renamed “Sakura” due to its phonetic similarity in Japanese. Around the same time, Sakizaya people and some Amis people crossed the Sapodang River to cultivate land, plant crops, or move nearby, forming the later Kasiwsiwan and Katangka communities.

The Katangka community was initially named by the Japanese using the Minnan term “CHIATONGKA,” also due to the abundance of bishopwood s in the area. In 1924, the Sakizaya people applied to the Kata Group to cultivate this land into rice paddies. After 1945, the area was renamed “Jialin Village.” In 1984, the national defense policy promoted the “Hualien-Taitung Professional JIASHAN Plan” to build the JIASHAN Air Force Base. The government forcibly expropriated 300 to 400 hectares of land from residents at low prices, with no plans for the subsequent relocation of residents. This forced the community members to scatter, some moving to nearby Xincheng Township and Hualien City to live with relatives, while others moved further away to establish new homes.

As a result, the Sakizaya people who once lived in the Katangka community no longer had the opportunity to hold traditional tribal ceremonies and other cultural activities, except for family gatherings during weddings and funerals. The interpersonal relationships and social networks built over several generations gradually became estranged, and related cultural relics were rarely used. The culture of the Katangka community remains only in memory and is gradually being forgotten.

## 3. Indigenous Historical Justice and Transitional Justice Committee and the “Silangaw i Katangka: buds of the Bishopwood” Special Exhibition

The issue of the forced relocation and dissolution of the Katangka community due to the construction of an air force base has been a source of pain for many Sakizaya people for years. However, the community members, being in a politically and socially disadvantaged position, had no opportunity to communicate with the government and could only remain silent for decades. It wasn’t until 2016, when President Tsai Ing-wen announced the establishment of the “Presidential Office Indigenous Historical Justice and Transitional Justice Committee,” that the Sakizaya people, through the election of tribal representatives, rekindled public attention on the forced relocation of the Katangka community. They chanted slogans like “The land of JIASHAN Base belongs to the Sakizaya!” The first and second elected tribal representatives strongly urged the government to address this issue during meetings at the Presidential Office, demanding that the Air Force return some of the unused land to the Sakizaya people. However, the Ministry of National Defense remained indifferent.

At the end of 2020, I was elected as the third-term tribal representative on Indigenous Historical Justice and Transitional Justice Committee. While continuing to emphasize the importance of the Katangka community’s forced relocation issue, I also changed the strategy for communicating with the government. I believed that what the Katangka community

members lost was not only land but also the traditional culture developed from that land. The interruption of tribal culture is a loss for the nation, and therefore, cultural restoration must be included in the transitional justice agenda.

In 2022, the Sakizaya people, through the “Preliminary Cultural Relics Survey Project of the Katangka community,” identified over 63 cultural relics, with the number continuing to grow. Before conducting the cultural relics survey, the project team held briefing sessions in the Sakul community, Takubuan Sakul community, and Hupu community, inviting tribal leaders and officials, members of tribal age-grade organizations, and women’s groups to attend.

Finally, in August 2023, the “Silangaw i Katangka: buds of the Bishopwood - Katangka Cultural Relics Survey Project Exhibition” was held. Through the display of cultural relics and oral histories, the exhibition led the audience to rediscover the modern history of the Sakizaya people and the living memories of the Katangka community.

#### 4. *luma’*—The Spatial Metaphor of the Exhibition Venue

The “Silangaw i Katangka: buds of the Bishopwood” special exhibition is not displayed in a professional museum or art gallery. Instead, it is held at the “*luma’80 Studio*” in the Sakul community. This studio was converted from an old house and named *luma’80* because its address number is 80.

The exterior of *luma’80* features a gable roof, reminiscent of traditional houses. Since most of the cultural relics surveyed are everyday items, including hunting tools, farming implements, kitchen utensils, clothing, and accessories, the initial concept for the exhibition theme focused on the house and family life—“*luma’*.”



The exterior of “*luma’80*” features a gable roof, reminiscent of traditional houses.

#### *luma’* means “home,” and *naluma’an* means “hometown.”

The word “*luma’*” in the Sakizaya language means “home/ house.” Depending on its grammatical form, it can extend to meanings such as *iluma’ay* (family), *laluma’an* (relatives), *taluma’* (return home), *misaluma’* (build a house), *pataluma’* (start a family), and *naluma’an* (hometown). In fact, the initial concept for the “Silangaw i Katangka: buds of the Bishopwood” special exhibition was “*naluma’an*: Hometown, Please Open the Door,” using *luma’* (home) and *naluma’an* (hometown) to create a resonance.

Why was “Hometown, Please Open the Door” considered as the exhibition title? It was because the only remaining structure after the Katangka community was dismantled was the “Jialin Bridge,” which once led to the tribe. However, the bridge now leads to the base’s fence. Therefore, “Hometown, Please Open the Door” became a kind of prayer, hoping that the exhibition would allow the audience to access the memory of the Katangka community. However, this title could evoke sadness, so after some discussion, it was changed to “The Bud of the Banyan,” which conveys a more positive and hopeful sentiment of a new beginning.



The Jialin Bridge, which once led to the Katangka community, is now blocked by the air force base’s fence.

#### Table and Chairs

When you enter the exhibition, you will see a round table with four chairs placed in the center. This setup serves not only as the focal point of the exhibition but also symbolizes the living room of a family space where family members can converse, work, and relax. This table and chairs also have a display function. On the table, there is a laptop showing an aerial view of the Katangka community before the air force base was built. Through the “Katangka community Landscape Survey Workshop,” many coordinates were



marked on the map, including indigenous place names, public facilities of the tribe, and various households.

Why use the living room to display the landscape of the Katangka community? In Sakizaya life, there has always been a need for spaces to gather and tell stories. Indoors, this might be the living room, while outdoors, it could be any place where people sit in a circle with a table for drinks and food, creating a suitable discussion space. During the execution of the cultural relics survey project, it was often in such spaces that various tribal stories were heard. The most crucial aspect of these stories was identifying the spatial locations mentioned, so investigators used maps to help interviewees pinpoint these locations. Therefore, the table in the exhibition not only symbolizes a gathering space for family life but also recreates the scene of cultural relics surveys and storytelling.

manage the household and its immediate surroundings, while men handle public affairs and activities further afield, such as gathering, fishing, and hunting. This concept means that men and women each have their own spaces for storing tools within the traditional house.

Reflecting this idea in the exhibition, I have presented the tools used by women and men on the east and west sides, respectively. Women's tools include farming implements, cooking utensils, and clothing, while men's tools include knives, hunting gear, and items used in public affairs, such as scales and gongs. However, some objects are placed in the opposite gender's space, such as men's clothing in the women's area and pottery jars for pickling food made by women in the men's area. This symbolizes the cooperative relationship between the genders despite their distinct roles.



*The table and chairs in the exhibition symbolize a gathering space for family life.*

### **Women's space and men's space**

The Sakizaya people traditionally practices a gender-balanced division of labor, where men and women have distinct responsibilities but also assist each other. In terms of spatial allocation, with the house as the center, women

### **The television is a window**

In the exhibition, a television plays the documentary "Katangka: The Bud of the Banyan," directed by Kawah and produced by Lisin. This documentary covers the execution of the cultural relics survey project and interviews with

community members who once lived in the Katangka community. They share their memories of life in the tribe and their experiences during the land expropriation and forced relocation. There are two versions of the documentary, one of which is specially edited for the exhibition.

During the interviews, community members often share their past life memories, including many landscape descriptions such as rice fields, fruit trees, vegetable gardens, papaya trees, bishopwood s around their homes, as well as streams, waterfalls, and forests nearby. The director has edited these scenic images into the film, servinas transitions to give viewers a break when the film loops in the exhibition, preventing fatigue. Additionally, these scenic images and natural sounds transport the exhibition's time and space back to when the Katangka community still existed—the television in the exhibition becomes a window of the house, allowing the audience to see the landscape remembered by the community members.



*The television in the exhibition becomes a window of the house, allowing the audience to see the landscape remembered by the community members.*

## The child's desk

The final section of the exhibition features a desk, with a military uniform hanging on a nearby coat rack. On the desk, there is a model airplane and a puzzle of the Katangka community map. The half-open drawer contains documents related to land expropriation and numerous letters expressing the sorrow of leaving their homeland. The desk symbolizes a child's space within the home, while the military uniform and airplane represent a child's dream of becoming a soldier. In the Katangka community, many young people pursued military careers. However, when the base construction plan was approved, some were asked by their superiors to help communicate the land expropriation issue to their families, putting them in a difficult position. Some still feel guilty about this to this day.



*Women's tools include farming implements, cooking utensils, and clothing. Men's tools include knives, hunting gear, and items used in public affairs, such as scales and gongs.*



This section of the exhibition inevitably evokes heavy emotions. Therefore, the puzzle on the desk and the documents and letters in the drawer serve as interactive elements. The purpose is to allow the audience to take action in response to historical events, such as piecing together the fragmented map of the tribe to see the tribe and homeland anew, or closing the drawer to symbolically put away the sad memories contained in the documents and letters. When the audience sits at the desk to calm their emotions, they might find a note left by the curator:

*Some things, though rarely mentioned, are kept in the heart;*

*Some memories, though seemingly light, may not have truly passed.*

*'only by facing the truth sincerely can reconciliation be attained.'*

— 2016, President Tsai Ing-wen apologized on the morning of August 1 to the indigenous peoples on behalf of the government."

## CONCLUSION

The "Silangaw i Katangka: buds of the Bishopwood" special exhibition is the result of my experiences as a Sakizaya person, a member of Indigenous Historical Justice and Transitional Justice Committee, and a curator. As a Sakizaya person, I am familiar with the multiple meanings of the word "luma'." As a committee member, I understand that this exhibition must help the audience grasp the importance of the Katangka community's issues and indigenous transitional justice. As a curator, I am deeply aware that the process of cultural relics investigation involves revealing painful memories, so the exhibition must have a collective healing effect, transforming past sorrowful memories into encouragement for future actions.

In terms of the spatial metaphor of the exhibition, I drew from the architectural characteristics of the luma'80 studio, deconstructing the elements of "luma' (home/ house)" to form various exhibition units: the circle of tables



*The desk symbolizes a child's space, while the military uniform and airplane represent a child's dream of becoming a soldier.*

and chairs creates a gathering space, recreating the tribe's discussions about the Katangka community's landscape; the everyday items of women and men reflect the gender division of labor and cooperation in the Sakizaya people; the television in the exhibition shows a documentary interspersed with many natural landscapes and sounds, bringing the atmosphere of the exhibition back to the past; the desk in the exhibition symbolizes a child's space in the house, representing both the child's aspiration to become a soldier and the reality of being caught between the nation and the tribe, while the interactive elements of the map and drawer encourage the audience to take action to change the historical narrative.

#### BIOGRAPHY

Daong Cinceng is a Sakizaya people, a indigenous people from Taiwan. The area of his academic study is cultural anthropology. Currently working at the National Museum of Taiwan Prehistory, his job includes planning exhibitions, planning educational activities, guided tours, marketing planning, etc. In addition to working in the museum, he also often works with Indigenous communities, including collecting cultural relics, interviewing elders, organizing youth activities, and creating picture books and songs in Indigenous languages.

## Showcases and space

Andrea Sartori

Goppion Technology, Milan

Italy

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### Abstract

The specificity of each museum is defined, in addition to its cultural and social identity, by the organization of its spaces and the relationship they establish with visitors. The space of the museum is determined by the architecture of the building in which it is located, the shape and characteristics of the display cases and the arrangement of these and other display units to create the visitor path. All of this generates relationships, different from time to time, between the works on display and the environment that houses them, the works on display and the visitors, and the visitors among themselves.

The role that the showcase plays, as a mediator between the visitor and the works, is fundamental. Thus the showcase custom-built around a work can isolate it and enhance its uniqueness, while large architectural showcases highlight the relationships between objects and recreate the original contexts.

The design of museum spaces and paths must take into account the key concepts of proxemics and the need to strike a balance between presenting objects effectively and engagingly and the convenience and comfort of visitors, for whom it is essential not to feel oppressed or too close to one another.

Likewise, the clear and well-marked organization of routes facilitates a natural and intuitive flow of visitors, avoiding congested situations and contributing substantially to an enjoyable visitor experience.

**Keywords:** space, proxemic, architecture, visit path, context.

**“A person recognizes and defines a relationship between himself and the world, delimits a zone of experience within which his personality is, however, active”** (Argan 1948). These words of the great art critic Giulio Carlo Argan help us frame the theme of this reflection on how the definition of an exhibition space, especially by means of its various display units, allows the visitor to immerse himself in a “zone of experience.” The precondition, which I believe you all share, is that the museum is not a “place that contains,” but rather an instrument that enables experiences made up of relationships, emotions, and perceptions.

A museum visit is “successful” when a relationship is created between visitors and exhibits, with their stories and messages, and when, as a result of this relationship, an emotion is provoked. An emotion that can be given by knowledge, experience, beauty, and immersion in a context.

In this sense, the showcases, as “basic display units”, as defined by Giovanni Pinna, become tools of communication, but they themselves become objects of communication. The medium is the message, as Marshall McLuhan said.

What I intend to offer to our today’s session is a review of experiences that differ in terms of the time of their creation, their location, and the type of museum and objects, where, however, the display case, or systems of display cases, stand in relation to the space or themselves contribute to define a space.



Sartori\_01

**Space, form and time.** The Jewels House in the Tower of London, built in 1993, is an example where space does not define a traditional type of visiting route, but is a path that follows step by step the unfolding of the ceremony of the sovereign’s coronation. (Sartori\_01) Symbolically, the long showcase in the entrance corridor displays the processional maces and swords and the trumpets that with the peals of the fanfare start the procession introducing the Sovereign. This showcase, as much by its shape as by its placement in space, makes the visitor, in some way, follow the way



Sartori\_02



Sartori\_03

of the procession, as if to revive it. (Sartori\_02) But then it is the succession of spaces that next presents the precious objects that are displayed in Westminster Abbey during the ceremony and, finally, the long showcases platform (Sartori\_03) that, still in succession presents the most precious and sacred objects of the ceremony: the scepters, the orb, the crowns. All linked by a shape of the showcases that we can also call “solemn,” monumental. Form, space, time. Three functional elements to convey definite messages, clear symbols by making the visitor experience the coronation ceremony and creating the emotion of participating in a historical act of immense significance.

**Space and contexts.** Different is the experience of the British Galleries of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, opened in 2001, more than twenty years ago but, in my opinion, still a very current model of ordering and its transposition into the exhibition design. (Sartori\_04) The



Sartori\_04





Sartori\_05



Sartori\_06

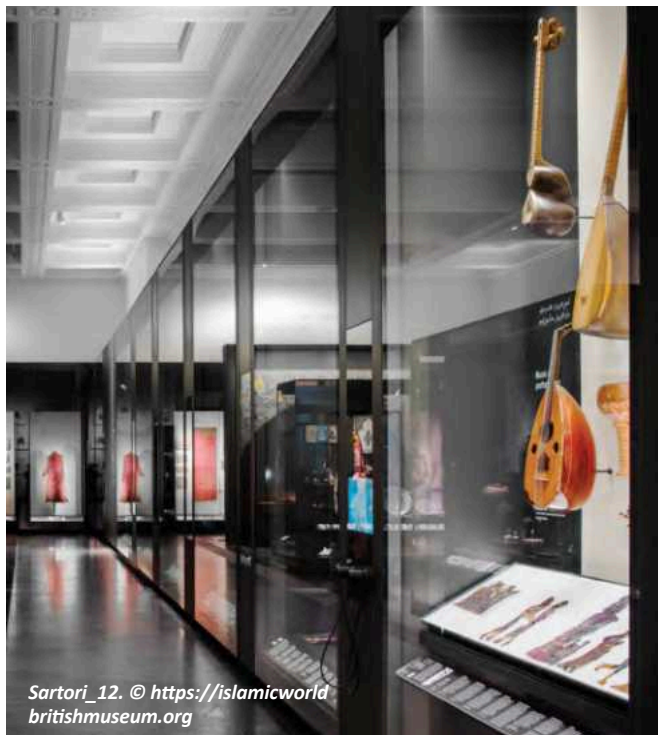


Sartori\_07

long path, which presents British arts & crafts from the 16th century to the end of the Victorian age, is divided by periods, attributing to each period a space defined by large panels and the display cases themselves. The breadth of the galleries, the multitude of objects, the physical length of the route, and the quantity and multiplicity of themes presented are “managed” through the creation of spaces that allow the visitor to focus on a specific theme within a specific period and, at least in theory, also to limit his or her visit to a specific topic of interest. (Sartori\_05) Here, then, emotion again arises from a relationship made possible by, among other things, a layout that, in the scanning of space, suggests contexts, juxtaposing objects in space that are connected by period, function or material. (Sartori\_06) Also thanks to these solutions, together with the “discovery rooms,” the projection rooms parallel to the path, an attention to proxemics is evident: the nonlinear path, the definition of specific areas of attention, avoids the “queue” effect. Visitors, although guided by the layout of the exhibit, have a certain freedom of movement that allows them to head to less crowded points to make the visit in a more comfortable situation. (Sartori\_07)

**Space and museological choices.** As mentioned above, if we understand the showcase as a “basic display unit” capable of contributing strongly, by its form and positioning in space, to the definition of the visit path, we must recognize that it becomes an essential tool to the explication of the museological idea of the project. There are in this regard two case studies similar in content, Islamic art, respectively at the Musée du Louvre, the Les Arts de l’Islam section, opened to the public in 2012, and at the British Museum, The Albukhary Foundation Gallery of the Islamic World, opened in 2018. In the Louvre, (Sartori\_08) the curatorial choice was to present the beauty of Islamic art, the richness of its materials, and the preciousness of its decorations. The famous relationship between visitor and objects is thus supported by the emotion of beauty. (Sartori\_09) In this sense, the large transparent showcases, glass bubbles, with minimal didactic apparatuses so as not to distract from the contemplation of the objects, are arranged in the space in apparent “disorder,” misaligned with each other, with no visit path highlighted. (Sartori\_10) Some have seen in this the suggestion of souks, Arab markets, caravanserais. Certainly the visitor can move through the space freely, guided, drawn in, not so much by the exhibition structures, but directly by the objects displayed in them. Entirely different is the case with the British Museum’s Albukhary Gallery (Sartori\_11). Organized chronologically and by geographical area, the exhibition is divided into two main galleries: the first covers the period from the beginning of Islam to the 1500s, showcasing the great mediaeval dynasties with broad references to the nearby galleries where Byzantine and Viking objects, from the era of the crusades and Islamic Spain, show the influence the Islamic arts had on the arts of Occident. In the second gallery, the visitor encounters works which represent the peak of creativity under the three main dynasties which have ruled the Islamic world from the 16th century onward. As is evident, this chronological ordering is functional for a tour that becomes a path of study, of learning. (Sartori\_12) The emotion, in this case, is the emotion of knowledge. For this reason, in addition to the abundance of caption apparatuses, and the arrangement of objects with well-defined and ordered scans, as is the case in the graphic tables of a scientific publication, the showcases themselves define well-defined spaces, especially the large L-shaped showcases (Sartori\_13) that almost create small rooms. In addition, the perception of space, defined precisely by the vitrines, is quite different from the transparent perception of Les Arts de l’Islam at the Louvre, where the gaze can sweep unrestrictedly in an overall view. Conversely, at the British Museum, the view is mostly confined to relatively small spaces, without transparencies, so that the visitor can concentrate on learning and deepening.

**The space and suggestion of storytelling.** There are instances, such as the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, where the presentation of applied arts is done in a way that tells stories. It may seem too simple to observe, but each







object has its own story, its own creator, its own specific place in a time, in a world. (Sartori\_14) An emblematic example is the relationship between display cases, space, and objects presented around the Sons of Liberty Bowl. The Liberty Bowl honored ninety-two members of the Massachusetts House of Representatives who refused to rescind a letter sent throughout the colonies protesting the Townshend Acts which taxed tea, paper, glass, and other commodities imported from England. This act of civil disobedience by the "Glorious Ninety-Two" was a major step leading to the American Revolution. The bowl was commissioned to Paul Revere by fifteen members of the Sons of Liberty, a secret, revolutionary organization to which Revere himself belonged. The Liberty Bowl, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution have been called the U.S. three most cherished historical treasures. The bowl is contained in a freestanding all glass showcase behind which, in perspective and thanks to its transparency, we can see the portrait of Revere himself holding the bowl itself in his hands. The emotion of the relationship here is as perceptible as ever, as if it were Revere himself presenting his work with all its meanings to the visitors. What is more, next to the portrait, and also visible in perspective, there are two other showcases containing other objects made by the famous silversmith, whose activity is thus presented as a whole, introducing the visitor to his world. Again, (Sartori\_15) the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, offers us another insight into the placement of objects in a real space, or at least in a space that suggests the real space in which they "lived" their lives. In this room, the essentiality of the display cases, placed at a distance from each other to allow a close view of the objects, is embedded in a space defined and punctuated by the original wooden beams of an eighteenth-century house relocated here. (Sartori\_16) Only the skeleton of the building is visible, but this is enough to evoke rather than create a space in relation to the objects on display.

**Space and universal knowledge.** Traditionally, when a museum sets out to offer an overview of the history of human civilization, we have been accustomed to walking through distinct galleries, ordered geographically and within them chronologically, then moving to other areas of the museum to visit exhibits from other cultures, other periods, etc. (Sartori\_17) A highly innovative case was that of the Galerie du Temp at the Louvre Lens, a "son" of the Musée du Louvre, built in the former mining town of Lens as an attractor and promoter of the renewal and resurrection of this town. The gallery space is immense and in it are placed objects belonging to the most diverse cultures and ages. From Sumerian civilization, to Egyptian civilization, and then Greek, Roman, medieval, Renaissance, up to the modern age, beyond the French Revolution. (Sartori\_18) All together in one big space. But it is precisely the exhibition structures, showcases, plinths and panels, the exhibit components, that discreetly mark out the succession of themes and periods, yet always leaving open the possibility

for visitors to choose between a synchronic type of visit, that is, by single period and culture, or a diachronic type, ranging their gaze through centuries in succession, thanks to the alignment of objects that are similar to each other, for example, sculptures, although belonging to entirely different contexts. Space management is thus managed here in the project in a way that entrusts the visitor with the choice of how to experience the visit.

**Space and the Dream.** Museum space, we have seen, concurs to create emotions, suggestions, to evoke sensations. Emblematic is the case of the Al-Thani Collection housed in the halls of the Musée de la Marine in Paris. (Sartori\_19) In one of these rooms, where the showcases appear as veritable treasure chests of the most precious objects, the space, kept almost in darkness, if one excludes the lighting of the display cases, (Sartori\_20) is filled with an endless series of golden petals that float creating reflections and immersing the visitor in an almost immaterial dimension, the dream that relates him or her to the preciousness of the objects on display. (Sartori\_21) Similarly, in the room dedicated to different representations of the human face, the vitrines, particular in shape and finishing material, titanium plates with special treatments, mark the space with an enveloping rhythm, a rhythm that brings the visitor closer to the works.

**The exhibition space and the museum space.** Museum spaces can be more or less neutral, in modern buildings or in historic buildings already designed for their museum function, or they can be characterized by architecture and decoration that is also very evident. Then there are spaces that were not born to be museums but nonetheless were born as "places of culture and knowledge." This is the case of libraries that, especially in recent years, have designed and built spaces dedicated to displaying their collections, even not limited to their book holdings. Cases to reflect on are the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris, the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, and the New York Public Library. In the first case, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, (Sartori\_22) one of the exhibition rooms with its highly characterized and very noticeable decoration could have been a critical issue in the inclusion of display cases for which high preservation performance was required. (Sartori\_23) Nevertheless, the display cases were related to the space containing them through attention to their size and proportions, which respect the architectural rhythm of the hall, and through the choice of colors and materials. (Sartori\_24) Similar solution in other rooms of the same building, where the spaces are characterized by the architectures but less by the decorations, in which the choice has been somewhat more neutral, more whispered, but still with a strong relationship between showcase and space. Different is the case of the Library of Congress (Sartori\_25) where, in a room in some respects similar to that of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the design choice was to define, by means of the display cases, a

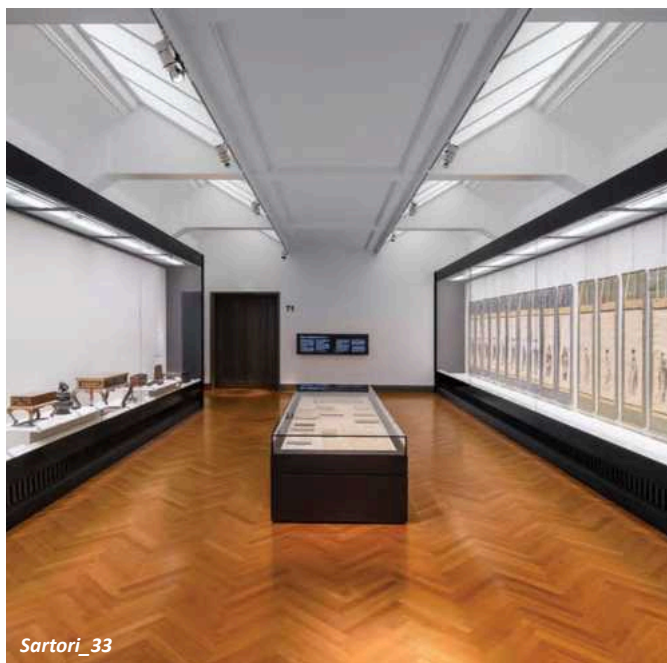




space within space, inserted but not really integrated into the architectural forms of the room. (Sartori\_26) The Treasure Gallery has thus become a space in which visitors can immerse themselves in the narrative of the exhibition and only separately relate to the space of the room and its architectural and decorative features. In the New York Public Library the experience (Sartori\_27) is still different, almost a compromise between the previous two. In the great hall of the Polonsky Exhibition there are large and “bulky” structural architectural elements, and therefore the vitrines fit within them, indeed integrate with them. (Sartori\_28) The showcases horizontally connect the large pillars and thus define the space and the tour route. (Sartori\_29) Again, however, the showcases are not extraneous elements to the building and its features, especially thanks to the choice of their finish, bronzed brass, which echoes the tones and materiality of the hall’s decorations.

**Space and Calligraphy.** The opportunity to find ourselves these days immersed in the oriental world, whose every beauty we are enjoying thanks to the amiability of the organizers of this conference, obliges us to consider how in museums of oriental tradition space and display units are organized in a relationship that brings us to the essentiality, linearity, and purity that are typical precisely of oriental calligraphy where form and meaning create a very strong unity. (Sartori\_30) The two most recent galleries rearranged in the Tokyo National Museum are the galleries dedicated to Katanas, (Sartori\_31) the famous Japanese swords, and the so-called Special Room, dedicated to the rotating temporary exhibition of Japanese fine arts. The images of the Katanas gallery np hardly need commentary. (Sartori\_32) The linearity of the showcases and their placement in transparency almost dematerialize the space, or rather, populate it with lines, with perhaps a bold suggestion, bring back to the signs of calligraphy or, but I do not want to exaggerate, to the movements in the air of the blades of the katanas themselves. (Sartori\_33) Different in form but perhaps not in suggestion is the case of the two huge vitrines that fill the walls of the Special Room. (Sartori\_34) They become part of the architectural space, almost disappearing but creating a kind of space within space, thanks to its size, isolates objects, allowing them to be viewed free of interference.

**Space without space.** We have seen how showcases dialogue with, complement, and sometimes define the physical space of display. (Sartori\_35) However, in a world where immateriality, virtuality, are more and more prevalent in our daily lives-think of Artificial Intelligence-I cannot help but offer you one last suggestion precisely related to this realm of immaterial, big data. It is about the experience of the structures, which are functional before they are expositional, but which expositional they become, of IBM’s Quantum Computer series. The Quantum Computer is yes an object, physical and well-defined, animated by



data that are not physical, inserted for functional reasons precisely, but here the “beauty” of technology takes over, in a structure that creates a space. An essential space, a functional space, a space, once again, full of suggestions and also of meanings. A space that propels us into the future. A future in which museums will continue to exist, with new challenges and new ambitions, where, however, we must never forget that the space of the exhibition is a place to create relationships and emotions.



## BIOGRAPHY

**Andrea Sartori** is an active ICOM member and regularly attends the ICOM General Conferences. He has a degree in Classics from the Università degli Studi di Milano and a specialized diploma in Archeology, and he worked for ten years at Milan’s Museo Archeologico as a curator of the classical archaeology section.

Andrea joined Goppion in 2002 and works alongside Sandro Goppion in museum studies, coordinating special projects, managing relationships with museums and universities, and putting together Goppion’s catalogues and publications.

# Museu do Seridó: an invisible museum

Isaias da Silva Ribeiro

Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN), Natal

Brazil

## Abstract

The Seridó Museum is one of the museums of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN) state and it's located in the city of Caicó, in a hot and arid region, approximately 270 km from the state capital, Natal. The small historical building that houses the museum presents characteristics of architecture from the Brazilian colonial period. Documents notice the building's opened in 1812 as a public jail until 1935. The change in function occurred with the inauguration as the city museum. A sequence of closings and openings is part of the history of this museum, leaving marks and structural problems. Completely abandonment remained until 1968. The institutional mission of the Museu do Seridó is to research, preserve and communicate the cultural identities of Seridó region in Rio Grande do Norte, in order to foment the scientific, educational, artistic, social and touristic development of that region, promoting training and critical reflection in order to contribute to human development, committing to social justice, socio-environmental sustainability, democracy and citizenship. After being closed for several years, the museum reopened in 2008. In July, 2019 there was the last reopening. A need for renovation (retrofit) for the museum to reopen. From the reopening until the closure of UFRN and the Museum due to social isolation to prevent Covid-19, approximately 650 pieces that form its rich collection were listed and sanitized. This work presents the history of this building and an architectural renovation proposal, which aims to meet and solve the needs of accessibility and inclusion, technical reserve, laboratory and educational sector, in addition to new living and exhibition spaces. The project has not yet been implemented, but we hope as results, in addition to the adjustments to the physical spaces, that the population will use the museum and participate themselves of the life of the city.

**Keywords:** museum architecture, university museum, museum exhibition



## Introduction

In the center of the city of Caicó (Rio Grande do Norte-RN) is the Seridó Museum. A building that is a jewel of colonial architecture in northeastern Brazil that changed its function as a public jail and resisted until it become a museum. This work was based on the document called Museological Plan of the Seridó Museum (2019) as a source, in which the history of this institution is highlighted, as follows:

"The Seridó Museum was created in 1962 on the initiative of Father Antenor Salvino de Araújo, who returned from São Paulo in the early 1960s, with the idea of creating a museum with regional theme in the city of Caicó. The priest visited farms, mills, flour houses, oratories and houses of several seridoenses, especially Caicoenses<sup>1</sup>, looking for donations of objects representative of the local culture. Despite the enthusiasm, the priest did not receive support from the Diocese of Caicó, the Municipality or the State to officially install the museum, and the collected material was stored in an improvised way in a hall of the Diocesan College until 1968. Only after eight years of the idea of creating the museum, Antenor Salvino got support from the Municipality of Caicó, which rented the *Sobrado do Padre Guerra* - a construction from the early nineteenth century (1811) owned by Francisco de Brito Guerra, priest, senator and founder of the Latin School of Seridó - where the collection was transferred.

<sup>1</sup> Seridoense is called a person who was born in Seridó region of Rio Grande do Norte state of Brazil and caicoense who was born in Caicó city.

On May 1, 1968 it was inaugurated as the *Golden Feather Museum*, a name given due to the donation of a gold pen made by the Felipe Guerra family. Despite being officially created, the museum was not open to the public and both the pen and the objects that made up the collection remained away from the eyes of the people of the city, only exhibited on important occasions such as the visit of some famous personality in the region. Thus, the museum was an entity absent from the population's conviviality. Father Antenor was bothered by the fact that the museum did not have public visitation and the lack of interest of the public authorities in the institution. At a certain point, the religious considered returning the pieces of the collection to their donors, but fortunately this did not happen" (Museological Plan of the Seridó Museum, 2019).

A new chapter in the history of the museum took place when its benefactor got new support from the city of Caicó, as quoted in the Museological Plan of the Seridó Museum (2019):

"In 1973 the museum was renamed **Museu do Seridó**. The priest once again had the support of the Municipality of Caicó which, through Municipal Law No. 486, of January 13, 1973, donated the building of the former Senate of Chamber and Jail to the Diocese of Caicó for the installation of the museum [...] Built in 1812, the building housed the Senate of Chamber and Jail, exercising administrative and judicial functions of the former colonial village Vila Nova do Príncipe, today the city of Caicó. The building was divided into two floors,



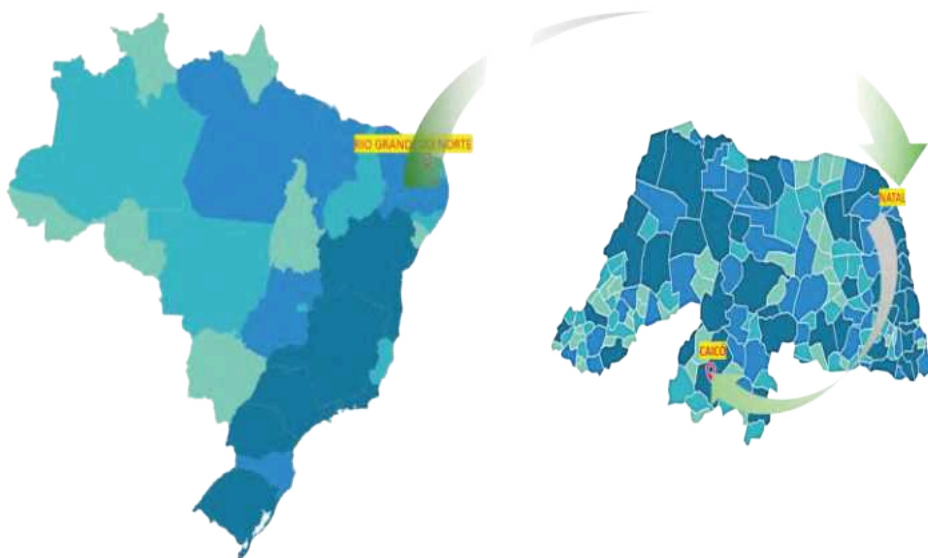
Old pictures from Seridó Museum



with the Senate of the Chamber on the upper floor, a place intended for politicians, and on the ground floor there was the Jail, an exclusive space for prisoners. With the construction of the City Hall in 1890, the function of the political administration was transferred, and the Senate of the Chamber ceased to exist in the building. It functioned as a Jail until 1935, when this function was transferred to the Police Headquarters. After losing its original functions, the building became the residence of several owners, as well as a Mosaic Factory in the 1940s [...] Of great historical and architectural value, the building, popularly known as "Old Jail", is among the few examples still existing in the state of Rio Grande do Norte (Museological Plan of the Seridó Museum, 2019).

scarce financial resources, without a specialized team and conditions to maintain the conservation of its collection and the building itself, the Seridó Museum closed its doors again. Since then, the museum has been going through periods of closure. In 1999, UFRN established the Seridó Museum as a Supplementary Unit, linked to CERES, with the objective of developing activities to support teaching, research and extension. This change in status did not guaranteed the museum financial resources for maintenance, as reported in the Museological Plan of the Seridó Museum (2019):

"The following year, in 2000, the University formed a Commission to prepare the Museum's Regulations. The institutionalization of the Seridó Museum as a university museum has not changed its situation of helplessness. The institution continued to suffer from the closure of its activities and attempts to reopen, carried out by the various administrations that were at the helm of the museum. The periods of closure caused significant damage to the collection, due to exposure to the weather, sunlight, dust and biological agents of all kinds. The same can be said in relation to the building, with aggravated structural problems, notably those that hinder the accessibility of the Museum, essential for its opening to the public. Closed to public visitation since 2012, this time imposed by the need for physical renovations in its building and by social distancing as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the current management of the Seridó Museum seeks once again to circumvent this obstacle by implementing remote activities, making use of digital tools, which has allowed it to communicate continuously with the public. [...] the Seridó Museum has been, since 2019, seeking to develop actions based on contemporary principles of museum thought and practice to restructure itself (Museological Plan of the Seridó Museum 2019).



Caicó city - Localisation . Source: IBGE, 2021

Father Antenor Salvino remained as director of the Museum and the city hall took over the institution administratively, which began to function for the first time as a museum open to the public. Until 1978, Father Antenor Salvino held the position of director of the Museum when he decided to step down from the board of directors and since then it has been managed by the Superior Teaching Center do Seridó (CERES), the campus of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN) in Caicó – RN. From this moment on, the history of the Seridó Museum has periods of reopenings and closures. The museum exists but there is lack of legal documents and information so it becomes "invisible" to the city of Caicó and the university.

Thus, in the course of the institutional organization of the museum, the museological plan was prepared and became a fundamental document that endorses the objective of "materializing a continuous process of institutional updating and repositioning, established through a collective construction, involving its professionals, external collaborators, the University and the community." The writing of this article also aims to illuminate and encourage the visibility of the Seridó Museum.

## 1. Architecture of the Seridó Museum

The Seridó Museum (MDS/UFRN) is located at Rua Amaro Cavalcante, 123, in the center of the city of Caicó, State of Rio Grande do Norte.



Seridó Museum in the city. Source: [www.google.com/maps](http://www.google.com/maps) (Edited by Isaías Ribeiro)

Two churches are the city's best-known landmarks: the Cathedral of Santana (Fig. XX), located about 300 m from



Neighbourhood map.

the museum and the Sanctuary of the Rosary. The building of the "old jail" is located on a quiet street and the neighborhood is residential in character, consisting of houses and few apartment buildings

After the technical visit to the museum, the information obtained was recorded as will be cited in this text. The land has an area of 475.85 m<sup>2</sup>, the topography uphill from

the street according to a maximum elevation of 1.32 m in the front-back direction (considering the elevation 0.0 m on the sidewalk), according to the renovation project. Having the museological plan as its official source, the following description was elaborated by the author of this work when he participated in the team responsible for writing the institution's museological plan.

"Implanted in this site, the Seridó Museum is made up of two constructions: the historic building and an annex building, an addition made in 2019, an architectural project by Heliana Lima de Carvalho, architect of the UFRN Infrastructure Superintendence. In 2020, after finding new needs to optimize the museum's activities, a new project to expand and renovate the spaces was started, in which architectural accessibility measures made by tactile floors, ramps and a lifting platform were inserted. Some spaces were expanded and role changes were carried out. The historic building has access through the side entrance on the sidewalk of Rua Amaro Cavalcante and comprises two floors: ground floor and upper floor. It consists of three rooms on the ground floor and two rooms interconnected by a span on the upper floor. The figure shows the plans with representation of the Annex Building. The area of each floor is 98.29 m<sup>2</sup>. The Annex was built at the back of the lot, with the emergency exit on Rua Coronel Francisco Pinto, and there is no sidewalk on this street for this access (Museological Plan of the Seridó Museum 2019)." constructions: the historic building and an annex building, an addition made in 2019, an architectural project by Heliana Lima de Carvalho, architect of the UFRN Infrastructure Superintendence. In 2020, after finding new needs to optimize the museum's activities, a new project to expand and renovate the spaces was started,

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Facades (to the street and to the yard. Photo: Isaias Ribeiro.



Gap between rooms.

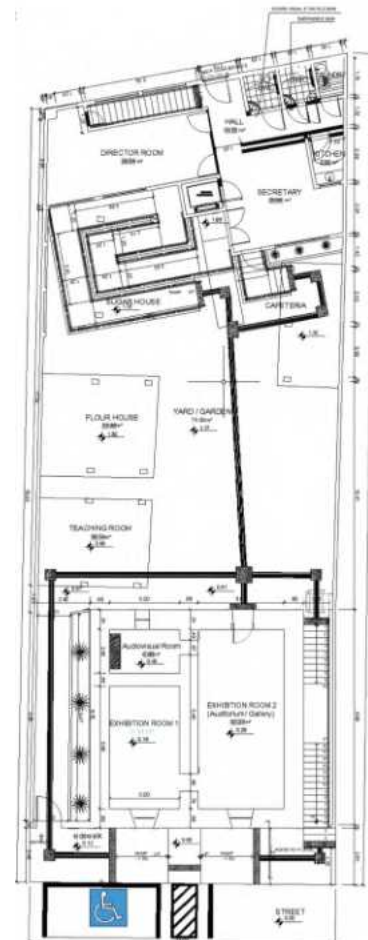
On the ground floor of the Annex there is a reception, library, two bathrooms and the service area interconnected by a circulation. On the upper floor, the technical reserve, the laboratory and a bathroom, access is made by a straight staircase with a flight and by means of a lifting platform. In the internal courtyard, which connects the two buildings, there are exhibition spaces called Engenho de rapadura, Casa de Farinha, Chouriço/Algodão and the Pedagogical Tent. They are open environments to the patio, cement floor and red ceramic tile roof in which objects related to the functions they represent and are exhibited there are

exposed. Described as follows by the Museological Plan,

The so-called historic building has characteristics of Brazilian colonial architecture. On the main façade (Rua Amaro Cavalcante) and on the internal façade, the robust construction customizes its initial function as a "chain" by presenting reduced fenestration. The facades show two windows with an arched design, with leaves and wooden railings, on the upper floor. Two barred doors were arranged symmetrically on the ground floor, different from the windows because they did not have the arch. On the internal façade are three windows and a door that open onto the inner courtyard. These frames are highlighted by means of masonry frames about 20 cm wide, according to the use at the time of their construction. It can be said that the different composition of the design expresses, through the distances between the frames, an aspect of security of the construction for a prison - a way of avoiding the passage, that is, the escape of prisoners) from one room to another from the outside.

On the sidewalk, in front of the building, a wooden gate, in a hollow grid, functioning as a "protection grid" closes

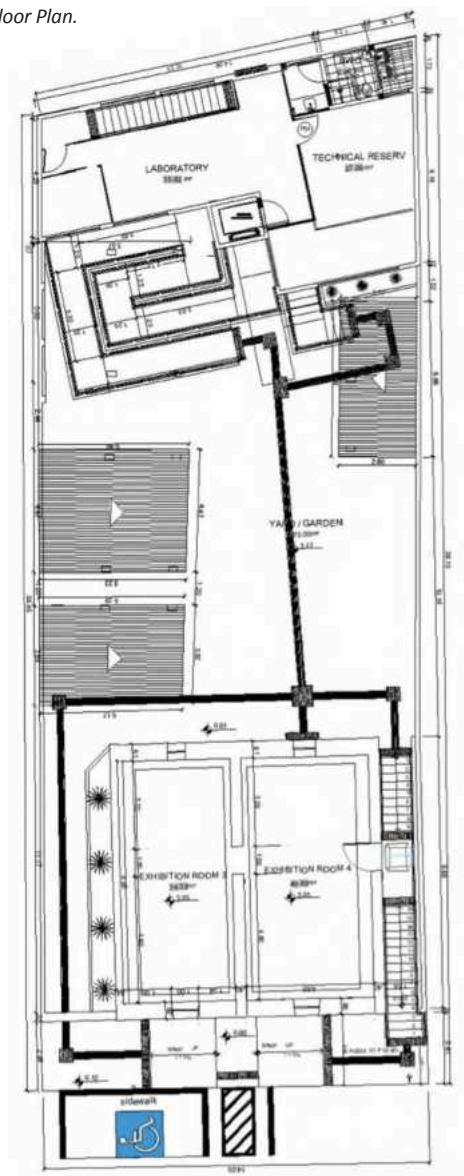
Floor Plan.





the right side setback and a staircase in stone steps that gives access to the upper floor (Figure XX). On the other side of the façade, in the left setback, an iron gate allows access to the museum. Some materials were used as a solution to hinder the excavation of tunnels for the escape of prisoners, such as the floors of the rooms on the ground floor are in granite stone cut in a rectangular shape, in gray color and orthogonal pagination. The walls, in solid brick, are on average 90 cm thick, as this is consistent with the initial function of the building.

*Superior Floor Plan.*



One of the characteristics observed in the building's plan is that there is no distribution circulation. Gaps between the walls of the rooms allow passage through the rooms, as was common in Brazilian colonial architecture. Wooden beams work as a support structure for the floor of the upper floor. A great resistant to the passage of time is the roof with its gabled red ceramic tiles. The façades are painted in white and frames in sky blue.

## 2. Annex building

As in the historic building there was no possibility of allocating spaces necessary for the operation of the museum, then, to solve this problem, a building was built in 2019 to house part of the museum's needs program. The main access is through the internal courtyard. The project by architect Heliana Carvalho (UFRN) installed on the ground floor the reception, the library, pantry and three bathrooms, one of which received accessibility measures. On the upper floor, the technical reserve, the laboratory and a bathroom were arranged. The two floors are interconnected by a lifting platform and a conventional ladder. The annex building, as it is called, was executed with a conventional construction system with masonry walls with 0.15 m, slab, beams and reinforced concrete pillars. The floor is covered in white ceramic, the same color as the walls and ceilings.

The façades, in straight lines, are painted with textured white paint. The internal doors are laminated wood and glass and the windows are glass with aluminum frames in natural color. The external walls elongate forming a platband that hides the roof made of fiber cement tiles.



*Facade Annex from yard view.*

After the completion of the construction, the project had modifications to incorporate adaptations and new functions to the existing spaces, according to the needs of the museum. Thus, still in 2019, a readjustment project for new jobs was started. The commission that dealt with



the renovation of the museum was composed of the architect Heliana Oliveira, the author of the Annex project and the consultancy in the area of museum architecture was carried out by Prof. Dr. Isaias da Silva Ribeiro, from the Department of Civil Engineering, author of this work. The group included Prof. Dr. Vanessa Spinoza (director of the museum, at the time) and the Head of the Project Sector architect Sileno Cirne Trindade. At that time, the museum was closed to the public because it was not prepared in terms of accessibility for people with disabilities and included the population that needs tools to visit the institution. It is expected that in this new architectural proposal, combined with the implementation of the architectural accessibility and inclusion project that will enable the reception of all people, the two buildings will interrelate and produce good results for the realization of the museum's activities. The following demands for the historic building were also listed: revision of the electrical and sanitary building installations, implementation of a fire fighting system, revision of the security system. And, to conclude, we observe that

"In 2021, the museum's spaces are occupied as follows: the historic building houses part of the collection in its rooms, on the two floors that make up the building. These rooms should function as exhibition spaces. In the courtyard, theatrical shows and meetings will take place, facts that reinforce the use foreseen in the expansion project in which events of various types will take place in the Caatinga and Carcará Spaces. In the Annex, the administrative functions are being carried out on the ground floor, and there is a forecast for the Educational Sector and the Board of Directors to be installed on this same floor. On the upper floor of the Annex, the rooms for the Technical Reserve and the Laboratory serve as storage for the collections that are in the process of cleaning and registration (PLANO MUSEOLÓGICO, 2019).

In this way, after studies and diagnoses, the team formed by technicians and professors from UFRN developed a project that would meet the old and current needs, envisioning another physical opening of the Seridó Museum.

### Final considerations

The Seridó Museum was presented in this work through the history, description and characterization of its museum architecture. Due to its history of closures and openings, the building still has problems in the physical part, in addition to the fact that the spaces have their functions displaced from their original use, seriously compromising the collections that are distributed in different environments. However, the current news informs that the museum has not yet carried out the execution of the new architectural project that will qualify the spaces with their proper functions

and in line with their specific characteristics, but part of its facilities are already used by the city, student visits and thus, the museum is no longer invisible. He is increasingly visible and fighting for his mission!



Various views.

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### BIOGRAPHY

Born in Rio de Janeiro, on October 11, 1964.

Since 1978 he has lived in Natal / RN. He holds a doctorate, master's degree and bachelor's degree in Architecture and Urbanism from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte. Joined the ICAM in São Paulo, 2016.

Research the relationships between architecture and art. Professor of Architecture Design. Visual artist.

His artistic training includes several art courses, practical and theoretical, among which "The Creative Process - Whistling and Sucking Cane" with Charles Watson, 2020 and "Artist Portfolio - Presentation Strategies and Career Development" stand out. , with Bruno Miguel, in 2023, both from the Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Laje, Rio de Janeiro. Since 1984 he has been participating in group and individual exhibitions in Brazil, one of which was in Vienna, Austria. His works belong to private and public collections such as UFRN, UFAL Pinacoteca and State Government. In 2022, his work was acquired to join the contemporary art collection of Banco do Nordeste do Brasil (BNB).

# Cultural Narratives in Museum Architecture: Exploring Religious Beliefs and Beyond

Yatin Singhal

Founder – Yatin Singhal Architects, Haryana  
India

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## Abstract

**Keywords:** Culture; Hindu; Museum; Symbolism; Gurukul

Swami Omanand Sarasvati Puratattva Sangrahalaya (or Gurukul Jhajjar), located in Jhajjar, Haryana, India, is an upcoming cultural institution. Rooted in the rich heritage of the Hindu community, this upcoming museum offers a unique opportunity to explore the integration of cultural symbolism and architectural form within a cosmological framework. The proposed museum design is crafted to immerse both the structure and visitors in a profound cosmological narrative. Embracing the circular form, the museum building symbolizes the eternal cycle of birth and death, reflecting deep philosophical underpinnings inherent in Hindu cosmology. In Hindu philosophy, the concept of cyclical time, known as "kala chakra", suggests that the universe undergoes endless cycles of creation, preservation, and dissolution.

The design incorporates a circumambulation space surrounding the museum block, fostering a sense of reverence for the sacred idols to be housed within. It echoes the practice of "pradakshina", commonly observed in Hindu religious contexts where devotees walk around sacred objects or spaces as a form of reverence and worship. This feature thus imbues the museum with a sacred aura, inviting visitors to engage in a ritualistic and contemplative experience. This architectural feature not only pays homage to Hindu religious practices but also invites visitors to engage with the museum space in an immersive manner.

Through an exploration of the museum design, the project seeks to uncover the intricate interplay between cultural heritage and architectural design. By delving into the symbolic significance of architectural elements and their cultural contexts, this study aims to deepen the understanding of how museum architecture can transcend mere physical spaces, becoming vessels for cultural expression and spiritual contemplation.

## Museum History - Swami Omanand Sarasvati Puratattva Sangrahalaya, Jhajjar

Gurukul Jhajjar is an institution founded by Mahasya Vishwambhar Das, Swami Parmanand and Swami Brahmananda on 16 May, 1915. 138 Bigha (a bigha is a unit of measurement for land area that is used in India) land was donated by Pt. Vishwambhar Das. At that time there were two-four younger Brahmachari, two-three old employees in Gurukul. The cowshed had two bulls and arrow-four cows. There was a big hall room and two small rooms adjoining it. There used to be a saltwater well. The foundation stone of the Goshala was laid by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, former President of India.

Presently the complex comprises of college, archaeological museum, library, dispensary and goshala, gymnasium, yagyashala, garden, restaurant, hostel, guest house, vanaprasthi sannyasi kuti group etc. The college has the Arya Curriculum Course, propounded by Maharishi Dayanand, recognized by Maharishi Dayanand University, Rohtak. A lot of historical archaeological remains are stored in the archaeological museum. Continuous manufacture of medicines for the treatment of diseases is going on in the dispensary. Medical work is done by Ayurvedic method.

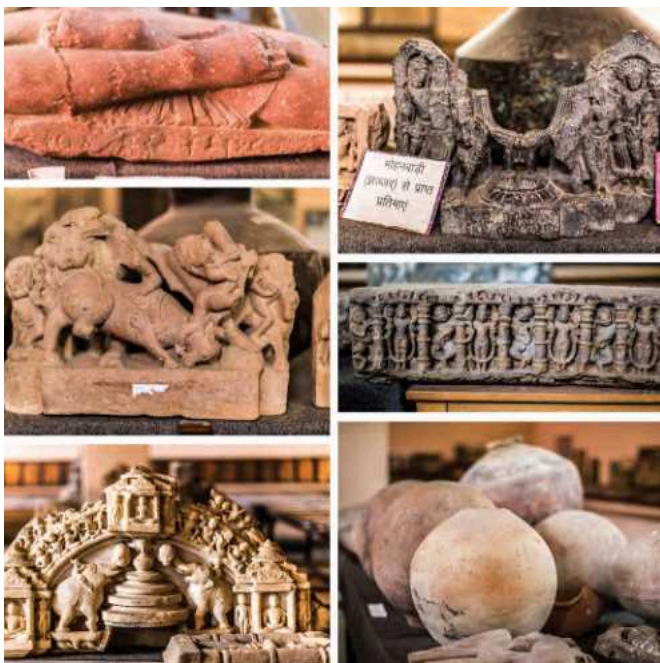


Fig.1, Antiquities of Gurukul Jhajjar (image source: <https://www.dsourc.in/resource/museum-gurukul-jhajjar/museum>)

### Need for the new museum

The proposal for a new museum at Swami Omanand Sarasvati Puratattva Sangrahalaya, Jhajjar, is driven by a vision to enhance the preservation, display, and accessibility of its valuable collection of historical artifacts. This collection, which includes coins, terracotta figurines,

and ancient sculptures, represents an important part of India's cultural heritage. The new museum would provide the opportunity to introduce specialized infrastructure designed to meet the specific conservation needs of these artifacts, ensuring their longevity and protection for future generations.

The museum would also benefit from a well-organized and spacious layout, providing custom storage units tailored to the preservation requirements of different types of artifacts. These specialized storage solutions would support both protection and ease of access, facilitating proper care and handling of the collection. Additionally, the new facility would allow for sufficient space to accommodate future acquisitions and donations, ensuring that new items can be seamlessly integrated and preserved from the outset. The new museum would offer significant benefits in terms of visitor engagement and education. With modern exhibition techniques, the museum would create an immersive experience, making the cultural and historical significance of the artifacts more accessible to the public. The redesign of display areas would enhance the presentation, attracting more visitors and creating opportunities for students and researchers to study the collection in detail.

The architecture of the museum will be a harmonious blend of tradition and modernity, making the museum itself a cultural landmark. Drawing inspiration from traditional Hindu philosophy and Indian architectural elements, the design will incorporate forms that reflect the region's heritage while utilizing contemporary materials and construction techniques. The circular layout, inspired by Hindu cosmology, will create a contemplative space for visitors, and the integration of modern technologies will ensure the building is both eco-friendly and energy-efficient. This fusion of cultural symbolism and modern innovation will make the museum an iconic structure, representing both the past and the future of Indian architecture.

### Architecture: A Cultural Marvel

The proposed museum is envisioned to reflect both the cultural grandeur of the past and the innovative spirit of the present. Rooted in the rich heritage of the Hindu tradition, this upcoming museum setup offers an opportunity to explore the integration of cultural symbolism and architectural form within a cosmological framework. The proposed museum design is crafted to immerse both the structure and visitors in a profound cosmological narrative. Embracing the circular form, the museum building symbolizes the eternal cycle of birth and death, reflecting deep philosophical underpinnings inherent in Hindu cosmology. In Hindu philosophy, the concept of cyclical time, known as "kala chakra," suggests that the universe undergoes endless cycles of creation, preservation, and dissolution.



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Through an exploration of the museum design, the efforts have been made to uncover the intricate interplay between cultural heritage and architectural design. By delving into the symbolic significance of architectural elements and their cultural contexts, the project deepens the understanding of how museum architecture can transcend mere physical spaces, becoming vessels for cultural expression and spiritual contemplation.

### Concept

The museum to be envisioned as a COSMOGRAM. The plan of the Museum is intended to situate the structure and the visitors within a broadly conceived cosmological framework. The circular shape of the museum symbolizes the cyclic paradigm, a concept deeply rooted in many religious and cultural traditions, particularly in Hinduism, where the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (samsara) is central. The circular design reflects the idea of time

as a recurring loop, where beginnings and endings are interconnected and continuous. The museum, in this form, becomes a metaphor for the eternal nature of existence, allowing visitors to experience the cyclical flow of history, culture, and spirituality.

The design integrates the idea of nature and culture, emphasizing the relationship between the built environment and the cosmic order. The circular form of the museum represents the cyclic paradigm, a concept central to Hindu beliefs, particularly the cycles of birth, death, and rebirth (samsara). This reflects the eternal, interconnected nature of existence, symbolizing time and life cycles as an unbroken loop where beginnings and endings are fluid and continuous.

Similarly, the land on which the museum is built reflects another profound belief: that nature, inherently circular, existed before culture (sanskriti) and will persist long after. The act of taming land to accommodate a structure like the museum is a symbolic process—while the land becomes cultivated for human use, nature remains omnipresent within this space. The museum’s circular form not only connects with Hindu cosmological concepts, but also speaks to the broader philosophical notion that the natural world endures beyond human creation.

This architectural approach offers visitors an immersive experience, situating them within a space where cultural narratives and the eternal cycles of nature intersect. By doing so, the museum becomes a metaphorical bridge between nature and culture, inviting reflection on the timelessness of both. This dual framework—circular design and symbolic taming of the land—creates a narrative that resonates with both religious beliefs and the larger philosophical discourse on humanity’s relationship with nature.

### Focal Axis

Creating a focal axis in the museum’s design is a deliberate and symbolic architectural choice. The alignment of the main museum entrance, fountain, and the sacred Tulsi plant along an axis establishes a strong visual and spatial connection that directs visitors’ movement and attention through the space. This strategic placement enhances the aesthetic experience while infusing the journey with cultural and spiritual significance. The fountain, with its flowing water and gentle sounds, adds a dynamic element to the axis. Beyond its visual appeal, the fountain introduces a sense of tranquillity, offering visitors a calming and immersive experience. The continuous movement of the water metaphorically represents the flow of knowledge, ideas, and energy circulating within the museum complex, symbolizing the unbroken cycle of learning and exploration. At the opposite end of the axis, the Tulsi plant brings cultural and symbolic depth. Revered in Hindu traditions,

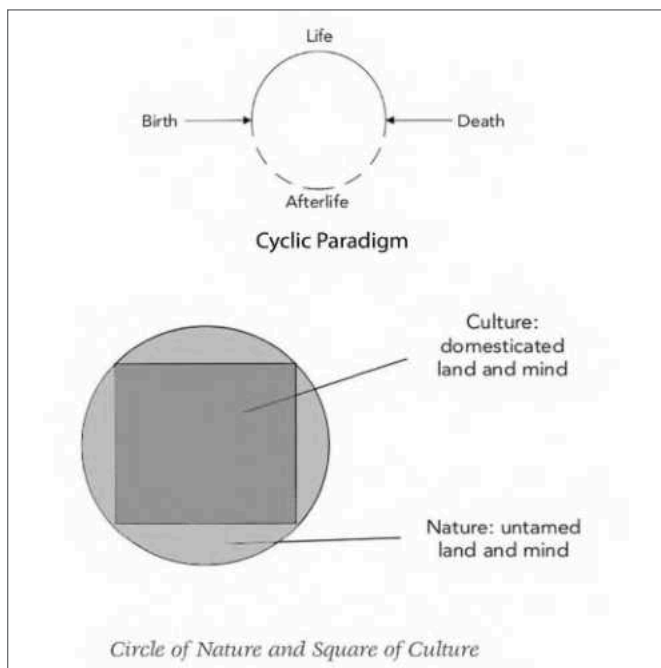


Fig.2. Diagrams showing the cyclic paradigm and circle of nature & square of nature (image source: Devdutt Pattanaik\_Indian Mythology – Tales, Symbols and Rituals)





Cosmos and the Earth



Domesticated Land



Museum

Fig.3. Earth, domesticated land and proposed museum (top).



Fig.4. Proposed Museum

the Tulsi plant signifies purity, spirituality, and the sacred bond between humans and nature. Its presence along the same axis as the entrance and fountain emphasizes the museum's broader theme of connecting culture, history, and the environment.

The essence of Tulsi plant, the divine embodiment of Mother Nature, permeates the entire museum complex, symbolizing the deep connection between human creation and the natural world. Atop a pedestal, a Tulsi plant will be planted, further enhancing the sacredness of the space. The same pedestal will feature, with each side dedicated to one of the four Vedas—Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda. The engravings on each side will symbolize the profound cultural and spiritual significance of these ancient texts, which form the foundation of Hindu philosophy and

knowledge. The inscriptions may include selected verse, highlighting the Vedas' teachings, hymns, and philosophical insights that have shaped the culture for millennia.

### Fountain

Within the confines of the complex, the sacred Shri Yantra takes on a new form—a fountain that mesmerizes visitors with its beauty and profound symbolism. As water cascades gracefully from its carved channels, the Shri Yantra fountain becomes a radiant manifestation of cosmic harmony. Each meticulously crafted groove and curve reflects the intricate interplay of divine energies, invoking a sense of reverence in those who behold it. The rhythmic dance of water upon the sacred geometry of the Shri Yantra creates a visual spectacle that captivates the senses and instills a



Fig.5. Creating a focal axis



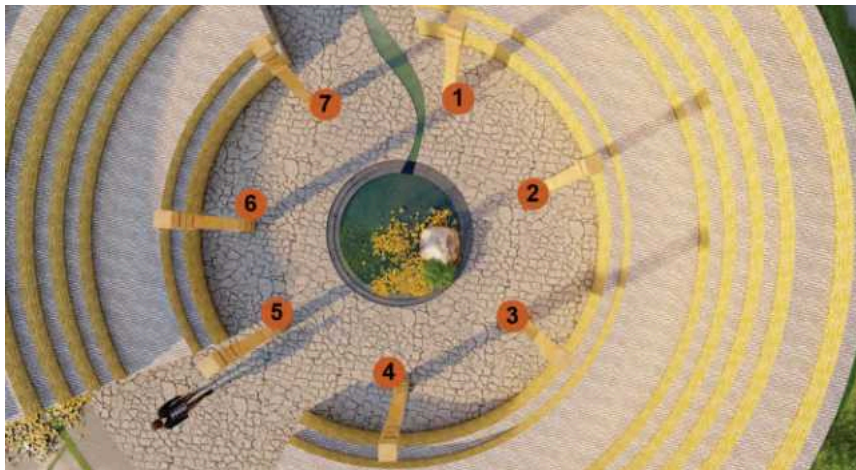


Fig.6. Tulsi plant and Vedas (top). Fig.7. Outdoor seating (bottom).

deep sense of tranquillity. The gentle flow and rhythmic patterns of the fountain mirror the eternal ebb and flow of the universe, reminding us of the interconnectedness of all things. It serves as a powerful reminder of the eternal nature of existence and the infinite possibilities that lie within the cosmic order. The Shri Yantra fountain becomes a focal point within the complex, not only for its artistic grandeur but also for the spiritual resonance it imparts. It invites visitors to reflect upon the profound mysteries of life and the profound interplay between art, spirituality, and the cosmic forces that shape our world.

### Outdoor Seating

Outdoor seating or *Muktakash Baithak*, refers to a literary and cultural gathering that aims to bring together enthusiasts of ideas, art, and literature. In this gathering, scholars, poets, writers, artists, and audiences come together to participate in literary presentations, discussions, poetry recitations, musical performances, and art exhibitions.

The name “Muktakash Baithak” is derived from the concept of “Muktakash,” which translates to “open sky” in English. It is named so because in this event, scholars, artists, and literary figures have the freedom to express their thoughts openly and share them with others. It is an opportunity to showcase the latest ideas, creations, and artistic endeavors, where members of the literary community can collaborate,

support, and influence each other through their works of literature and art.

Drawing inspiration from the Sapt Rishis, who were revered for their deep spiritual insights and profound wisdom, the presence of water in the “Muktakash Baithak” represents their association with the sacred rivers and water bodies in Hindu culture. Just as the Sapt Rishis sought enlightenment and knowledge through their interactions with the divine elements, the gathering encourages attendees to explore the depths of their own consciousness and gain deeper insights into literature, art, and spiritual growth.

In essence, the integration of the Sapt Rishis, water symbolism, and the “Muktakash Baithak” creates a harmonious and enriching atmosphere. It encourages individuals to immerse themselves in the depths of knowledge and artistic inspiration, fostering a space where literature, art, spirituality, and the transformative power of water converge in a unified experience.

### Summary

The proposed Swami Omanand Sarasvati Puratattva Sangrahalaya in Jhajjar, Haryana, serves as an embodiment of cultural and religious narratives through its architectural design. Rooted in Hindu cosmology, the circular layout symbolizes the cyclical nature of life, reflecting the concept of “kala chakra,” or the eternal cycle of creation and dissolution. The museum’s architecture is intended not just as a physical space but as a vessel for spiritual contemplation, integrating sacred practices such as pradakshina (ritual circumambulation) to invite visitors into a contemplative, immersive experience.

Key features, such as a circumambulatory path, focal axis with a sacred Tulsi plant, and a Shri Yantra fountain, elevate the museum from a mere repository of artifacts to a sacred, contemplative space that harmonizes nature and culture. These design choices highlight the relationship between the material world and the spiritual cosmos, symbolizing the eternal connection between human life and the divine order. The architecture is not only a reflection of Hindu philosophical principles but also demonstrates a

modern, eco-friendly approach that blends tradition with contemporary materials and technologies.

Additionally, the museum's open-air seating, *Muktakash Baithak*, fosters community engagement by creating a space for literary and cultural gatherings, inspired by ancient wisdom traditions. This multi-layered approach situates the museum as a cultural and spiritual landmark that transcends conventional museum experiences, inviting reflection on the eternal interplay between history, culture, and the cosmos. Through this design, the museum aims to preserve and promote India's cultural heritage while offering an enriching, immersive environment for visitors, scholars, and community members alike.

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<https://haryanatourism.gov.in/Destination/gurukul-jhajjar-museum>

*Image courtesy: author*

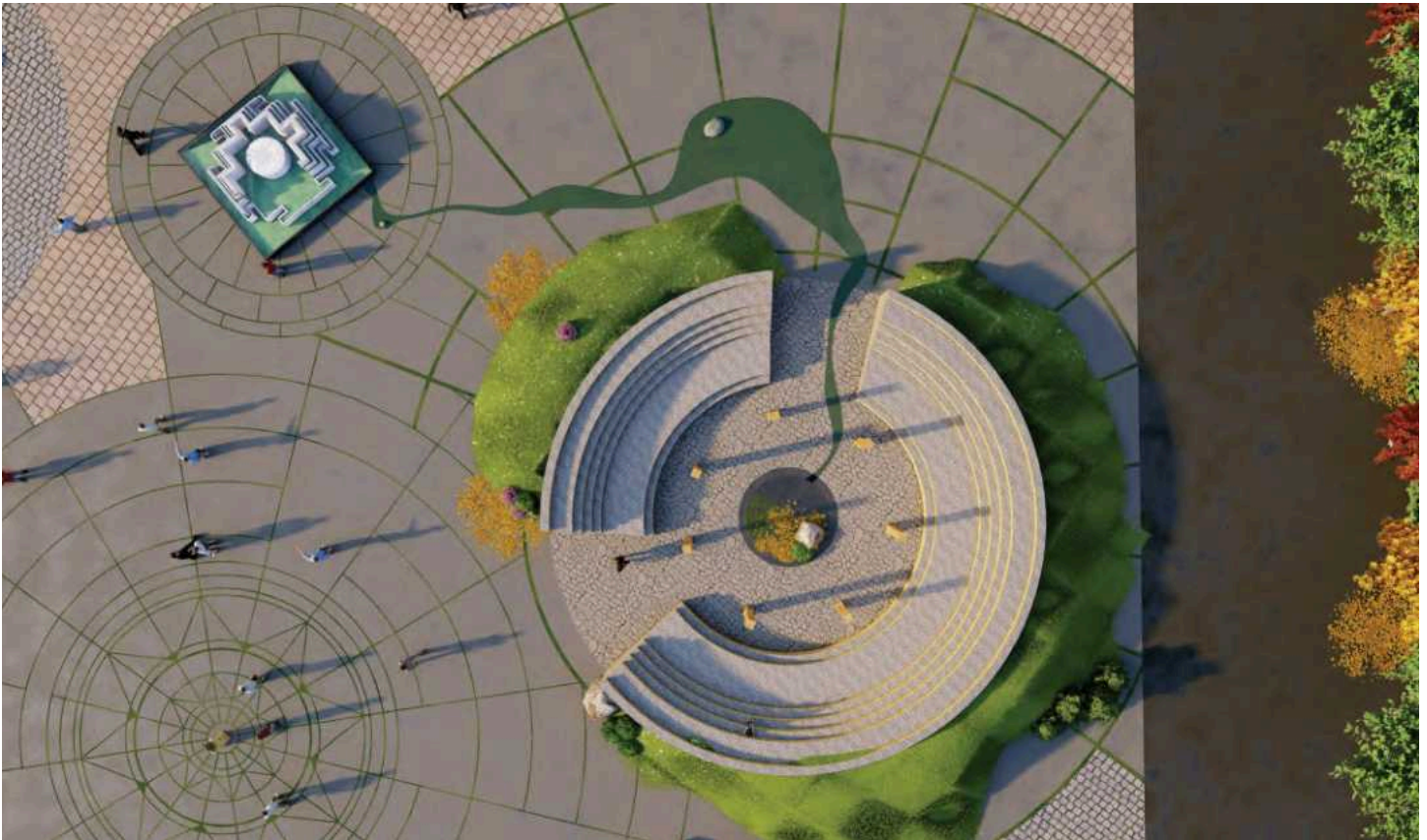


Fig.8. Outdoor seating, fountain and Tulsi plant



## BIOGRAPHY

*Yatin Singhal* is an architect with a niche towards cultural heritage projects. A bachelor's degree in architecture allowed him to explore heritage immensely in his professional journey. He has undertaken diverse roles with government and private organisations, including a consultancy position with the Department of Archaeology & Museums, Haryana, head office at Chandigarh, India. This rich and varied experience has profoundly influenced his approach to architecture for culturally inclined audiences. Currently, he's leading a multidisciplinary architectural firm – Yatin Singhal Architects at Panipat, Haryana, India.

At this organisation, the work approach is characterized by meticulous attention to detail and a commitment to delivering excellence in architectural design. The diverse portfolio showcases a range of projects, from cultural precincts, adaptive reuse and heritage documentation to institutional, commercial, and residential developments. The ability to combine creativity with functionality, crafting spaces that not only meet clients' needs but also fulfil their expectations. This sort of project experience enables an architect in Haryana to work in qualitative potential and deliver innovative spaces that amalgamate culture, heritage, and sustainable approach, in an environment friendly precinct.



# **Sub-theme #2 – EXHIBITION DESIGN – tangible, intangible and digital: current tendencies**

**JAMES TAYLOR-FOSTER**

**MADDALENA D'ALFONSO**

**MARINA MARTIN BARBOSA**

**HSIN-YI CHAO**

**CHENG-YI SHIH**

**PO-KANG HSIEH**

**MIOK CINDY CHOI**

**CAROLINE PIRES TING**

**PETER STOHLER**

**MAJED AWADH ALGHAEMDI**

**NICOLLE MANUELLE BAHIA BITTENCOURT**

**RUEN-YA YU, SHAO-CHUN WU**

# The Design of a Feeling

James Taylor-Foster

Curator of Contemporary Architecture and Design ArkDes, Stockholm  
Sweden

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## Abstract

In 2020, an exhibition about the world of ASMR—*WEIRD SENSATION FEELS GOOD*—opened at ArkDes in Stockholm. At the same time, the museum embarked on a major redesign and renovation project. This project explores the exhibition as a scenographic environment of feeling, tracing a thread towards the notion of 'thresholding' – a broad approach to considering visitor experience, exhibition architecture, and curatorial thinking can encourage softer ways of understanding the power and potential of the exhibition.

**Keywords:** design, thresholding, digital culture, ASMR, immersive environments

## A museum in transition

In 2020, ArkDes embarked on a four year-long project to holistically reimagine the spaces of the museum in central Stockholm and the ways in which the museum operates, from its internal processes to public-facing presentations. The museum was founded as Sweden's *Arkitekturmuseet* in 1962, moved into spaces designed by Rafael Moneo Architects in 1998, and became ArkDes—the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design—in 2013<sup>1</sup>. A decade later, it is a national museum and a policy and research think tank<sup>2</sup>.

The project to holistically renew the museum, initiated by former director Kieran Long and driven by the current acting director Karin Nilsson<sup>3</sup>, has involved multiple years of work across all departments of the institution – from collections management and digitisation processes to contemporary projects and events. The exhibitions and infrastructural projects that have taken place since 2018 have functioned as trials and testing grounds to imagine a museum as a public space, an open platform, and a continually evolving work-in-progress.

In 2022, the Stockholm-based architecture studio Arrhov Frick were tasked with redesigning the museum's exhibition halls and visitor experience, both inside and out. In tandem with their work, A.M. Stockholm were commissioned to design a new identity and graphic language, intended to at once span and unite the 'off' and 'online' spaces of the museum. The driving force behind the material reconfiguration of ArkDes has been redesign has been comprehensive reuse, resulting in an ambitious design project to reappropriate building material from former exhibitions and existing structures in the museum. One key element in this process of reuse has been the dismantling and reconfiguration of Boxen (designed by Dehlin Brattgård Arkitekter)<sup>4</sup> – a platform for fast-changing, experimental exhibitions that debuted in 2018 and showcased projects until 2023.

During its time as an exhibition environment, Boxen proved to be an crucial testing ground for a number of projects that sat at the edge of the thematic focus of ArkDes. Initially commissioned as a temporary solution to longer term challenges now solved in the latest redesign, Boxen was often programmed in tandem to a larger temporary exhibition. The goal was to create a programmed symbiosis

between content-related needs of the museum. Its 150sqm double white cube space hosted exhibitions exploring archives, video game design, speculative architecture projects, urban graphic design, and the architecture of gay cruising<sup>5</sup>. Conceived as a 'curatorial engine' Dehlin Brattgård's design was, to all intents and purposes, a building within the building – an inhabitable model among a sea of scaled models, a haven for low-budget and high-frequency exhibition projects and, in hindsight, a piece of architecture in its own right. By many metrics, the renewed museum that reopened its doors in September of this year builds upon this experiment, both literally and conceptually. It is also the culmination of a multifaceted body of curatorial work that has experimented with ways of mediating the expanded fields of architecture and design, meeting publics, and testing exhibition architecture<sup>6</sup>. One exhibition in particular—which was first displayed in Boxen in 2020—provides insight into this process.

## To design for a feeling

In April of 2020, an exhibition devoted to a new form of creativity opened at ArkDes. Centred on a feeling—Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response, known more commonly as ASMR<sup>7</sup>—the exhibition sought to make room for an emergent cultural field of design and creativity, for which an institutional exhibition had not yet occurred. As recently as 2007, ASMR did not exist in the way that we have come to know it today: a culture, community, and creative field that shines a unique light on societal concerns spanning loneliness and isolation to emergent structures of collective intimacy – on, offline, and inbetween. Over the last fifteen years, the contours of this world—born online by way of Facebook groups and video streaming platforms—has mushroomed out from its niche and into mainstream popular culture.

<sup>5</sup> *Exhibitions in Boxen*. (2024). ArkDes. Retrieved from: <https://arkdes.se/en/exhibitions/?filter=1&date=previous&category=boxen#archive-content>

<sup>6</sup> Since 2018, exhibitions have included large-scale thematic shows, such as *Public Luxury*, *The Future Starts Here* (in collaboration with the V&A), *Cruising Pavilion: Architecture, Gay Sex and Cruising Culture*, *Flying Panels: How Concrete Panels Changed the World*, *WEIRD SENSATION FEELS GOOD: The World of ASMR* (later presented in collaboration with *The Design Museum*), *Kiruna Forever*, and *Sigurd Lewerentz: Architect of Death and Life*. Monographic exhibitions have presented work by people and practices including *Space Popular*, *Amie Siegel*, and *Tham & Videgård*. Large-scale outdoor installations have been created by *Linda Tegg*, *Studio Ossidiana*, and *Mira Bergh and Josefin Zachrisson*. Most recently, the museum worked with Joar Nango and collaborators to present *Girjegumpi: The Sámi Architecture Library* in the Nordic Countries Pavilion at the 18th International Architecture Exhibition – *La Biennale di Venezia*.

<sup>7</sup> In the context of *WEIRD SENSATION FEELS GOOD*, the first museum exhibition dedicated to this feeling and the field of creativity growing around it, a broad definition is offered to visitors: a static-like sensation of low-grade euphoria or deep calming triggered by gentle sound, touch and movement. In its most intensely pleasant form, it is likened to champagne bubbles, starbursts or glittering water falling down your scalp. It can also induce a misophonic response, triggered by common sounds such as yawning, chewing, breathing or lip-smacking. The term 'misophonia', which literally means 'hatred of sound', was coined by audiologists Pawel and Margaret Jastreboff in 2003. A misophonic response can be understood as the opposite reaction to an Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response.

<sup>1</sup> The history of ArkDes. (2024). Retrieved from: <https://arkdes.se/en/arkdes-mission/the-history-of-arkdes/>

<sup>2</sup> ArkDes' mission. (2024). ArkDes. Retrieved from: <https://arkdes.se/en/arkdes-mission/>

<sup>3</sup> *Reopening in 2024*. (2023). *e-flux Architecture*. Retrieved from: <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/555078/reopening-in-2024/>

<sup>4</sup> *Boxen at ArkDes*. (2018). *e-flux Architecture*. Retrieved from: <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/206872/boxen-at-arkdes/>

That's not to say that ASMR today is mainstream by any means. While some ASMRtists (the term ascribed to those who make ASMR) have tens of millions of views to their name, the niche that they populate remains as such. ASMR injects the internet with softness, kindness and empathy. As a form of digital intimacy, it offers comfort on demand, standing against the feeling of isolation that constant connectivity can deceptively breed. Anecdotally, ASMR is used as a form of self-medication against the effects of loneliness, insomnia, stress, and anxiety. This is a cue to its success, and to its transcendental appeal. In recent years, a level of criticality has started to surround the field. In 2022, Sam Kriss wrote in *The Spectator* of how "there are untold millions of people who spend a good chunk of their free time every day sitting by themselves in a dark room in front of a screen, blissing out to a series of clicking sounds"<sup>8</sup>.

A burgeoning form of creativity, ASMR has grown in and alongside the screen and its underpinning technologies. It is, in part, a reaction to the ways in which technologies frame contemporary life – something very difficult to discern in the moment and easier to isolate in hindsight. With some distance it is now possible to see that, through their work and consciously or otherwise, ASMRtists have sought to subvert relentless flows of information (such as feeds of image and sound, notifications and durational messaging) in order to recast bits and bytes as something that can be more primally *felt*—touched, almost—through sight and sound.

*WEIRD SENSATION FEELS GOOD* was slated to open on April 6th. The week prior, COVID-19 entered Sweden. A very particular response to the pandemic within Sweden meant that national authorities, such as ArkDes (The Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design), were left largely to their own devices in deciding how to respond. The museum chose to not open the exhibition as intended, choosing to reorient mediation online – and in the space of only a week. In the early months of the pandemic there was no shortage of cultural organisations pivoting towards 'shakey' Instagram live broadcasts or pixelated recordings in galleries; in a concious opposition to this emerging trend, ArkDes committed to creating a ninety minute-long live broadcast from the exhibition, presented with *e-flux Film*<sup>9</sup>. This 'virtual vernissage', as it came to be known, was enormously successful. At a moment in which lockdowns were spreading across the world, and anxiety was peaking, this hour and a half presentation and tour demanded nothing from a view other than to sit quietly and discover worlds of calmness and close-listening.

Two versions of the exhibition have existed: one that took place at ArkDes in Stockholm, and a second iteration that was held at The Design Museum in London between 2022 and 2023. (The exhibition will land in two more venues between now and 2026.) Due to the fact that the installation is so site-specific, each version of the exhibition necessarily requires adjustment and reimagining. This process, the opposite of a 'turn-key' tour, is time consuming – but also allows for specific adaptations to context, the updating of objects, and reframing as required.

Based on the notion that ASMR is a child of the internet, *WEIRD SENSATION FEELS GOOD* is an exhibition that brings internet-born media into a physical, visitor-oriented, haptic environment. It does this through careful object selection, precise and minimised written mediation, and—at its core—an integrated exhibition scenography that at once provides sensorial cues to the exhibition's content and message, while also providing an environment unlike many other exhibitions of its ilk. The Riga and Zürich-based architecture studio ÉTER form a central part of the team that conceptualised the exhibition's architecture and experience, and help to adapt it as it moves. Their design supports a simple curatorial logic: to create an immersive, calming, acoustically-tuned environment through which to allow visitors to *feel*, independently or socially.

The exhibition treads a fine line between 'analogue' and 'digital' presentation, although any sort of binary along these lines is increasingly meaningless. This is an exhibition about the relationship between technology and the self, the exhibition indirectly narrating a recent history of technological developments. For instance: In 2005, YouTube launched with the tagline 'Broadcast Yourself', offering video consumers the possibility to become video producers. When the iPhone was unveiled in 2007, the handheld smartphone and its mirrored surface quickly usurped the television set as our primary screen. We have been attentive to screens since the TV entered homes in the mid-20th century. Recent years have seen the screen become an extension of our beings: they are in our hands, on our heads and on our wrists. The premise of the exhibition is, therefore, quite simple: we no longer just stare at screens; we touch them, too.

In the context of a highly codified museum environment ('do not run', 'do not touch', 'do not eat', 'do not shout'), *WEIRD SENSATION FEELS GOOD* was able to construct a space of vulnerability. This is an exhibition that encourages a visitor to rest, to nap, to chat, and to touch. These negotiations underpinned the construction of an environment capable of absorbing large numbers of visitors over long periods of time, and to find ways to decodify the space of the exhibition and allow for different ways of being.

<sup>8</sup> Kriss, S. (2022, 3 December). *Why ASMR is evil*. *The Spectator*. Retrieved from: <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/why-asmr-is-evil/>

<sup>9</sup> ArkDes presents a virtual vernissage: *WEIRD SENSATION FEELS GOOD*. (April 7, 2020, 5–6:30pm). *e-flux Events*. Retrieved from URL: <https://www.e-flux.com/events/437809/weird-sensation-feels-good/>



## Thresholding

What can be learnt from an exhibition of this kind? Looking back over the last four years of intense redevelopment at ArkDes, the role that *WEIRD SENSATION FEELS GOOD*—and its kindred relationship to its first gallery, Boxen—is interesting to note. A central aspect of this learning was in understanding how sequestered environments can bleed into institutional contexts – in other words, a porous threshold. In *Solicited: Proposals* (2021-22), a project initiated by ArkDes and *e-flux Architecture* a year after the first incarnation of the exhibition and a year before the second, the curator and director-emeritus Vasif Kortun writes:

“Threshold, I have learned the hard way, is not about accessibility, fluent information, charming socialisation spaces, attentive staff, or guards who do not hound you. It is about the conditions of how the two parties—the institution and its audience—begin to trust each other. Not to consent, but to agree to a process of accepting each other as workable partners. [...] It is a fluid contract, not a once-and-done deal.”

The notion of ‘thresholding’ in exhibitions, institutions, and other types of cultural organisations is an important concept. For Kortun, the threshold is about “adopting, growing, and developing” a fluid relationship of trust. Otherwise, he argues, “institutions are just shopping, doing good, and being timely: commoning in the Summer, queering in the Fall, and decolonising in the Winter.”

*WEIRD SENSATION FEELS GOOD* is an exhibition capable of reframing what it means to be in a museum, radically reorienting a space of authority into a social space of feeling. One reviewer described the ‘Arena’ as “a wooden structure covered in plush fabric shapes on which you can sit”<sup>10</sup> – a matter-of-fact description. The ‘Arena’, sometimes described as “one big embrace of a room” is, in essence, a very large bench. In the same breath, however, it is also signified generosity, comfort, and an expansion of dwell time. It is this which so few exhibitions consider, and this which is at the heart of the exhibition’s appeal to visitors as a physical, tactile environment.

A key move in the new ArkDes is the reopening of an old entrance. The redesign of the spaces hinges upon this single threshold, through which all visitors to the museum now flow. The decision to reopen it stands for far more than it might at first seem. Yes – it allows for a different sort of reception, and clearer branding for the institution. At the same time, it signifies a willingness for the museum to claim its environments, and invite you in. This is symbolic

of the ideas that underpin ArkDes today: to be a museum that is unashamedly a work-in-progress, to not profess higher order knowledge or a status of authority over its fields, and to provide a foundation for near and far future adaptation that is not limited, but flexible. The invitation to dwell lies in far more than an open door, but initiates a relational in kind that can flow into any museum’s broader practices.

## BIOGRAPHY

*James Taylor-Foster* is a writer, cultural critic, and curator of design and digital culture who is trained in architecture. He’s the curator of contemporary architecture and design at ArkDes, and has developed a number of curatorial projects in Stockholm including *Cruising Pavilion: Architecture, Gay Sex and Cruising Culture and Space Popular: Value in the Virtual*, alongside public installations with *Studio Ossidiana*, *Swedish Girls*, and others. They curated *WEIRD SENSATION FEELS GOOD* – the first museum exhibition to explore the culture and creative field of ASMR, currently touring. Most recently, they worked with Joar Nango and collaborators to present *Girjegumpi: The Sámi Architecture Library* in the Nordic Pavilion at the 18th International Architecture Exhibition – *La Biennale di Venezia*. Their first collaborative collection of essays, *softspot*, was published in 2021 (*InOtherWords*).

<sup>10</sup> Walker, B. (2023). *At the Design Museum*. *London Review of Books*. Retrieved from: <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v45/n07/ben-walker/at-the-design-museum>

## Il Resto dell'Alba (The Rest of Dawn)

Maddalena d'Alfonso

Md'A Design Agency, Milan  
Italy

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### Abstract

Il Resto dell'Alba (The Rest of Dawn) is an immersive exhibition that explores the dialogue between humanity's past and future through a fusion of art, architecture, and digital technology. Curated at the MAN Museum of Nuoro, the exhibit is a collaboration between artist Patrick Tuttofuoco, museographer Maddalena d'Alfonso, and Pininfarina Architecture. At its core, the exhibition contrasts a nuragic statue, symbolizing ancient heritage, with a double rising sun made of neon tubes, representing the metaverse and the digital and virtual future.

The space is enveloped by a striking aluminum skin, meticulously designed by Pininfarina Architecture using mesh clustering technology. This recyclable, sustainable structure wraps around the room, creating an immersive environment that serves as both art and architecture. The exhibition also acted as a backdrop for inclusive events, promoting accessibility while addressing urgent contemporary issues such as climate change and digital transformation. Visitors are invited to reflect on humanity's evolving role in the digital age, positioned between the ancient past and an uncertain future.

**Keywords:** Collaboration, Digital, Technology, Sustainable Design, Resource Conservation

The exhibition *Il Resto dell'Alba* (The Rest of Dawn) presented at MAN in Nuoro, a unique institution in Sardinia dedicated to the study, conservation, and promotion of modern and contemporary art, emerged from a theoretical collaboration among artist Patrick Tuttofuoco, museographer and curator Maddalena d'Alfonso, and architect Giovanni de Niederhäusern, VP of Pininfarina Architettura. This immersive work delves into the virtual realm by giving tangible form to hyper-technological digital concepts and the metaverse.

Within the art space generated using virtual prototyping tools visitors and environment blend activating a dialogue with the temporal dimension of art. On one hand there is the historical past, symbolized by a Nuragic sculpture, an eternal emblem of our origins and archaic heritage. On the other we glimpse the digital future represented by the ethereal, auroral light of a double sun. This dual perspective embodies hope, regeneration and a new understanding of human existence on Earth echoing the ideas of Rousseau, Taut, and Heidegger.

Crafted entirely from aluminum using generative parametric design tools, it employs mesh clustering to optimize material usage. After the exhibition the work can be disassembled and its components recycled. The double sun, a fusion of an incipient sphere and its luminous shadow creates an enigmatic circuit challenging our notions of light and warmth.

*Il Resto dell'Alba* (The Rest of Dawn) fosters a dialogue among art, architecture, and museography shaping a personal journey for visitors. It captures the ephemeral beauty of dawn, encapsulating anticipation and a suspended state of time. The exhibit challenges viewers to contemplate a future that may seem increasingly detached from nature yet it advocates for a harmonious balance between ecological principles and technology. As spectators traverse the boundary between past and future they personify the present state. The museographic landscape, inspired by the metaverse's digital vistas, evokes the thrill and trepidation of proximity to the sun a metaphor that prompts introspection on pressing global concerns, from the effects of climate change to sustainable design and resource conservation.

**The project can be summarized in the four key points described below.**

**1. Evolution of the Space from Place to Concept:**

By detaching itself from a traditional pattern, the space generates a multi-sensory narrative, giving voice to an experiential artistic expression. This paradigm shifts the focus of the route from a sequence of works to the alternation between artistic space and its multiple generated in the reflection of the lucid parts. This frees up space to give voice to a multiplicity of narratives oriented towards inclusion and gender equality. The surface of

the walls, reflective but treated with a bush-hammered effect that creates a slightly corrugated surface, makes the reflection of the individual different from itself.

**2. Territories and Landscapes of Contemporaneity:**

The space provides an environment of a geo-historical character, the map of which relates to the individual in search of a relationship with a new artificial nature of a universal character that can respond to the urgencies of the present. The natural element opens up a path made up of landscape mixtures. The immersive space is set up to contain both a moment of pure contemplation and a moving observation of the new naturalness we are encountering.

**3. Diachronic Multi-Temporality:**

Light plays a central role within the entire route, marking time as well as the variety of spaces generated between the elements. From the diaphanous illumination, we pass to the darkness lit by the double sun, functional to the creation of an emotional place, suitable for producing a personal experience. The umbratile room allows contact with an art installation that dialogues with its refracted light on ceiling and walls.

**4. The Time Space Embodied:**

What is the time in which we live? A historical process from past to present or a memory time full of mystery, a black hole between what we know about the past and what we desire for the future? The art space is conceived to give shape to the new interpretation of contemporary time lost between the new theory and daily experience, through the lens of cyclicity. A digital appearance of a double sun enlightens ancient Nuragic sculptures of human beings, suspending the present in a metaphysical atmosphere.

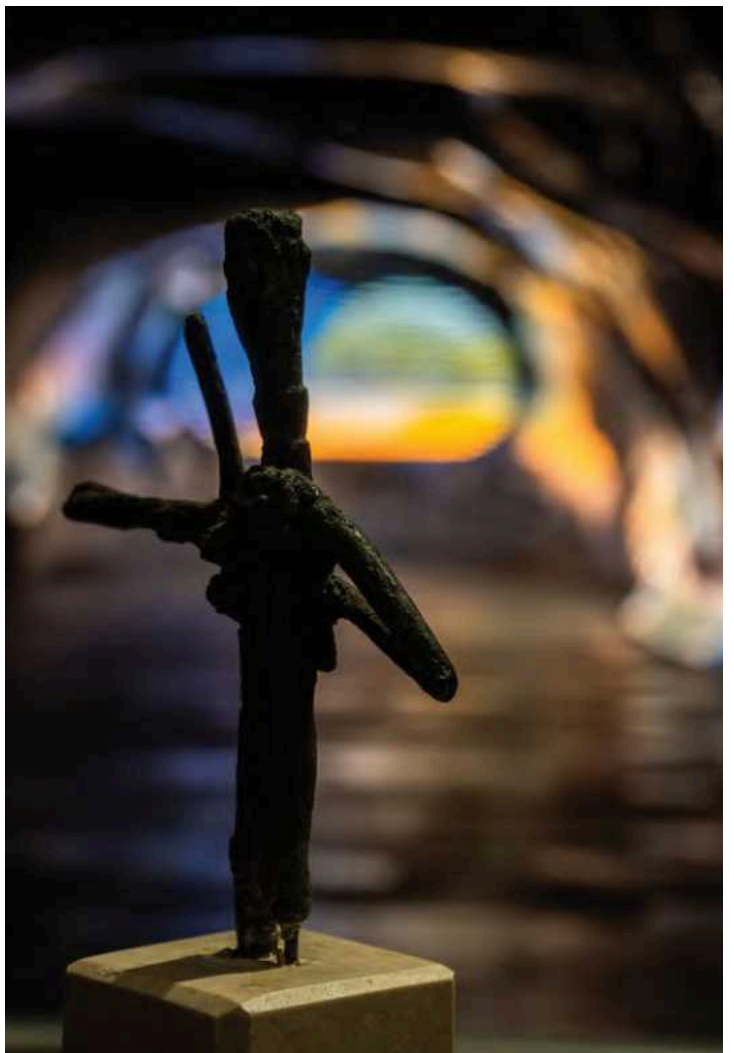
**How did the audience react to this exhibition and why exhibitions of this kind are important for the museums of the future?**

The audience responded very positively to *Il Resto dell'Alba* (The Rest of Dawn) with 19,000 visitors over 4 months and additional events in February attracting 2,500 people. The guided-tours for primary school children also saw more than 2,000 attendees. Visitors appreciated the exhibition's immersive blend of historical and digital elements, which highlighted themes of hope and regeneration through the juxtaposition of a Nuragic sculpture and a double sun prompting reflection on humanity's future.

Exhibitions like this are important for the future of museums. They integrate ecological and technological considerations, challenge traditional schemes and address global issues such as climate change and sustainability thus enhancing the museum's role in education and engagement.

*Credit photos - Alessandro Mori*









## BIOGRAPHY

*Maddalena d'Alfonso* is an architect, essayist and researcher and holds the distinction of being an associate professor since 2017. Her expertise stands in the intersection of research activity and museographic culture which she skillfully applies to the conception and design of exhibitions and cultural programs. As a member of the scientific committee of ICOM - ICAMT (International Committee for Architecture and Museum Techniques) since 2019 she contributes significantly to the field.

One of her notable achievements is "The Landscape of Rights: Photographing the Constitution" exhibition curated in 2017 for the Municipality of Milan. This exhibition received the Medal of Representation from the President of the Italian Republic. Additionally her book "Warm Modernity" (published by Silvana in 2016, Milan) was honored with the RED DOT AWARD.

In 2019 Maddalena founded Md'A Design Agency where she brings together interdisciplinary expertise in architecture, curating and other specialties essential for managing museum spaces. Her agency focuses on implementing sustainable solutions for architecture and design emphasizing accessibility to visual culture.

Furthermore in 2024 she co-founded Display and Design ETS Cultural Association focusing on exhibits and museographic concepts related to sustainability and accessibility to culture. Maddalena d'Alfonso's efforts shape the fields of architecture, museography and visual culture.

# Curating the Exhibition Design and Designing the Exhibits' Curation: Gae Aulenti and The Phoenicians at Palazzo Grassi

Marina Martin Barbosa

Independent researcher, Zurich

Switzerland

## Abstract

The objective of this paper is to analyze the importance of dialogue between museum professionals, specifically the Exhibition Designer and Curator, in the development of complex exhibition projects. In this context, the main protagonist chosen is the Italian architect and designer Gaetana "Gae" Aulenti (1927-2012), who throughout her career worked on projects for the renovation of buildings for museum use and exhibition spaces. Notable examples include the Musée d'Orsay and the Contemporary Art Gallery at the Centre Pompidou, both in Paris, and the Palazzo Grassi in Venice.

**Keywords:** Exhibition Designer, Curator, Gae Aulenti, Palazzo Grassi, Phoenicians

Regarding Palazzo Grassi, in 1983, the Fabbrica Italiana Automobili di Torino (FIAT) purchased this palace to present important temporary art and archaeology exhibitions to the general public and specialists, entrusting Aulenti with the renovation and interior design projects. Dating back to the 18th century, the building presented various technological restrictions; despite this, its first exhibition was inaugurated in the summer of 1986, after only 13 months of work. Aulenti declared that her goal was not to create a museum but an exhibition space. In fact, her collaboration with Palazzo Grassi during the FIAT administration went beyond this, as she also designed innovative exhibitions, in close collaboration with the responsible curators.

Thus, this work addresses initial investigations into the fourth highly successful exhibition held at Palazzo Grassi during the FIAT administration, titled "I Fenici" The Phoenicians, which ran from March 6 to November 6, 1988, under the scientific direction / curation of Sabatino Moscati. This historical exhibition aimed to describe the Phoenician civilization in its development and diversification of areas, its connections with other civilizations. It was realized in collaboration with other museums, universities, and research centers, and thanks to its division into sections, designed by Aulenti, featuring graphic panels, films, and audiovisuals, the result was astonishing.

## Introduction

*"A museum is visited by great experts as well as by school children. An archaeological exhibition requires then a didactic commentary for visitors. In some cases, contents cannot be conveyed in a direct way, so art is narrated by various techniques, working in a strict relationship with curators. Setting up an exhibition implies a full knowledge of what is to be narrated"*<sup>1</sup>

This is an initial study of the exhibition period at Palazzo Grassi in Venice during its management by FIAT, which took place between 1984 and 2005. In the specific case of the exhibition on the Phoenicians, the fourth exhibition of that period, we aimed to understand how the collaboration between Exhibition Designer and Curator was conducted in an exhibition of great complexity, especially as it involved the presentation to the public of archaeological artifacts belonging to an ancient culture, difficult to interpret.

To effectively convey information about this civilization and the artifacts on display, the exhibition was enhanced with didactic elements such as graphic panels, technological tools, films, and audiovisuals. But how were the objects selected? What role did the Exhibition Designer play in understanding the pieces to be displayed, and how did the Curator contribute to conveying the information through the exhibition design? We intend to address these questions, though some will remain open as we continue to develop this research.

## Exhibition ideation

Due to the significant transformation in knowledge about the Phoenicians in the last 25 years of that period, driven mainly by new archaeological discoveries, The Phoenicians exhibition was launched. Its goal was to create the most comprehensive exhibition on this civilization from across the Mediterranean, spanning from east to west, with evidence from Lebanon to Spain, outlining the development and regional diversification<sup>2</sup>.

In line with the fruitful collaboration that had extensively characterized Palazzo Grassi initiatives, the exhibition also sought collaboration with museums, universities, and research centers, both Italian and international, to achieve a unique scientific and cultural endeavor<sup>3</sup>.

In a report written by the exhibition coordinator on his visit to Cagliari, Sassari, and Palermo, it is evident that the work on The Phoenicians exhibition commenced even before July 1986, two months after the opening of the first exhibition at Palazzo Grassi on Futurism. He highlighted the importance of starting the expographic project already, which will be of great complexity<sup>4</sup>.

At an organizational meeting in September of the same year<sup>5</sup>, several aspects of the exhibition were discussed such as the importance of a close collaboration between archaeological and artistic-expositive components, emphasized by the exhibition's Scientific Director, i.e. Curator, Sabatino Moscati (1922-1997)<sup>6</sup>, and the significance of the team's familiarity with the works already listed in the pre-catalogue.

In the same occasion, Pontus Hultén (1924-2006)<sup>7</sup>, Artistic Director of Palazzo Grassi, emphasized that designing an exhibition requires a thorough understanding of the items on display. He recommended that both the architect and graphic designer participate in visits to the lending institutions. Hultén also highlighted the importance of the exhibition possessing an excellent balance of superb, didactic and contemporary appeal, with attractive graphics of great artistic curation.

For her part, the Exhibition Designer, architect Gae Aulenti (1927-2012)<sup>8</sup>, emphasized that replicating a museum structure should be avoided. She stressed that an exhibition requires a spectacular approach that integrates all elements -materials, panels, and captions- into a cohesive and unified presentation.

As a suggestion for the exhibition, Moscati proposed, at the same meeting, to start with a single, highly impactful work to capture attention, followed by a tour of major categories. He recommended incorporating transitional

<sup>4</sup> Report prepared by Cristiano Buffa, Venice July 28, 1986. In: ASAC, Busta 134. Before The Phoenicians, there was the Arcimboldo Effect and Jean Tinguely shows in 1987 and Futurism & Futurisms in 1986.

<sup>5</sup> Notes on the meeting of September 5, 1986, at Palazzo Grassi. In: ASAC, Busta 132.

<sup>6</sup> Sabatino Moscati was an Italian archaeologist, historian, and orientalist. During the time of the exhibition, he served as the president of the National Academic Union and the Institute for Phoenician and Punic Civilization of the National Research Council of Italy. He was also a national associate and member of the presidential council of the *Accademia dei Lincei*, as well as a full professor at the University of Rome. By then, he had promoted numerous Italian and international archaeological missions.

<sup>7</sup> Karl Gunnar Vougth Pontus Hultén was a Swedish art collector and museum director. He was the pioneering former head of the Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm. In the 1970s, he was invited to participate in the creation of the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, where he became the first director of the National Museum of Modern Art. In 1980, he was invited to establish the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and from 1984 to 1990, he oversaw Palazzo Grassi in Venice. For more on Hultén's early career see: Tellgren, A. (2017).

<sup>8</sup> Gaetana Emilia Aulenti was an Italian architect and designer known for her work in exhibition design, industrial design, and interior architecture. She gained international recognition for her innovative approach to design and ability to transform historical spaces into modern settings. For more information on Aulenti's work see: Pasca, V. (2013).

<sup>1</sup> Quotation from Gae Aulenti. In: Rykwert, J. (1992). p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> At the time there were significant differences of opinion regarding the origins and culture of the Phoenicians. Scholars were divided between those who place them in the 2nd and 3rd millennia BC, and those who date their emergence to the beginning of the Iron Age, around 1200 BC. In any case, it is known that the Phoenician civilization achieved total autonomy around 1200 BC. Dépliant "Les Phéniciens". In: ASAC, Busta 176.

<sup>3</sup> Document titled: "Note sulla Mostra I Fenici". In: ASAC, Busta 132.

spaces with strong, focused content, and concluding with a section that connects the Phoenicians to contemporary times, titled "The Phoenicians and us".

The personalities mentioned so far were crucial to the development of the exhibition, but the project also involved various teams structured as: Scientific, Exhibition, General organization, as well as other collaborators such as graphic designers, architects, photographers, video producers, etc. Additionally the exhibition counted with an Honorary, Promotion, and Scientific Committee, which included international members.

It is known that Aulenti took part in the restructuring of Palazzo Grassi alongside Antonio Foscari, also designing the furniture for the installations and acquiring an intimate understanding of the space, which probably contributed to her appointment as the exhibition's designer. She likely had heard of Hultén, and vice versa, even before she began a previous project on the redesign of the National Museum of Modern Art at the Centre Georges Pompidou, which took place between 1982 and 1985, before Hultén left the institution, where he had served as director from 1977 to 1981.

### Exhibition Production

The importance of the exhibition's design and the role of the architect chosen to create it is also evident in the loan request letters, where Aulenti is mentioned with the Scientific Director<sup>9</sup>. By this time, she had already

<sup>9</sup> Loan request letter dated November 6, 1986, from Giuseppe Donegà, General Director of Palazzo Grassi, to Professor M'Hamed Fantar, Director General of the National Institute of Archaeology and Tunisian Art. In: ASAC, Busta 134.

established a reputation with her museum project, but it is interesting to see this unusual mention in such demarche. Additionally, she played a crucial role in the final selection of objects together with the Scientific Committee, likely due to the complexities involved in displaying certain types of archaeological artifacts<sup>10</sup>.

In fact, organizing an exhibition featuring more than 800 objects of various types - including statues, bronzes, terracotta, ceramics, jewelry, ivory, coins, ostrich eggs, and alabaster vases<sup>11</sup> - from 23 institutions across 9 countries, including Belgium, Cyprus, France, Great Britain, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Spain, and Tunisia, was certainly a complex endeavor. Prestigious institutions like the Louvre and the British Museum were among the lenders, adding to the logistical challenges of coordinating such a diverse and vast selection.

To design and build this exhibition effectively, Aulenti's collaborator wrote to Palazzo Grassi's secretariat, suggesting that a simplification of the construction and display system would be desirable to obtain better results<sup>12</sup>. The drawings indeed reflect this approach, showing standard showcases with six variations of their internal supports. This allowed for a greater focus on the exhibition's transitional spaces, where ad hoc scenography was implemented.

<sup>10</sup> Letter dated June 24, 1987, from Giovanni Garbini, Department of Oriental Studies University of Rome La Sapienza, to Giuseppe Donegà. In: ASAC, Busta 131.

<sup>11</sup> Notes of July 1987. In: ASAC, Busta 132.

<sup>12</sup> Letter dated November 23, 1987, from Francesca Fenaroli to Clarenza Catullo. In: ASAC, Busta 132.

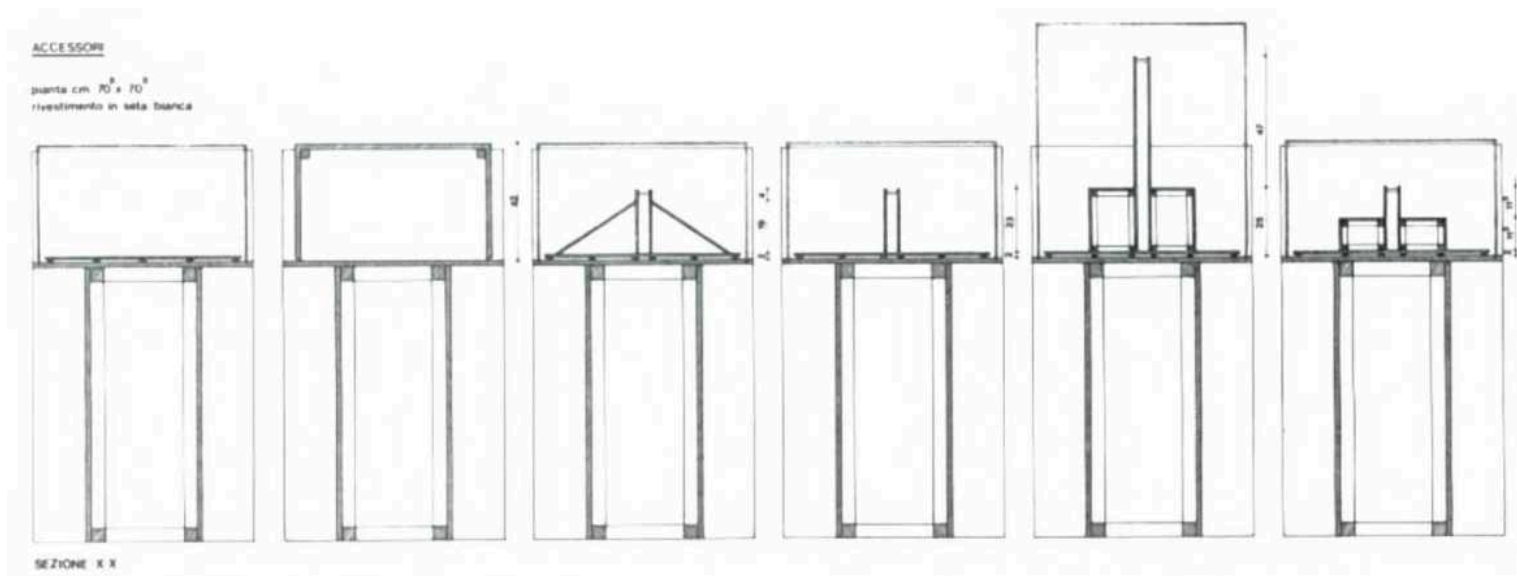


Figure 1: Variations of internal showcase supports. In: Rykwert, J. (1992), p. 94.



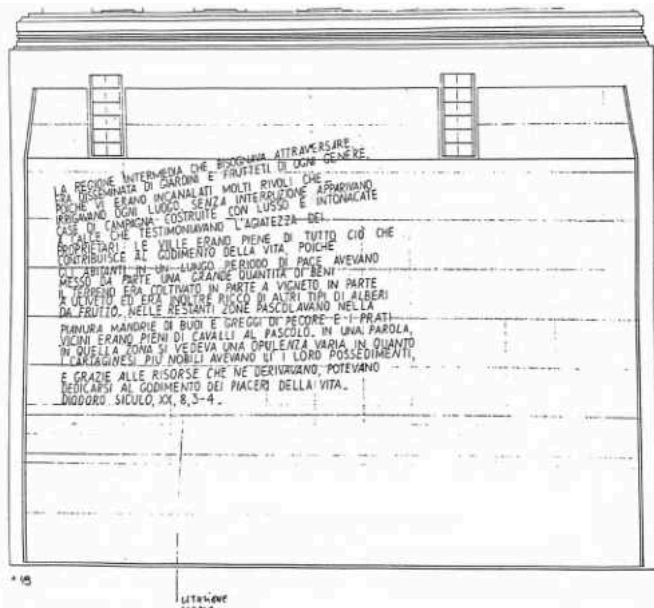


Figure 2: Designs by Giorgio Camuffo for Pieluigi Cerri In: ASAC, Busta 113.

Drawings of the graphic project executed by designer Giorgio Camuffo, were also found, indicating that considerable attention was given to this aspect. The themes developed on the walls of the rooms included a wide range of topics such as geography, political and administrative organization, urban planning and architecture, navigation and transport, alphabet and writing, beliefs and religious life, comparisons with other civilizations, wars, trade and exchange, food, and literary quotations<sup>13</sup>.

## Exhibition Description

According to Aulenti, the exhibition design was based on three communicative principles. The first, more traditional, displayed archaeological objects in "typological series" to showcase their artistic diversity. These objects were arranged in showcases, organized by production areas of Phoenician culture. The second created transitional spaces that separate different geographical areas, to highlight major Phoenician cultural-historical themes, presented using "spectacular" display techniques. The third emphasized didactics by using large painted and graffitied depictions on the walls, integrating educational and scientific elements, offering an immersive and spectacular experience<sup>14</sup>.

The exhibition was spread across three floors and organized into five geographic areas: Phoenicia and the Near East, Carthage and North Africa, Iberia, Sardinia and Sicily, Malta & Tyrrhenian Italy. The exhibition was also divided into eight special sections to highlight the most significant and distinctive contributions of this civilization. The main themes included Sarcophagi, Navigation, the Tophet, the Mozia Youth, the Alphabet, Production and Trade, Hannibal and the wars against Rome.



Figure 3: Installation preparations. © Studio Fotografico Piermarco Menini & Michele Gregolin, Mestre, Venice. In: ASAC, Busta 176.

The ground floor welcomed visitors with a display of sarcophagi located at the center of the atrium. Contrary to the plan discussed in the organizational meeting of September 1986, which proposed a single impactful work, Aulenti designed the central courtyard of Palazzo Grassi to feature a large dune from which many stone sarcophagi emerged. This design element aimed to evoke the wonder of archaeological discovery and create a powerful initial impression as the first view of the exhibition.

On the same floor, there were two rooms dedicated to interactive programs with terminals installed by IBM (International Business Machines Corporation), to allow visitors to follow electronic paths parallel to the exhibition, serving as an educational aid. The rooms were equipped with 12 computers that hosted four programs<sup>15</sup>. These programs included an introduction on Phoenician Civilization, the Rediscovery of the city of Kerkouane in Tunisia, the Reconstruction of the Port of Carthage to

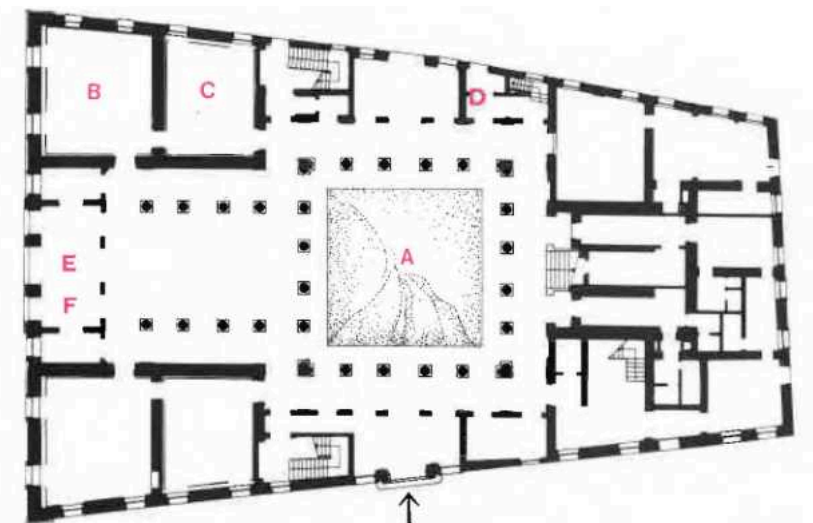


Figure 4: Ground floor - A: Sarcophagi, B-C: IBM Electronic Itinerates, D: Exhibition Audio Guide rental, E: ECO Object Sales Desk, F: Catalog Sales Desk. In: Booklet "I Fenici".

<sup>13</sup> In: ASAC, Busta 133.

<sup>14</sup> Brochure "I Fenici". In: ASAC, Busta 179.

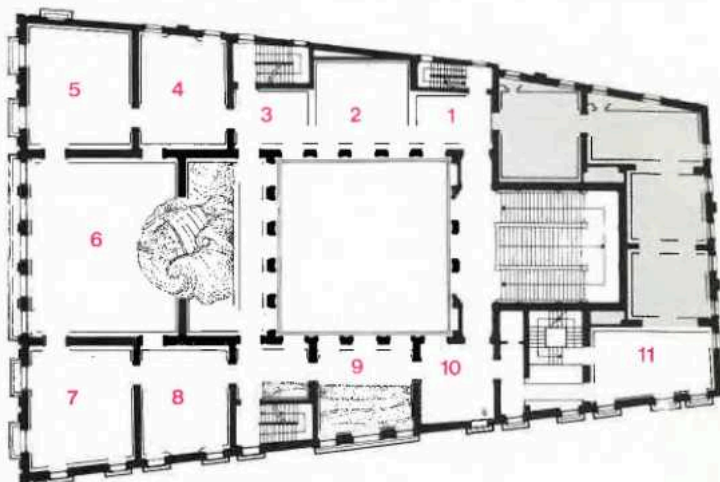


Figure 5: First floor - 1-5: Phoenicia and the Near East, 6: Navigation, 7-8: Carthage and North Africa, 9: The Tophet, 10: The Mozia Youth, 11: Iberia. In: Booklet "I Fenici".

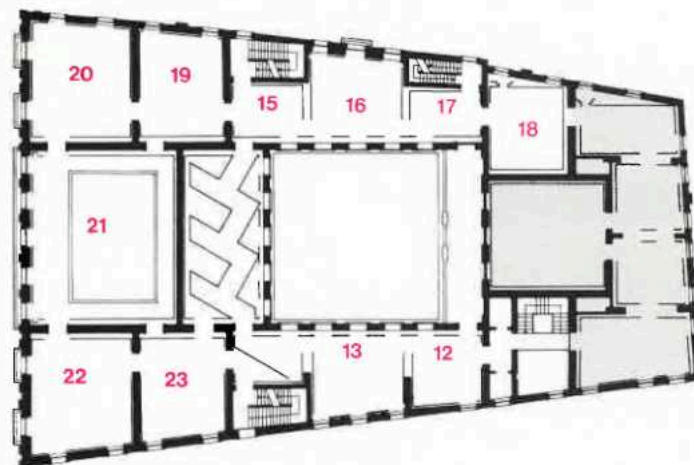


Figure 6: Second floor - 12-13: Iberia, 14-17: The Alphabet, 18: Audiovisual, 19-20: Sardinia, 21: Production and trade, 22: Sicily, Malta and Tyrrhenian Italy, 23: Hannibal and the wars against Rome. In: Booklet "I Fenici".

understand ships and trade, and an Analytical Laboratory, which determines the processing, state of conservation and restoration interventions of artifacts<sup>15</sup>. The two rooms proved so attractive that they were not dismantled at the end of the exhibition, but kept for use in the next one<sup>17</sup>.

On the first floor, it stands out the room dedicated to navigation, widely discussed by the exhibition team and notable for reflecting Aulenti's proposal to build a group of Phoenician ships placed in a water mirror. In a large tank, models of various types of vessels, from transport to war, built by the architect Ercole Borsani<sup>18</sup>, were reproduced providing the idea of a fleet and a possible maritime organizational structure of the Phoenicians.

In the same room the reconstruction of a Phoenician shipwreck, with the arrangement of its ballast and amphora cargo, portrayed not only about the structure and trim of the vessel, but also about its purpose and functionality with respect precisely to trade.

Also noteworthy is the room about Tophet, the open-air shrines where the incinerated remains of sacrificed children were placed. Dozens of stelae of different characteristics and origins emerged from a high sandbank in the shape of a dune.

On the second floor, stands out the room dedicated to production and trade, where the Phoenicians were the great creators of large-scale and wide-ranging trade, spreading their products and those of others throughout the Mediterranean area. A type of bazaar has been



Figure 7: Sarcophagi installation from above. In: ASAC, Busta 179.



Figure 8: Sarcophagi installation from the ground floor. In: Rykwert, J. (1992), pp. 92-93.

reconstructed in which various types of products were placed, including those typical of the Phoenician market: purple, textiles, glass and jewelry.

As an additional didactic element of the exhibition, the nearby Church of San Samuele hosted non-stop screenings of a film about the Phoenicians by Folco Quilici.

<sup>15</sup> Notes "Piccolo Catalogo". In: ASAC, Busta 133.

<sup>16</sup> Brochure "I Fenici". In: ASAC, Busta 179

<sup>17</sup> Meeting minutes, Venice October 10, 1988. In: ASAC, Busta 133.

<sup>18</sup> Letter of May 14, 1987, from Giuseppe Donegà to architect Ercole Borsani: In: ASAC, Busta 131.





Figure 9: IBM rooms. In: ASAC, Busta 179.



Figure 10: Navigation room. In: ASAC, Busta 179.

with a large audience"<sup>19</sup>, it had more than six hundred thousand visitors, just under a month before it closed, with a daily average of around 2,800 visitors a day<sup>20</sup>.

Promotion for the exhibition was strong, and parallel activities to promote it were carried out, such as a congress with the presence of Moscati and Aulenti<sup>21</sup>, as well as a presentation in Italy<sup>22</sup> and abroad<sup>23</sup>, not to mention the articles published in newspapers, and competitions with prizes held in schools always in relation to the exhibition<sup>24</sup>.

The scientific research and selection of works from the pre-catalog were fundamental starting points for the exhibition. However, the emphasis on exhibition design from the outset to effectively convey information about the objects was a key aspect of this show. The designer's deep understanding of the artifacts, actively involved in the final selection, along with the curator's close

## Success of the Exhibition and Conclusion

Contrary to what Hultén expected: "that The Phoenicians would be a prestigious exhibition, but certainly not one



Figure 11: Shipwreck at Navigation room. In: ASAC, Busta 179.



Figure 12: "Tophet" room. In: ASAC, Busta 179.

collaboration in the design process, were crucial to the exhibition's extraordinary success, allowing for effective communication of a challenging theme and generating a significant impact.

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<sup>21</sup> "Convegno Mostra I Fenici" in Cagliari, November 10, 1988. In: ASAC, B182.



Figure 13: Production and Trade room. In: ASAC, Busta 179.

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**Marina Martin Barbosa** has a Ph.D. in History (line of research Politics, Memory, and Cities) from the State University of Campinas and in Art History from the Ca' Foscari and IUAV Universities of Venice (2015). She holds a master's degree in Conservation and Enhancement of historical and cultural heritage, with a focus on industrial heritage, from the University Paris 1-Panthéon-Sorbonne, the University of Évora and the University of Padua (2010). She is Architect and Urban Designer (São Paulo University State) with a training completed at ENSA Paris La Villette (2007). Her professional experience includes the management of art collections, the coordination and design of exhibitions, teaching Expography/Museography, and working with conservation and restoration projects of architectural heritage. She currently works at Photo Elysée - Museum for Photography, Lausanne as Exhibitions and Collection Registrar and is member of the VKKS -ASHHA (Swiss Association of Art Historians) and part of the executive committee of ICOM-ICAMT (International Committee for Architecture and Museum Techniques).

<sup>22</sup> "Invitación Encuentro los Fenicios con motivo de la Exposición de Venecia" in Madrid, on June 16, at the Prado Museum. In: ASAC, Busta 133.

<sup>23</sup> "Invito per presentazione della mostra sui Fenici" in Naples, on October 13, at the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy, University of Naples. In: ASAC, Busta 170.

<sup>24</sup> "Concorso per gli otto migliori elaborati collettivi di classe di scuole medie sui Fenici". In: ASAC, Busta 190.



# Non-Visual Perception of Museum Buildings: A Case Study on the Strategy of the Spatial Conceptualization in the Architecture of the National Center for the Performing Arts for the Visually Impaired

Hsin-Yi Chao

Assistant Professor, National Chung Hsing University, Program of Digital Humanities and Creative Industries, Taichung City  
Taiwan

## Abstract

This study examines methods for visually impaired audiences to understand the indoor and outdoor spatial concepts of performance architecture, using three performance art venues with different design philosophies and styles: the National Theatre & Concert Hall of Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall in Taipei, the National Taichung Theater, and National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts-Wei Wu Ying in Kaohsiung. It aims to summarize suitable strategies for constructing non-visual spatial cognition navigation as a reference for museums. The research methodology involved non-participatory field observations of architectural spaces, verbal image-guided tours, tactile models, and analysis of three-dimensional aids. Interviews with accessibility officers were conducted. From the combined data of the three venues, the study found: 1. For architectural models, it is best to make them tactile within reach of both hands, displaying the complete architectural volume and detailed exterior structure. For indoor performance spaces, models explaining the seating and stage positions should be available for understanding spatial relationships. 2. Overall floor plans are necessary tactile aids, suggesting the addition of navigation route explanations for better understanding of spatial layout. Although elevations and sections are more difficult concepts, they can still enhance understanding of architectural facades and spatial scale. 3. The quality of verbal image-guided tours affects the understanding of visually impaired audiences. Guides should provide accompanying tactile aids to avoid differences in information received by visually impaired audiences. Therefore, auditory and tactile information can construct conceptual understanding of museum architectural spaces. The universality of aid design, completeness of spatial information, and quality of guidance all influence visually impaired audiences' comprehension of museum architecture.

**Keywords:** Museum Architecture, Visually Impaired Audience, Audio Description, Tactile Aids, Spatial Cognition

## Introduction

The existence and establishment of cultural institutions serve to provide services to all audiences. The architectural form of these institutions symbolizes their positioning, cultural imagery, or city branding. One of the missions of museums is to allow all audiences to understand the architecture of museums through various resources, including visually impaired individuals. How to comprehend architectural space information in a non-visual manner, thereby fostering interest in cultural venues, is essential for promoting independent exploration and enhancing the cultural participation of people with disabilities.

Architectural models, floor plans, elevations, and section drawings are tactile aids that help visually impaired individuals understand spatial information (Passini et al, 1986; Ungar, et al 1996; Ungar & Blades, 1997; Chao, 2022). Audio description further assists by conveying details about the museum's building such as color, size, material, texture, location, and orientation (Piety, 2004; Jiménez Hurtado & Soler Gallego, 2015; Chang, 2016; Hutchinson & Eardley, 2018, 2019 & 2021). This helps enhance spatial awareness and facilitates orientation, social interaction, and opportunities for cultural participation for individuals with visual impairments.

Currently, Taiwan has over 500 public and private museums. Among the main cultural performance venues, there are three performance arts buildings: the National Theatre & Concert Hall (NTCH), the National Taichung Theater (TTC), and the National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts-Wei Wu Ying (WWY), located in Taipei, Taichung, and Kaohsiung, respectively. In response to the operational model of administrative corporations and the social trend of cultural equity, these venues, in addition to offering age- and audience-segmented services, are placing greater emphasis on customer service experiences and the needs of people with disabilities, actively developing accessible and inclusive cultural spaces.

Performance arts museums differ from traditional museums and art galleries that provide static exhibits of cultural relics or artworks. Instead, they offer performance activities within limited time and space. These venues focus on architectural tours as a key factor in attracting audiences, in addition to their interest in the performances themselves, to motivate them to visit.

Why do these three performance venues use their architectural forms as the focus of their tour services? In line with Taiwan's urban marketing strategies, international architects were invited through public competitions to design these buildings, making architecture a cultural brand element. Apart from providing a venue for performing arts, the architecture itself has become a highlight in urban development. Thus, offering architectural tours has become a development goal for cultural performance venues.

However, while performance content is visually driven, incorporating elements of sound, light, and acoustics to develop genres like drama, dance, and music, how can information about architectural forms, performance spaces, and stage structures be translated and conveyed to visually impaired audiences? This has become a key strategy for these venues.

Although Taiwan's three performance arts venues opened at different times, sharing the same institutional roles and service functions, their architectural designs reflect different social contexts and the approaches of architects from various countries. In recent years, these venues have been more proactive than other types of museums in promoting architectural tours for visually impaired audiences. They have developed tactile architectural models, touchable maps, and trained staff in audio description, aiming to help visually impaired individuals build architectural concepts and spark interest in participating in performance activities.

This study aims to explore how to construct non-visual spatial cognition of architectural spaces. It will investigate the design rationale behind the floor plans and three-dimensional tactile aids used in performance venues through interviews with venue staff. Additionally, it will examine how the three performance venues plan their guided tours and strategies for visually impaired audiences. Finally, after experiencing the guided tours, the study will assess whether visually impaired individuals can understand the architectural structure, scale, orientation, and spatial relationships of museums through audio descriptions and tactile aids. The findings will provide a reference for other museums to promote similar services.

## Methods

### 1. Subjects

This study focuses on the architecture of performance venues, specifically the three administrative institutions under the National Performing Arts Center of Taiwan's Ministry of Culture, including: the National Theatre & Concert Hall, the National Taichung Theater, and the National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts-Wei Wu Ying. This research has been approved by the Research Ethics Review Board of National Cheng Kung University (Approval number: NCKU HREC-E 110-425-2).

1. National Theatre & Concert Hall (NTCH) opened in 1987 and located in Taipei, was originally under the Ministry of Education before being transferred to the Ministry of Culture's National Performing Arts Center in 2014. Designed by the C.C. Yang & Architects & Engineers Associates, the complex consists of the National Theatre and Concert Hall situated on either side of the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall. The theatre's design features traditional Chinese architectural style, with a roof resembling the Hall of Supreme Harmony in Beijing's Forbidden City, which is rare in Taiwan with its double-eave hipped roof. The building is

surrounded by large red colonnades. The concert hall has a traditional roof similar to the Hall of Preserving Harmony in the Forbidden City, slightly lower in status than the Hall of Supreme Harmony. It features a double-eave gable and hip roof with yellow tiles, decorative red columns, and brackets.

2. National Taichung Theater (TTC) opened in 2015 and located in Taichung, was designed by Japanese architect Toyo Ito. The design concept is inspired by primitive structures such as "treehouses" and "caves," resulting in three theaters: the Grand Theater, the Playhouse, and the Black Box, along with a curved lobby called the "Wavy Lobby," all connected by 580 curving walls.
3. National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts-Wei Wu Ying (WWY) opened in 2018 and located in Kaohsiung, was designed by Dutch architect Francine Houben. The architectural form is organically shaped to resemble the old banyan tree groves in Wei Wu Ying Park, allowing visitors to enter the venue from all directions. The curved roof, made from 4,500 aluminum alloy panels, makes it the world's largest performance venue under a single roof.

## 2. Research Tools

1. Interviews with museum educator: The researcher conducted interviews with staff responsible for guided architectural tours for visually impaired visitors at the three venues: on November 28, 2023 (WWY Learning & Outreach Department), May 28, 2024 (NTCH Customer Experience Department), June 6, 2024 (TTC Customer Service Department), and July 2, 2024 (WWY Operations Department). The interviews focused on the design of tactile aids and the training methods for audio description personnel (see Appendix 1).
2. Participant Observation: The researcher accompanied visually impaired audiences on guided architectural tours, observing the use of tactile models and touch-based maps, while listening to audio descriptions at NTCH (March 2, 2024), TTC (April 20, 2024), and WWY (May 11, 2024). The process was documented using video recordings.

This study was approved by the Research Ethics Review Board of National Cheng Kung University (Approval number: NCKU HREC-E 110-425-2). All interviewees and visually impaired participants received compensation after their interviews or tests.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

This study conducts a comparative analysis of the architectural tours of three performance venues, focusing on three aspects: architectural model production, tactile map design, and audio description guides.

### 1. Comparative Analysis of Architectural Model Design (Table 1)

#### (1) National Theatre & Concert Hall

In consideration of visually impaired visitors, NTCH designed architectural models focused on the exterior appearance of the buildings. In 2019, two monochromatic models were created at a 1:300 scale, one of the Concert Hall and one of the National Theatre. Some architectural features were magnified for easier tactile exploration. The venue recommends that three visually impaired visitors take turns touching the models, which are sized to be within reach of both hands. For unique design elements, additional enlarged sections were made for detailed tactile exploration of special features.

#### (2) National Taichung Theater

The National Taichung Theater opted to produce partial models of its most distinctive structural elements at a 1:100 scale. These colorful models were handcrafted using PVC, putty, and acrylic composite materials. Two models were produced in 2019, and a third was added later to meet the needs of the guided tours. The size of the models remains within the tactile range of both hands. Future plans include creating models of the interior performance halls and related tactile maps.

#### (3) National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts-Wei Wu Ying

Since its opening in 2018, Wei Wu Ying has been planning tactile models for visually impaired tours, with official use beginning in 2019. Five small models at scales of 1:500 and 1:1000 were produced, along with two larger models. The small models emphasize the unique roof structure, while the large models, designed with hollowed-out structures, illustrate the spatial positions of the performance halls. These models are used in guided tours to help participants understand the overall architectural design and the orientation of the four main performance halls.

### 2. Comparative Analysis of Architectural Tactile Map Design (Table 2)

#### (1) National Theatre & Concert Hall

NTCH has 15 tactile map booklets produced by a company specializing in aids for the visually impaired. These are designed as portable booklets, with each containing around three pages. The maps are explained at fixed locations within the venue. The orientation and movement flow across the entire venue are introduced first, followed by details of the National Theatre and Concert Hall, which are divided into first and second-floor maps. The content covers the overall building layout, including the main structure, stage, audience seating, orchestra pit, and corridors.

## **(2) National Taichung Theater**

The National Taichung Theater collaborated with organizations for the visually impaired to produce related aids. Due to the unique architectural form of the building, the initial 2019 design featured single elevation maps, using a raised design with braille and printed text arranged separately. Starting in July 2024, floor plan booklets were introduced, covering the first floor, second floor, fifth floor, sixth-floor sky garden, and the experimental theater on the second basement level. The dual-vision design allows both visually impaired and sighted individuals to use the same maps.

## **(3) National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts-Wei Wu Ying**

The tactile map design at Wei Wu Ying was co-developed with visually impaired organizations starting in 2018. During the development process, visually impaired individuals were invited to participate in tests, resulting in a portable, dual-vision map with color-coded features. The maps include floor plans, visitor routes, and floor plans and sectional diagrams of indoor performance spaces. Since visually impaired visitors cannot always enter the performance spaces, the four main indoor spaces (Opera House, Playhouse, Concert Hall, and Recital Hall) are presented through both floor plans and sectional views. The spatial structure and characteristics of these areas are clearly shown, and four distinct colors are used to differentiate spatial attributes, making it easier for individuals with low vision to identify the locations and orientations of performance spaces.

## **3. Comparative Analysis of Audio Description Tours and Path Planning (Table 3)**

### **(1) National Theatre & Concert Hall**

Since 2020, the National Theatre & Concert Hall has established the "Inclusive Sustainability Team," with members from each department. The team holds annual meetings inviting experts and scholars to share insights and conduct workshops for accessibility tour demonstrations. Initially focused on improving accessible seating, the NTCH now organizes monthly events for various types of disabilities. Each tour lasts 90 minutes and focuses on either the Concert Hall or the Drama Theatre, as chosen by the participating group, with registration required one month in advance. Individual participants can choose to join based on the NTCH's scheduled events. Approximately 10 to 12 events are held annually, with over 20 events in 2023 and more than 300 participants with visual impairments recorded.

Guides undergo professional training in audio description and simulate tours for visually impaired participants. After receiving feedback from visually impaired individuals, the audio description is finalized and memorized by the guides. Tours include at least three key points: the performance hall, model displays, rotating stairs, and the lobby. Tours

also involve explanations using guide booklets, tactile models, physical touch of architectural features, and other model exhibits such as art installations in the Drama Theatre or organ models in the Concert Hall. At the end of each tour, feedback is collected from participants. NTCH also offers free braille guidebooks to applicants, allowing them to familiarize themselves with the venue in advance, thereby enhancing the motivation for visually impaired individuals to attend performances. However, satisfaction surveys for architectural tours are not yet conducted but may be considered for future planning.

### **(2) National Taichung Theater**

Starting in 2019, TTC began training in audio description, and by 2020, architectural tours incorporating partial models and elevation diagrams were introduced. The theater has 20 to 30 trained audio description guides. During the development phase, visually impaired individuals were invited to participate in discussions and provide feedback on the audio descriptions. Guides offer one-on-one services to visually impaired individuals during tours, adhering to the prepared script. Initially offered regularly each month, the tours are now open for registration, accommodating 1 to 10 participants per session. If there are more than 5 participants, the group is divided. Since 2019, 23 tours have been conducted for 308 visually impaired individuals and their companions, with 9 sessions specifically for visually impaired attendees, totaling 125 people. Although satisfaction surveys are not currently conducted, positive feedback from visually impaired participants has been received.

This indicates that visually impaired audiences at the National Taichung Theater are satisfied with the professionalism of the audio description tours, which can enhance their motivation to attend performances. In addition, the theater provides extra guiding facilities, including tactile maps of restrooms, tactile textures at staircases, and guiding tiles from bus stops to the theater lobby.

### **(3) National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts-Wei Wu Ying**

WWY has been hosting tours since 2019, with 4 to 5 audio description volunteers and additional support from visually impaired organizations or general volunteers. Statistics show that in 2020, 6 tours were held with 87 participants, in 2021, 1 tour with 35 participants, in 2022, 3 tours with 32 participants, in 2023, no tours were held, and by June 30, 2024, 2 tours with 29 participants were conducted, totaling 183 participants. The tours focus on the architectural park rather than the performance hall interiors, with detailed guidebooks used to explain indoor performance spaces. The tour starts with participants touching small models of the building's exterior at the first-floor gathering area. They then proceed through the first-floor space for sensory experiences. On the third floor, another audio description guide explains the floor plans and sectional diagrams of each space, concluding the tour with small cards.



Table 1  
Comparative analysis table of architectural three-dimensional model design survey

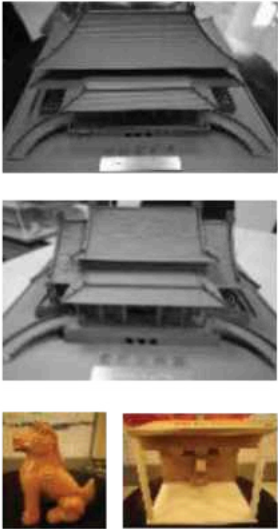
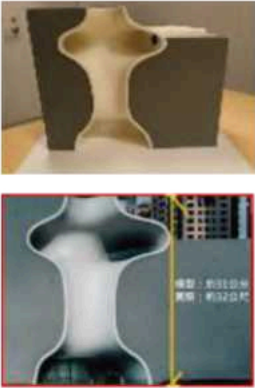

	NTCH	TTC	WWY
Size	Theater 45(L)*45(W)*28(H)cm Concert Hall 45(L)*42(W)*28(H)cm	40(L)*14(W)*31(H)cm small model:	Small model: 22(L)*15.5(W)*3.6(H)cm Large model: 45(L)*31.8(W)*6.3(H)cm
Scale	1/300	1/100	Small model: 1/1000 Large model: 1/500
number	Theater: 1 Concert Hall: 1	3	Small model: 5 Large model: 2
Material	acrylic, 3D printing	PVC, soil filler, acrylic	nylon
Color	dark gray	White, gray	white
Structure	The overall exterior design is emphasized, with detailed models and movable columns produced using 3D printing.	Highlight the distinctive structural design of the teapot-shaped structure ( <b>Bottle the Art</b> ) on the fifth floor.	The small model is the overall appearance; the large model is the hollow structure of the performance space
Architect	Yang Zhuocheng (Taiwan)	Toyo Ito (Japan)	Francine Houban (Netherlands)
Thumbnail			

Table 2

Comparative analysis table of architectural plan design survey

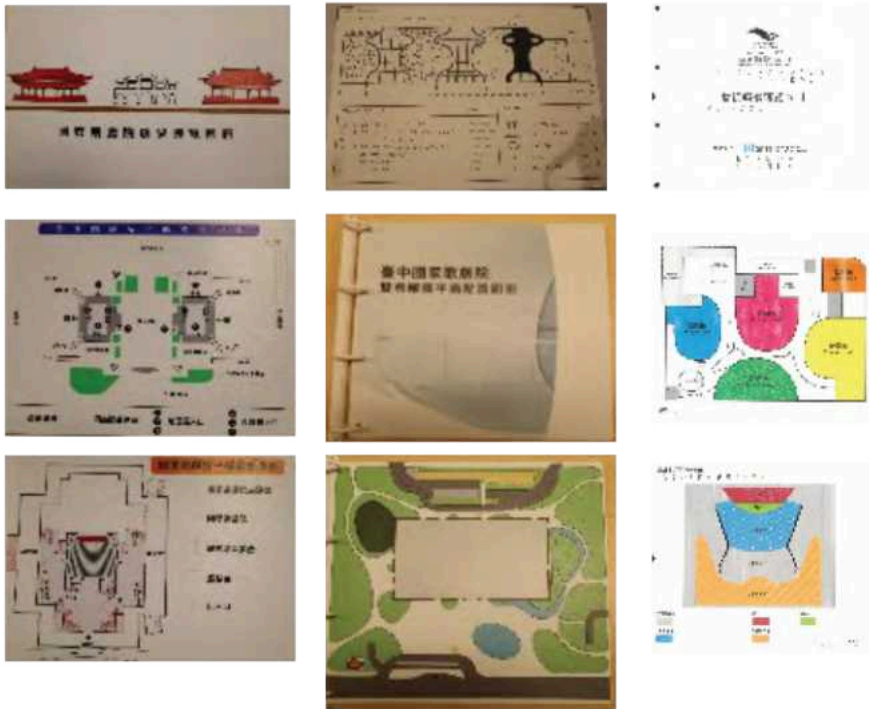
	NTCH	TTC	WWY
<b>Type</b>	Floor Plan	Elevation, floor plan	Section, floor plan
<b>Scope</b>	Overall Park Surrounding Concert Hall Theater	Overall Park Surrounding Floor plans of each floor.	Overall park floor plan and circulation diagram. Plans of the first and third floors Floor Plans and sectional of the four performance spaces
<b>Content</b>	Text, braille, tactile graphics, color (double vision design)	Text, Braille, tactile patterns, monochrome elevations, color albums (double-view design)	Text, braille, tactile graphics, color (double vision design)
<b>Size</b>	25*22.5cm	Guide book 25*22.5cm Elevation 29.7*42cm	25*22.5cm
<b>Number</b>	Guide book 15	Guide book 10 Elevation 10 more	Guide book 15
<b>Thumbnail</b>			

Table 3  
Comparative Analysis of Audio Description Tours and Path Planning

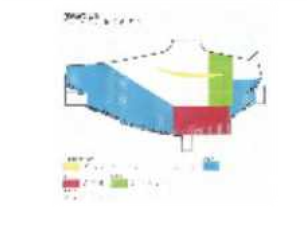
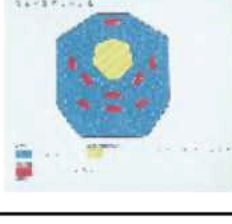
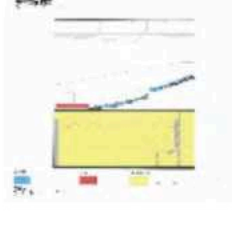
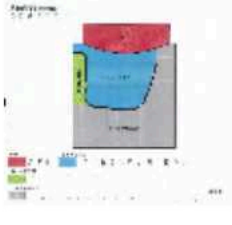
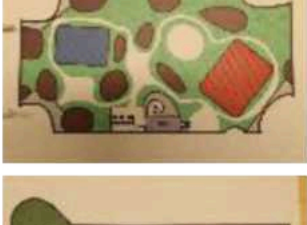
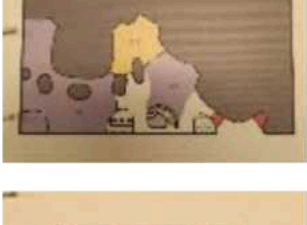
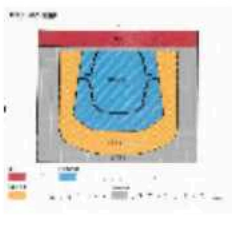
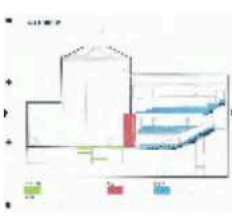
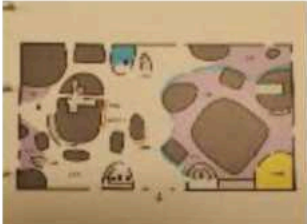
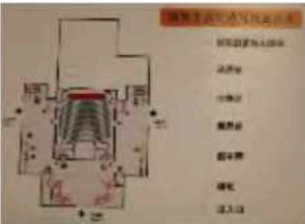









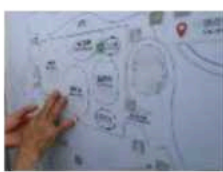
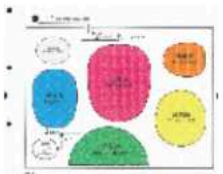
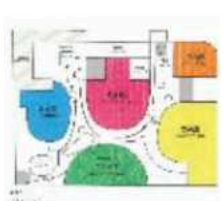


Table 3

Comparative analysis of oral description video guide and route planning survey

	NTCH	TTC	WWY
<b>AD Guider</b>	10 more	20-30	4-5
<b>Volunteer</b>	60 from the NTCH or from the group of application	20 to 30 volunteers who trained by audio descriptions from NTT	7-8 from the WWY or from the group of application
<b>Number of participants</b>	Approximately 20 events each year	23 events (308 people) since 2019	12 events (183 people) since 2019
<b>Number of applicants</b>	1-20 (3-5people in one group)	1-10 (5 people in one group)	1-5 (one group)
<b>Related touch exhibits or information</b>	    	   	  
<b>Visiting Route</b>	1. Description of spatial circulation and orientation in the guidebook. 2. Touching the building model and spiral staircase in the	1. Understanding elevations and models. 2. Multisensory experience in the lobby. 3. Touching curved walls, circular	1. Gathering and touching models at the first-floor operations office. 2. Multisensory experience and model touching at the
	lobby. 3. Touching the materials and shapes of the audience seats inside the auditorium. 4. Additional touchable organ model in the music hall.	windows, and butterfly shapes on the second floor. 4. Indoor and outdoor spaces on the fifth floor. 5. If time permits, add the sixth-floor sky garden.	banyan tree plaza. 3. Touching guidebooks on the third floor.



## APPENDIX

### 國家表演藝術中心建築導覽研究訪談大綱

研究計畫：博物館觸覺文化：科學、藝術與建築觸覺圖像轉譯方法與再現研究  
(II) 111-2410-H-005 -048 -MY2

研究者：趙欣怡 國立中興大學 助理教授

訪談日期：\_\_\_\_年\_\_\_\_月\_\_\_\_日

訪談對象：

#### 一 友善服務規劃

1. 請問貴單位友善服務之負責部門及分工？
2. 每年辦理的場次及參加人數？
3. 視障導覽的模型及觸覺輔具？
4. 聽障導覽提供的服務類型？
5. 製作無障礙輔具時是否邀請視障者參與設計？
6. 關於視障導覽服務的視障者回饋？
7. 建築模型與觸覺教材何者能讓視障者理解空間資訊？
8. 口述影像如何進行空間引導解說？
9. 節目表演前的觸覺導聆設計內容為何？
10. 視障者對於觸覺導聆歌口述影像解說的回饋意見？

#### 二 觸覺輔具設計

1. 觸覺圖轉譯之線條設計是否可作為平面圖辨識空間區域之依據？
2. 觸覺圖轉譯之形狀設計是否可作為平面圖辨識點位置或方向指標之依據？
3. 觸覺圖轉譯之造型設計是否可作為平面圖辨識建築量體結構之依據？
4. 觸覺圖轉譯之色彩設計是否可作為立面圖辨識建築外觀顏色之依據？
5. 觸覺圖轉譯之質感設計是否可作為立面圖辨識建築外觀肌理特色之依據？
6. 觸覺立體模型是否有助於增進理解建築空間感及空間量體造型結構？
7. 觸覺立體模型是否有助於增進理解建築外觀之建材特徵？
8. 觸覺立體模型是否有助於增進理解空間視角投射之概念？
9. 觸覺立體模型是否有助於增進理解無法觸及物體之理解？

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### BIOGRAPHY

**Dr. Hsin-Yi Chao** is an assistant professor of Cultural and Creative Industry Program at National Chung Hsing University in Taiwan. She finished Master of Fine Arts in National Taipei University of Education and Architecture Ph.D. in National Taiwan University of Science and Technology. Chao continued postdoctoral research in the psychology graduate school of University of Toronto in Canada and found the national nonprofit organization, Taiwan Art Beyond Vision Association in 2014. Then, she changed her position from the 10-year visual art teacher at primary school into a curator who worked on accessible technology and exhibitions with multisensory at National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts for 6 years. Chao focuses her studies on nonvisual art educational theory and practice, accessible technology application, universal display design, art audio description, and tactile spatial cognition research with special education, psychology, museum, and art to promote the equal right of art education for the visual impaired.

# Art as Paratext: How Art Transmits Museum Narratives and Rewrites the Space

Cheng-yi Shih

National Taipei University of Education, Taipei  
Taiwan

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## Abstract

**Keywords:** art, paratext, museum narratives, museum space, exhibition design

This research explores how art serves as a transformative force in communicating museum narratives and reshaping museum spaces, with a focus on installations in the newly renovated Austronesian Hall of the National Museum of Prehistory (NMP) in Taiwan. By examining the role of artworks as paratexts—supplementary elements that enhance and support the museum’s metanarrative—the study investigates how art contributes to the representation of Austronesian culture and impacts visitor interaction with the museum’s spatial design.

Through detailed case studies of selected artworks, this research analyzes their influence on museum space and audience engagement. The artworks do more than offer aesthetic value; they actively participate in the museum’s storytelling by interacting with the architecture and guiding visitor experiences. Whether by playfully encouraging visitors to explore overlooked spaces or provoking reflection on environmental and cultural issues, the artworks create deeper connections between the museum’s narrative and its audience. By incorporating art into the museum’s broader narrative of Austronesian heritage, these installations contribute to an inclusive understanding of island cultures and their historical and contemporary relevance.

The study employs a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating museum studies, spatial theory, and narrative environment design. Data is collected through qualitative methods such as visitor observation, staff interviews, spatial analysis, and content interpretation. The findings are expected to reveal how artworks, as paratexts, foster dynamic interactions between the museum’s narrative, its architectural spaces, and its visitors.

This research aims to contribute to discussions on museum curation, museography, and exhibition design, offering insights into how art can be used innovatively to enhance narrative engagement and transform spatial experiences within museums.

## Introduction

In recent years, more and more artworks have found their way into museums, or rather, museums have actively welcomed various forms of art into their spaces. This paper does not aim to explore art museums or the various types of art itself. Instead, the focus lies on examining the narrative effects generated by artworks in **non-art museums** and how they contribute to the rewriting of space. Here, “art” is not merely an “art object”; it also functions as a paratext, participating in the museum’s narrative and demonstrating its agency in assisting the transmission of that narrative.

In this paper, art objects, while embodying the intentions of the artist (which in itself is a form of narrative), also echo or convey the overarching narrative that the museum wishes to present to its visitors through the curatorial decisions regarding artist selection and the placement of artworks.

This study adopts the concept of paratext, aiming to highlight that unlike the primary text—the narrative constructed, communicated, and expressed through the museum’s permanent exhibitions or spatial design—art, as a paratext, interacts with the main text in its unique way, while simultaneously possessing the capacity to rewrite architectural space.

### Brief Introduction to the National Museum of Prehistory (NMP)

This research primarily adopts a case study approach, incorporating staff interviews, onsite observation, and spatial analysis to gather data. The case study focuses on two art installations in the National Museum of Prehistory (NMP), which recently underwent a large-scale permanent exhibition and architectural renovation, culminating in its reopening in 2023. The analysis and argumentation in this paper are based on the perspective of how these installations contribute to the museum’s narrative and spatial transformation.

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between art, the transmission of museum narratives, and the transformation of museum spaces.

#### Research Questions:

1. How do the selected artworks function as paratexts within their respective museum environments?
2. In what ways do these artworks contribute to the narrative and spatial experience of museum visitors?

### Theoretical Framework

Firstly, in the field of literature, a paratext serves as a supplement, explanation, or extension to the main narrative, sometimes providing background information or

insights into the author’s intentions. In visual arts, paratexts can take the form of illustrations, descriptive texts, or other art forms that help viewers understand the main artwork or subject. In the museum context, Peter Ride (2018) analyzed (broadly defined) artworks in museum entrance halls, showing how artworks can assist audiences in understanding the museum in a powerful yet non-didactic way. Similar to paratexts, these artworks can interact with the museum’s institutional metanarratives, helping the institution identify key points of communication with the public and fostering engagement with the audience.

On the other hand, we must also pay attention to the composition of museography and exhibit objects. Tzortzi (2015) argues that museological objects are not merely physical items but carry deeper meanings and values bestowed by society. These objects can take on several forms:

1. Fetish objects: Objects valued for their symbolic or iconic status.
2. Metonymic objects: Objects used to represent a broader culture or concept, which can lead to oversimplification or stereotyping.
3. Metaphoric objects: Objects that illustrate ideas but may risk losing their intrinsic value by being reduced to symbols.
4. Objects in context: Placing objects in their cultural or historical context is crucial for understanding their significance. However, it is equally important to recognize that objects can have multiple contexts throughout their history.

These distinctions allow us to examine how artworks in museums, aside from the creative intentions behind them, serve as narrative tools when incorporated into non-art museum exhibitions. It also implies that no display is neutral; each installation reflects cultural, historical, and aesthetic choices that evolve over time. Finally, and just as importantly, art in museums often complements architectural spaces, shaping the atmosphere and decoration, which significantly influences the visitor experience and museum environment.

Thirdly, Hill (2003) introduces the idea that architecture is made not only by design but also through use, and he identifies five types of user creativity: mental, bodily, physical, constructional, and conceptual. This suggests that it is not only architects who make buildings and spaces, but users also play an active role. In the context of this study, how do art, artists, and museum staff collaboratively alter the space through artistic interventions? This concept helps us analyze the transformative effects of art from the perspective of space production. At this point, space becomes a medium for meaning-making. As Tzortzi (2015) emphasizes, space is not a neutral container but an active medium that influences how visitors perceive and interpret objects.



### Case Study: National Museum of Prehistory (NMP)

NMP in Taiwan, located in Taitung City, reopened on May 19, 2023, as part of a recent wave of renovations in public museums across Taiwan, involving both architectural transformations and updates to permanent exhibitions. Originally designed by renowned postmodern architect Michael Graves, the museum underwent an extensive architectural and landscape redesign starting in 2020, led by architect Chen Che-Sheng. The renovation included the reconfiguration of the museum's entrance hall, exhibition spaces, visitor flow, and outdoor landscapes. As a national museum dedicated to anthropology and natural history, the NMP focuses on the preservation, research, and promotion of Taiwan's prehistoric culture and Indigenous peoples. Importantly, the recent renovation also introduced a new thematic focus: Austronesian culture. The subtle incorporation of artworks throughout the museum now serves to guide visitors toward this overarching narrative, highlighting the richness of Austronesian heritage and human life from prehistory to the present. Simultaneously, visitors are encouraged to experience the museum's spaces in innovative and meaningful ways.

### Selected Artworks in NMP

In the following section, we examine two art installations at the National Museum of Prehistory, analyzing how these artworks contribute to and enhance the museum's narrative of Austronesian culture while reshaping the spatial experience.

Before entering the side corridor after ticket validation, visitors encounter an artwork by artist Reretan Pavavalung, a member of Taiwan's Indigenous community, titled ***The Birthplace of Rising Smoke***. This piece consists of three main parts: two large murals located in the ground floor hall and at the exit of the second-floor Austronesian Hall. In Austronesian belief, "smoke" symbolizes spirituality. One of the murals depicts a group of people waiting for



Figure 2. The other large mural of "*The Birthplace of Rising Smoke*" is located at the exit of the second-floor Austronesian Hall. Source: Cheng-yi Shih.

a ritual meal, representing the primal instinct for survival, while the smoke rising from the hearth ascends into the skylight, drifting into unknown dimensions of time and space.

Between these two large murals are numerous smaller illustrations, which form the third part of the artwork. These smaller pieces are not placed at the typical viewing height; some are positioned higher or lower, with a few even installed inside restrooms. The artwork playfully and cleverly interacts with architectural features and spatial elements, prompting viewers to pause and observe not only the art itself but also the details of the museum's interior architecture that the illustrations seek to engage with, as shown in the accompanying photographs.



Figure 1. The first section of "*The Birthplace of Rising Smoke*" is located on the right side of the museum entrance. Source: Cheng-yi Shih.



Figure 3. The smaller illustration "*The Birthplace of Rising Smoke*" which interacts with the sign indicating the restroom. Source: Cheng-yi Shih.



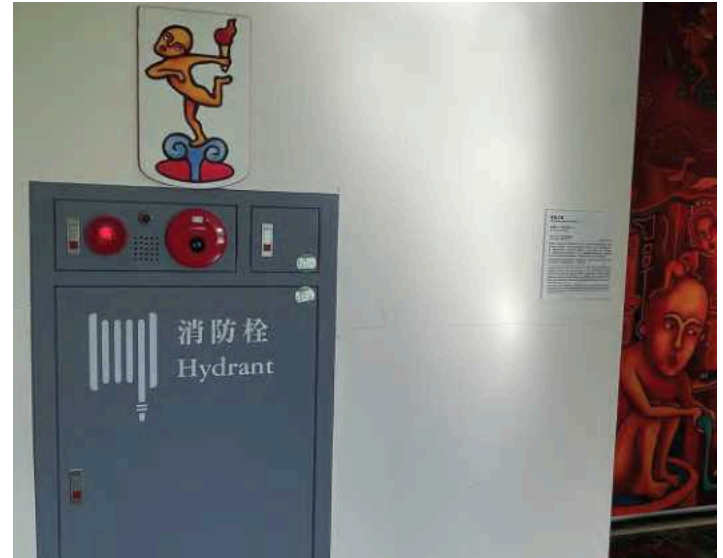


Figure 4. This smaller illustration “The Birthplace of Rising Smoke” which interacts with the CCTV (left). Figure 5. The content of this illustration is related to the function of the fire hydrant below (right). Source: Cheng-yi Shih.

The concept behind this artwork is rooted in the significance of smoke as an important symbol in Austronesian spirituality. Smoke, in this context, guides the trajectory of civilization, crossing through temporal and spatial dimensions to inspire contemplation of the past, future, and human evolution. The smoke permeates the entire museum space, appearing in various strange and unexpected forms throughout the museum, much like the marks time leaves upon the world. Eventually, at the exit on the second floor, the smoke converges into burning millet stalks. Around this scene, figures reach out to grasp the smoke, which rises from the first hearth, embodying the thoughts and souls of humanity.

In this case, art, viewed through the lens of paratext, resonates with the museum’s metanarrative, using smoke as a symbol to illustrate the enduring presence and



Figure 7. This smaller illustration is located in the men’s restroom (top). Figure 8. This smaller illustration interacts with the architectural structure (bottom). Source: Cheng-yi Shih.



Figure 6. This smaller illustration “The Birthplace of Rising Smoke” which interacts with the roof design. Source: Cheng-yi Shih.

evolution of Austronesian culture. In terms of spatial transformation, the artwork not only humorously interacts with the functional and architectural details of the space, but the smaller illustrations also guide the viewer's gaze toward places that might otherwise be overlooked, such as restroom walls or signage. Some visitors begin to actively search for these small artworks throughout the space, following the characters within the smoke, and in doing so, they experience the relationship between the artwork and the surrounding environment. This shifts their original perception of and interaction with the museum's internal spaces.

### Tuna and Godzilla: A Call for Contemporary Environmental Issues

The second art case is located in the newly established permanent exhibition, the Austronesian Hall, on the second floor of the National Museum of Prehistory. This installation features a tuna made of canned tuna, along with a model of Godzilla from Japanese cinema. Both are displayed within a cylindrical structure, forming a sub-exhibit on contemporary environmental issues. A tuna caught on a fishing hook (symbolizing its capture) is juxtaposed with a nearby photograph, illustrating the following message:



Figure 9. The contemporary environmental issues display within a cylindrical structure. Source: Cheng-yi Shih.

Crafted from layers of empty tuna cans, this artwork represents a tuna struggling against being caught, serving as a metaphor for sea cultures that are under imminent threat. It prompts viewers to reflect on the increasingly precarious relationship between humanity, the sea, and cultural practices.

Austronesian peoples once relied on traditional fishing practices rooted in cultural knowledge and seasonal rhythms. However, modern industrial fishing and the rising demand for sashimi have pushed tuna and related species toward extinction, depleting ocean resources. This has forced many Austronesians to leave their fishing livelihoods, instead working in cities for low wages and buying fish from supermarkets. As they grow disconnected from the ocean, their fishing expertise, cultural practices, and way of life shift. Their health also declines as they increasingly rely on cheap, processed foods like canned tuna, contributing to issues such as obesity<sup>1</sup>.

Next to the tuna installation is Godzilla, an iconic figure from popular cinema and a symbol of 20th-century environmental awareness through science fiction disaster films. Godzilla's origins can be traced to the U.S. nuclear testing in the Pacific. On March 1, 1954, during "Operation Castle" at Bikini Atoll, the Japanese fishing boat *Lucky Dragon 5* was contaminated by radiation, along with its crew and catch. Later that year, Japan released *Godzilla*, a film about a prehistoric sea monster awakened by hydrogen bomb tests, which then attacks Tokyo—an allegory for the nuclear event.



Figure 10. The display about film "Godzilla" and Nuclear weapons test explosion. Source: Cheng-yi Shih.

This artistic juxtaposition of the tuna and Godzilla installations is a call to recognize the ongoing exploitation of Austronesian cultures and the environment. The canned tuna, crafted from the very symbol of human exploitation—capitalism—tells a story of environmental degradation, while Godzilla represents the suffering and memories of Pacific Islander communities. Both artworks serve as bridges to past environmental traumas, forcing a reckoning with inconvenient truths.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the explanatory label.

The tuna made from cans and Godzilla's fury parallel the emotions of displaced people whose homes were devastated by nuclear testing. Yet, while Godzilla became a box-office success in popular culture, the real suffering endured by Pacific Islanders has largely been forgotten. Recognizing this, the curators of the museum's permanent exhibition decided to integrate these narratives into the space.

Within the exhibit, these works act as both metonymic and metaphoric objects, advocating for museum activism by confronting visitors with the negative histories of Austronesian cultures, which mainstream and capitalist societies often ignore. Behind the installation, a map of Pacific Ocean currents illustrates how trash circulates, demonstrating the shared ecological fate of the islands. These artworks not only carry artistic and symbolic meaning but also, through their ties to popular culture, connect the audience to their everyday lives. By linking to the everyday, they remind visitors that these imbalances and injustices continue to persist in hidden ways.

### Comparative Analysis: Inclusion and Connection

The two case studies discussed above both feature artworks whose creators and underlying concepts align with the overarching theme of the National Museum of Prehistory's Austronesian Hall, focusing on the narratives and issues related to Austronesian peoples. These artworks reinforce the museum's metanarrative, concretely linking the curatorial intentions through symbols like smoke, tuna, and Godzilla.

Moreover, these artworks serve another function: fostering a connection with the audience. In *The Birthplace of Rising Smoke*, the motif of smoke not only adds an element of discovery for viewers but also, through its playful interaction with the architectural details, encourages visitors to notice previously overlooked spaces, altering their relationship with the museum environment and increasing engagement, even if only visually. Additionally, the tuna and Godzilla installations draw attention to contemporary environmental issues, revealing hidden truths about negative histories and ongoing injustices. In this way, the exhibition space is transformed into one of museum activism.

Austronesian culture transcends national borders, representing not just a linguistic system but a broader, interconnected network of islands across the Pacific and Indian Oceans. It embodies the idea of inclusion—illustrating that islanders have long been connected through exchange and interaction. This inclusiveness is also a hallmark of Taiwan's Indigenous cultures and the everyday practices of Austronesian peoples over thousands of years, marked by frequent contact, shared knowledge, and a blend of distinct yet similar cultural characteristics. The goal of this inclusiveness extends to the (Taiwanese) audience, inviting them to see Austronesian culture not as an abstract academic concept, but as a lived reality for the peoples of Taiwan and other islanders for millennia. This is one of the key curatorial intentions of the Austronesian

Hall: not just to focus on the past, but to engage with the present lives and provoke discussions about the future (MacLeod, 2021).

### REFLECTION

On a broader level, art plays a crucial role in reshaping museum narratives and spaces. It softens the intellectual weight that non-art museums often impose on their audiences, offering an alternative to the overwhelming nature of historical narratives. In the National Museum of Prehistory's artistic practice, art becomes a bridge—connecting the past, present, and future—while also linking positive and negative stories and events. By doing so, it helps to lower the barriers (museum threshold) and fears often associated with museums, guiding visitors through the museum's larger narrative and offering meaningful ways to engage with the space itself.

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### BIOGRAPHY

**Cultural and Creative Industries Management at the National Taipei University of Education (NTUE), alongside an adjunct role at the Graduate Institute of Museum Studies at Taipei National University of the Arts. Holding a PhD in Museum Studies from the University of Leicester, UK, Cheng-Yi's research focal points include museum architecture and spatial design, curation methodologies, narrative environment crafting, museum planning, and design thinking applications. Drawing from an interdisciplinary background in sustainable design and spatial/environmental planning, Cheng-Yi integrates practice and theory in his work. He has led and contributed to curatorial endeavors across a spectrum of institutions, spanning national museums, local cultural hubs, and quasi-museum spaces. His approach underscores the holistic integration of diverse curation methodologies, encompassing research and fieldwork, exhibition content development, audience engagement assessments, conceptual ideation, narrative crafting, innovative exhibition strategies, and exhibition design planning. Central to Cheng-Yi's ethos is the creation of inspiring and meaningful museum exhibitions, imbued with contemporary perspectives. Throughout his endeavors, he explores the nuanced interplay and interconnectedness of curatorial methodologies, interpretative content, material artifacts, design mediums, spatial configurations, and audience experiences.**



# Thick Description Experiment of Confronting Difficult Histories: A Curatorial Experience at a Taiwan Indigenous Peoples Local Cultural Museum (HBCM)

Hsieh, Po-Kang (Ciang Langus)

National Museum of Prehistory, Taitung

Taiwan

## Abstract

**Keywords:** Taiwan Indigenous Peoples, de-Colonialism, Thick Description

For most indigenous peoples in Taiwan, the period of Japanese Imperial rule from 1895 to 1945 marked their first encounter with a modern national political regime. This era was characterized by military and legal domination, as well as profound socio-cultural transformations, presenting a challenging chapter in modern history known as "Difficult Histories." However, the face of colonialism and the colonial experience were never monolithic; indigenous peoples, too, exhibited diverse perspectives and intentions that must be disentangled through thick description to confront historical processes more authentically.

Museums serve as pivotal arenas and agents in this endeavor. Between 2017 and 2019, the Bunun Cultural Museum of Haiduan Township (BCM) in Taitung County received a donation of a collection of old photographs left behind by Taiwanese-Japanese police officers. Through thorough research, it was determined that the majority of these photographs were administrative records from the colonial period, documenting various significant historical events in the region. The research findings were translated into an exhibition that opened in 2020, attracting even the visit of President Tsai Ing-wen at the time. This young curatorial team eschew the previous nationalist confrontational perspective and adopted a method of thick description to reinterpret colonial archival materials. This paper will review the display theory of such reflective historical exhibitions, explore the dual-dialogue spatial design of the exhibition, and discuss the immersive design balancing object selection, color schemes, and sound elements, showcasing the indigenous curatorial team's intention to voice their perspectives and contribute to Taiwan's societal pursuit of historical justice and transitional justice for indigenous peoples.



## Introduction

The sovereignty and historical experiences of Taiwan's indigenous peoples, much like Taiwan's own standing in the world, are often present yet overlooked or long neglected. This article aims to explore how young indigenous curators transform research into exhibition design, challenging existing nation-state discourses of opposition to present a diversity of perspectives. It directly addresses the specific challenges faced by Taiwan's indigenous peoples in their colonial history, as well as the starting point for contemporary decolonization efforts.

### 1. Facing the State: A Brief History of Taiwan's Indigenous Peoples (Austronesian Peoples)

Taiwan's indigenous peoples are part of the Austronesian language family, sharing deep linguistic and cultural connections with communities across Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands. Archaeological and linguistic evidence points to Taiwan as the earliest origin of this linguistic group, which today encompasses a population of approximately 250 million, though Taiwan's legally recognized indigenous population numbers only 600,000. Covering an area of 36,000 square kilometers, Taiwan is the 38th largest island in the world, with 70% of its landmass made up of hills and mountains, some of which rise to nearly 4,000 meters.

Over 7,000 years of migration from the western plains to the central highlands and the steep eastern valleys have produced a rich diversity of cultures and languages. Despite being on the northern edge of the Austronesian region, Taiwan's indigenous communities largely remained untouched by world religions like Hinduism and Islam that spread across Southeast Asia, preserving ancient cultural and cosmological views in what can be described as pre-state social-political structures.

Beginning in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese and Asian merchants crossed from the mainland to Taiwan, establishing it as a key hub for maritime trade beyond the reach of imperial authority. Notably, Taiwan's western plains, rich in deer populations, supplied materials for the armor of Japanese *samurai*. In 1624, the Dutch East India Company formally established a colony in southern Taiwan, which was ruled for nearly 40 years. During this period, Chinese immigration surged, beginning the transformation of Taiwan's indigenous plains societies.

Following the departure of the Dutch, Taiwan fell into a politically ambiguous state under China's imperial frontier. The Qing Empire attempted to enforce strict maritime restrictions and establish internal boundaries to protect indigenous territories, yet waves of Han Chinese settlers continued to push indigenous peoples from the plains to the mountains and eastward.

In 1895, Taiwan came under Japanese rule, while its Austronesian indigenous peoples remained unrecognized by international law. Through anthropological surveys, North American indigenous policy experiences, legal debates, and military occupation—facing fierce indigenous resistance—the Japanese fully controlled indigenous territories by the 1920s. Camphor, a key export from indigenous mountain regions, drove military actions. Due to challenging terrain and strong resistance, the government adopted a strategy of blockade and encirclement in southern Taiwan. Consequently, the central highlands of southeastern Taiwan, home to the Bunun people, were the last to fall under state control.

However, this region, once a blank spot on colonial maps, was eventually filled by the colonizers, who imposed assimilation policies that touched every facet of social life, from language to kinship and religious systems. This colonial legacy extended into the post-WWII period under the Republic of China's rule. Despite these challenges, Taiwan's indigenous peoples tenaciously preserved fragments of their culture, continuing their way of life between forests, rivers, seas, and urban areas. After the lifting of martial law in the 1990s, indigenous communities began to rebuild their identity and legal status, reasserting their cultural narratives in museums—reclaiming a space where they once were displayed as exhibits, now to tell their own stories.

### The Bunun Cultural Museum in Haiduan Township: A Voice for Local Culture

The Bunun Cultural Museum in Haiduan Township (HBCM) is a small, local museum located at the foot of the southeastern mountains of Taiwan. Managed by the township office, it is a unique autonomous indigenous unit within Taiwan's administrative system. The museum opened in 2002, a time when Taiwan had been free from martial law<sup>1</sup> for nearly 15 years following its end due to the Chinese Civil War. The grassroots localization movement had significantly influenced government cultural policies, leading to a greater appreciation of local history, culture, and distinctive products. As a result, the museum was entrusted with the important role of serving as a local cultural gateway. Faced with the 98% Han Chinese settler colonial structure in Taiwan, local Indigenous Cultural Museums have been assigned the dual roles of cultural preservation and educational outreach—while also being expected by local governments to serve as venues for promoting tourism development.

<sup>1</sup> The martial law was imposed in 1949, after the Republic of China government retreated to Taiwan from mainland Asia, and it remained in effect until 1987, making it one of the longest periods of martial law in world history. During this time, local culture was disregarded; the national language and educational content were based on Chinese models, and indigenous peoples were treated as frontier minorities, subject to assimilation policies aimed at integrating them into the "Chinese nation" framework.



Figure 1. HBCM located in Bunun traditional territory. Source: Photo by the author.

However, like elsewhere in the world, no one innately knows how to operate or use a museum. After years of collaboration with national museums, the HBCM began to develop its own curatorial and research capabilities in the 2010s. More young people with strong ethnic identities returned to their hometowns to work, and the management provided more resources for museum operations. Langus Lavalian (2019) noted that the museum had undergone several phases in its development: from local people as reporters and material providers, to local curators, and then to collaboration with local artisans and community-driven exhibitions.

The 2015 exhibition "*Kulumah in: Homecoming!*" was a significant milestone, where the National Taiwan Museum collaborated with Haiduan to bring back Bunun cultural artifacts collected by the Sakuma Foundation in the 1930s. Elders reconnected with the artifacts through rituals and spiritual communication, confronting the complex emotions of encountering objects that had been scattered across urban museums. The Bunun term "*kulumah in*" expresses the idea of "coming home," reflecting the Bunun worldview towards objects.

The most crucial step is to involve local museums and indigenous communities as the main bodies in the curatorial process, through joint planning and production. This approach achieves the fundamental museum goals of collection research, exhibition, and educational promotion, while also building a more diverse network of collaborators. An exemplary case is the 2020 exhibition, *Layered Shadows: An Exhibition of Haiduan Social Photography (1920-1960) from Police Officer He-Mei(Buia)'s Collection*. Through meticulous foundational research and curatorial translation, this exhibition deconstructs simplified narratives of resistance and reconstructs a complex, multi-faceted "true story," serving as a platform for reexamining the "difficult history" faced by indigenous peoples.

## 2. Curatorial Process and Key Approaches

In 2017, the HBCM began receiving commissions to study a collection of historical photographs, which belonged to "He Mei," a police officer during the Japanese colonial period. Through further research into the photographs and the family's history, it was discovered that He Mei was actually Buia, a person of Bunun descent. His family, like many Chinese merchant families, had traversed the mountainous region since the late 19th century<sup>2</sup>. A large portion of his photographs were closely related to the modern history of the Bunun people. After several years of exploration, the team eventually curated a special exhibition, which was even visited by the President of Taiwan.

### 2-1. Main Theme of the Exhibition: "Layered Shadows"

Launching this exhibition project meant conducting more rigorous historical and temporal verification of the images, as well as tackling the challenging task of "interpretation," breathing new life into the photographs by telling a story conceived by the curators. He Mei, as a low-ranking police officer within the Japanese colonial system, captured images from a perspective that, for the Bunun people, seemed to represent the viewpoint of the enemy—the victors documenting their successes. However, during the process of careful examination, the team discovered the multifaceted nature of history, which manifested in the life experiences of different individuals. In other words, if we are to tell this story well, does the binary narrative of opposition, friend versus foe, remain suitable for a contemporary historical perspective that emphasizes context and the agency of individuals?

Haiduan Township currently has three resistance monuments. Whether interpreted from the perspective of the Chinese nation's narrative of defending the homeland, or from the theme of fighting to preserve the dignity and lifeblood of the Bunun people as emphasized by the Localization Movement, the interaction with the Japanese has often been simplified into a binary formula of "resistance or not." This narrative framework seems inadequate for the younger generation of curators seeking a deeper understanding of this period in history. Faced with 64 photographs that depict the governance of the latter part of the Japanese colonial era, the curatorial team pragmatically used these images as basic materials and story blueprints. Through historical research, they

<sup>2</sup> Indigenous areas in Taiwan, including during the Japanese colonial period, were special administrative zones with restricted access, prohibiting Han Chinese immigrants from entering freely. However, historically, a few individuals managed to enter these mountainous regions to conduct business, marry local residents, and act as intermediaries under the pre-modern administrative system, known as "*tongshi*" (interpreters). In the regions studied by the author, many merchant families transformed into police officers during the Japanese rule, as the police were the local bureaucrats responsible for governance during that period.

sought to understand the people, events, times, places, and objects reflected in the photos. If colonialism is seen as an inherently “difficult history,” the team chose to present the specific colonial processes straightforwardly, using this as a starting point for decolonial narratives. They aimed to understand what exactly transpired—how the Japanese established their order of governance, and how deeply this system influenced future generations and the present day.



Figure 2. Lamata Sinsin Monument at HBCM. Source: Photo by the author.

Furthermore, the curatorial team hoped that by exploring the complex backgrounds of the actors involved, they could engage the audience with real stories, prompting reflection on the choices individuals make as “human beings” facing the same fate. The historical injustices often stemmed from the deprivation of agency, rather than just physical harm. This intricate empathy, though difficult to grasp, was projected throughout the exhibition’s design and approach.

In the Chinese title of the exhibition “烈日疊影 (Layered Shadows)”, each character carries multiple layers of metaphor. The main theme revealed by the exhibition’s title conveys two key messages the curatorial team aims to communicate: colonial reflection and the governance techniques of the modern state, as well as the preservation and analysis of common people’s historical materials and old photographs. The team hopes that after visiting the exhibition, audiences will feel inspired to revisit their own old photographs. For those interested in the history of the Bunun people or Taiwan’s history, this exhibition offers a glimpse into a specific historical moment. Moreover, the team hopes that visitors, while engaging with the

seemingly gentle exhibition design and text, will perceive the underlying reflections and critiques of colonial history that the curatorial team has embedded within the narrative.

## 2-2. Exhibition Structure, Color Scheme, and Soundscapes: Aligning with the Themes of the Exhibition Media

The exhibition is divided into four sections. First section, “*Who is He Mei?*”, introduces the main character’s story through a combination of objects and images, along with different perspectives from family members and documents. This section focuses on *He Mei*’s movements between Nantou (南投) and Taitung<sup>3</sup> (臺東) and connects it to the migration of the *Bunun* people, who originally came from *Nantou*, and the subsequent establishment of Japanese colonial rule in the *Bunun* area of *Taitung*.

The second section, “*Testimony to the Grand Waves of History*”, is the largest in scope and also the main content of the photographic collection. It showcases how Japanese colonial policies, such as forest surveys, group relocation, land distribution, and education system, influenced governance. The team supplemented these images with art installations and archival photos, reflecting both the number of local resistance events and the techniques used by the state to seize control.

The third section, “*The Circulating Family*”, and the fourth section, “*Beyond the Frame: You Can Also Be a Keeper of Memories*”, are interconnected. Photos of *He-Mei* after his retirement primarily focus on family memories. The curatorial team combined these personal family photos with other historical images from *Haiduan*, weaving them together into a visual timeline. This sets the stage for the next theme: techniques for preserving old photographs.

The exhibition space covers approximately 92.3 square meters. In an effort to break the traditional historical narrative, the curatorial team designed the layout so that visitors would enter the first section from the left, thus disrupting the typical “right-hand rule” of exhibitions. The color scheme is based on lead blue (R62 G87 B112, #3D566F), cherry blossom pink (R225 G198 B192, #E0C6BF), and persimmon red (R217 G117 B86, #D97455), representing “the river of time,” “resistance and war,” and “a new social order,” respectively. The lead blue, close to the indigo color in *Bunun* clothing, symbolizes the flow of history and trade. In the second section, the team used a bright cherry blossom pink to depict the brutality of war, with the cherry blossom symbol acting as a deliberate irony, since it is widely recognized as a Japanese symbol. Persimmon red, taken from the Japanese color chart

<sup>3</sup> Nantou is the most inland basin in Taiwan, surrounded by the Central Mountain Range. Taitung, on the other hand, is located to the east of the Central Mountain Range.





Figure 3. "The Last Free Men" Utilize the "void" on historical maps as a symbolic metaphor. Source: Photo by the author.

representing sunrise, symbolizes the story of a "new social order."

During the discussions about the color scheme, the team reviewed many exhibitions and publications from the Japanese colonial period in Taiwan. They aimed to avoid the overly direct use of red-and-white contrasts, which too clearly resemble the colors of the Japanese flag, and instead adopted a more subtle and refined approach to express their perspective on this period in history.



Figure 4. "Negotiation: The Dilemma of Aziman Sikin," in visual contrast to Figure 3. Source: Photo by the author.

Although the exhibition space is not large, the curators attempted to design two thematic soundscapes. The first one incorporates Japanese children's songs (The Elephant, Momotaro, Shoes Are Tapping, Sunset Glow), used in the section on "Education" to evoke nostalgia for the few elders who lived through the Japanese colonial period and experienced these songs in their childhood. In contrast to the soft yet deeply evocative children's songs, the transition corridors between the second and third sections, which focus on World War II, feature stronger wartime

mobilization songs. These include "Nirin no Sakural 二輪の桜<sup>4</sup>" and The Song of the Taiwan Army. The latter is a choral version performed by Li Xianglan (李香蘭) from the movie *Sayon's Bell* (サヨンの鐘), deliberately chosen to highlight the issue of indigenous Taiwanese soldiers in the Japanese army. Though played at a low volume, the songs echo through the exhibition space with the effect of a broadcast, evoking the omnipresence of colonial power.

### 2-3. Exhibition Space Focus Keywords Example: Dual-Axis Dialogical Design

Through historical research during the curatorial process, the team recognized that this area was the last place in Taiwan to come under national rule. They selected a map from 1916 as an important visual anchor. The 1:50,000 Indigenous Territories Topographic Map was part of the early efforts of the imperial government to undertake military operations and governance over indigenous lands after securing the plains of Taiwan. However, during this process, the mapping team was attacked, leaving a blank spot on the map. At the time, this blank was seen as a "shame on imperial prestige," but the curators reinterpreted it in the present day as representing the "last free people of the Central Mountain Range," which inspired a dual-axis dialogical design for the exhibition space.

The focal points of this design include the "Last Free People of the Central Mountain Range" in the first section (1-2) and "Negotiation: The Choice of Aziman Sikin" in the second section (2-1-1). Both feature large visuals measuring 3 by 2 meters. The first visual, authorized by the GIS Center of Academia Sinica, is a high-resolution version of the 1:50,000 Indigenous Territories Topographic Map. Due to the impact of the incident, this area became the last blank spot on Taiwan's map. If maps are the foundation of modern state governance, then this "blank" becomes a powerful visual metaphor for "resistance." White text on the map further enhances the imagery of "freedom," contrasting with the "colonial order" portrayed in the latter half of the exhibition.

In contrast, the corresponding focal point in the photographs is the first official negotiation scene involving Aziman Sikin. His submission was a key mission in the Japanese colonial government's policy of indigenous pacification during the latter part of Japanese rule. He Mei, the protagonist, is also present in the scene. However, the curatorial team introduces the theme of "choice" here. Through careful background research, the team reassembled the roles of the various figures in the scene (the Japanese police officer, He Mei, Aziman Sikin, and Bunun leader Lanihu) to reflect the complexity of the historical moment.

<sup>4</sup> The original version of the famous wartime song *Dōki no Sakura* (同期之櫻) from the end of the Pacific War. Cherry blossoms, all falling simultaneously, metaphorically represent the brave fallen soldiers.



This section is also designed as a space for guided theatrical tours, where visitors can engage with interactive materials and role-play as "resistors," "government officials," "family representatives," or "kinship members" to explore how they might face and respond to the monumental changes before them. This is more than just a historical display—it encourages personal reflection on these historical events. The map, symbolizing "resistance and the state's invisibility," alongside the negotiation scene, highlights the historical struggles indigenous peoples faced with sovereignty and the tragedy of colonialism.



Figure 5. Official View: Rebellion Records/ the Bunun people without "history" (top). Figure 6. Bunun Perspective: Visual Evidence of Invasion/ Transforming the Power of Spatial Planning (bottom).  
Source: Photo by the author.

Another design element involves seating arrangements that simulate the negotiation scene. The exhibition panels, as seen from different perspectives, reflect the viewpoints of the participants. From the perspective of the Japanese police, the focus is on the Bunun people's resistance, illustrated by a series of "attack reports" and evidence of state violence, such as the "Archive Photos of Lamata Sinsin and Talum Before Their Execution<sup>5</sup>." Accompanying this is a three-dimensional map of the mountains, with colored pins marking the locations of Japanese military posts, forts, and electrified wire fences, as well as pins identifying locations where battles occurred, based on official records. The artistic installation contrasts the

"named colonial records" with the "nameless Bunun warriors who perished in battle." If the detailed records of fallen police officers in the colonial government's Record of Taiwanese Police Officers represent a visible national archive, the Bunun people, in the same conflict, become blank data, left nameless, transformed into rebels against the state's order, justifying the state's exercise of violence.

However, when viewed from the perspective of the Bunun people, the wall panels depict the Japanese mountain survey work. The empire's governance began with precise mapping and planning, enabling the bureaucratic apparatus to exert its will remotely. For the indigenous peoples, this was an infringement on their sovereignty and a provocation. Through this survey, their ancestral knowledge and plans for the land were erased under the lens of cultural Darwinism. This dual-axis design, with two focal points in the exhibition space, allows visitors to immerse themselves in different perspectives and seek balance within their own life experiences. It encourages them to weigh how they would face various choices in the context of historical structures and events, presenting a more complex narrative of the exhibition's storylines. This design also serves as a key scene for the development of theatrical guided tours in the future.

### 3. Conclusion: The Completion of Curation and the Opening of a Contact Zone

The young curator at the HBCM conducted a reconstruction experiment of modern history. Based on old photographs, new visual texts were created through interpretation and display methods. This approach, combined with more nuanced historical analysis and exhibition design, allows the audience to gain a deeper understanding of the complex and challenging life stories faced by the Bunun people during the Japanese era. By rejecting simplistic antagonistic narratives, the exhibition encourages viewers to contemplate the weight of "choices" through historical evidence, suggesting that simplified historical narratives may not bring us closer to the truth, and that truth itself may not be singular. This slightly different narrative approach, which deviates from the traditional public expectations, began to be tested by the public in the past two years. This marks the beginning of the "contact zone" anticipated by the team and myself.

On October 23, two days after the opening of "Layered Shadows" on October 21, the Hualien Museum welcomed a distinguished guest. President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) of Taiwan, during her tenure, made her first visit to Hualien for an inspection. The township office arranged for the HBCM to serve as the reception venue.

The Bunun Cultural Museum not only helps the Bunun people understand what their ancestors experienced on this land throughout history, but

<sup>5</sup> Lamata Sinsin, Talum, and the earlier Aziman Sikin were all prominent resistance leaders.



Figure 7. President Tsai Ing-wen, who has represented the government in apologizing to Indigenous peoples. Source: Photo by the author.

it also allows visitors from across Taiwan to gain a clearer and deeper understanding of the events that occurred in the original homeland villages. She believes that not only should the President visit, but all Taiwanese people should also come and see. ... The museum aims to recreate the history of the indigenous homeland, and to research, document, and promote the culture and historical memories of indigenous peoples and various tribes. This is the unique contribution of local cultural museums. (Tsai Ing-wen, speech at Hualien Museum, October 23, 2020)

As the highest elected official of Taiwan, President Tsai Ing-wen apologized to the indigenous peoples on August 1, 2016, on behalf of successive national administrations. However, during her tenure, national bureaucrats were still unable to resolve structural issues such as the demarcation and announcement of indigenous traditional territories, the disposal of nuclear waste in Lanyu (蘭嶼), and the official recognition of the Pingpu Peoples (平埔原住民族). The indigenous communities continue to experience various forms of neglect and mistreatment from the broader society.

Ideally, institutions like the HBCM, which are rooted in local contexts and mediate between the public, indigenous peoples, and national bureaucrats, should serve as contact zones to foster mutual understanding. Their exhibition content and development direction bear the responsibility of reversing external interpretations, representing a challenging communication and translation task. Nonetheless, this is also the goal and purpose of the cultural museum's establishment.

Taiwan's indigenous peoples, despite comprising only 2% of the population, have been present throughout

over 98% of Taiwan's history. By inheriting oral histories from elders, reinterpreting colonial-era archival materials, and using exhibition techniques to engage with settlers, museums can apply a "Thick Description" approach to translate the intentions of various historical actors. This method helps uncover historical issues and re-understand the truth of history. This represents a highly challenging task of communication and translation, yet it is the core goal and purpose of indigenous local museums.

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**Hsieh Po-Kang**, works at the National Museum of Prehistory (NMP) in Taiwan as an assistant curator in the Department of Exhibition and Education. He holds a Ph.D. in Anthropology and his primary research focus on the representation of modern history of Taiwan's indigenous peoples in museums.

# Open Storage! A New Paradigm of Museums and Exhibitions

Miok Cindy Choi

National Folk Museum of Korea, Seoul  
Korea

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## Abstract

The role of museums has evolved beyond the mere preservation and exhibition of artifacts. Museums now emphasize education, cultural engagement, and addressing societal issues. A critical question in this context is how museums can contribute to a sustainable society. This paper explores the concept of open storage at the National Folk Museum of Korea (NFMK) in Paju, which was established in 2021. This project, conceived approximately a decade ago, was groundbreaking in its vision of transforming a museum's storage area into a space accessible to the public. The successful realization of this open storage initiative introduces a new paradigm for museum exhibitions, expanding the museum's role and contributing to sustainability by serving as a source of inspiration and information across various fields, beyond the traditional function of artifact preservation.

**Keywords:** Open storage, New paradigm, Museum archive, NFMK Paju



## 1. New Paradigm of Museums and Exhibitions National Folk Museum of Korea Open Storage

The National Folk Museum of Korea (NFMK) is situated in the historic heart of Seoul, South Korea's capital. With its long-standing history, the museum focuses on Korean culture and lifestyle, attracting a significant number of foreign visitors. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was the third most-visited museum in Asia, with an annual footfall of 3 million. However, the museum's location within the confines of the historic Gyeongbokgung Palace presented challenges in terms of expanding its collection. Consequently, a new museum was constructed in Paju, approximately one hour from the original site. The museum's director at the time proposed a radical idea: creating a publicly accessible museum storage facility rather than the conventional closed storage system. A decade ago, this notion—especially in a setting where even curators had restricted access—was seen as quite provocative. Yet, through the visionary leadership and dedication of the staff, this dream was brought to fruition. After nearly eight years of preparation, the new facility finally opened in Paju, Gyeonggi Province, in 2021.



*Panorama of National Folk Museum of Korea, Seoul.*



*Façade of National Folk Museum of Korea, Paju.*



*Lobby of National Folk Museum of Korea, Paju.*

## 2. Architecture with the concept of 'Si-Gan (示間)'

The architectural concept behind the open storage was 'Si-Gan.' This Chinese character signifies a "space where time can be seen," symbolizing the layering of past and present. The open storage spans a total floor area of 10,268 m<sup>2</sup>, with one basement and two ground floors. Upon entering the ground floor lobby, visitors are immediately greeted by a towering storage unit filled with artifacts. The transparent storage racks allow a view of the entire space, from top to bottom and side to side, showcasing the relics within and enabling visitors to experience the passage of time. The tower-type storage area, which is the most accessible, houses pottery, stone, and glass relics—artifacts that are least affected by light, temperature, or humidity. Artifacts made of other materials are stored in separate areas, with varying degrees of accessibility.



*Tower storage of National Folk Museum of Korea, Paju.*





*Inside of Tower storage.*



*Storage 16 of wood artifacts in National Folk Museum of Korea, Paju 1.*



*Storage 16 of wood artifacts in National Folk Museum of Korea, Paju 2.*



*Inside of storage 16.*

### 3. Long-Scale Digital Archiving Meets Design

The 'Interactive Media Wall' is a media art installation inspired by the collection wall of the Cleveland Museum of Art. This touch-based system, built into a multi-vision display comprising six 4K screens (measuring approximately 6.5 m X 2 m in total), incorporates projection mapping techniques across three walls, creating an immersive environment. Visitors can browse through around 170,000 items from NFMK's collection, easily accessing detailed information. By selecting an image from the panel filled with collection images, visitors can explore details such as characteristics, purpose, current storage, and explanatory notes. Additionally, the Archive Lab provides access to over 1 million collection items, including photographs, videos, and books, embodying the Paju Museum's motto of "Open X Sharing X Extend."



*Interactive media wall of National Folk Museum of Korea, Paju.*

### 4. How Open Storage Welcomes Children, Children's Experience Room 'Welcome You're Treasure'

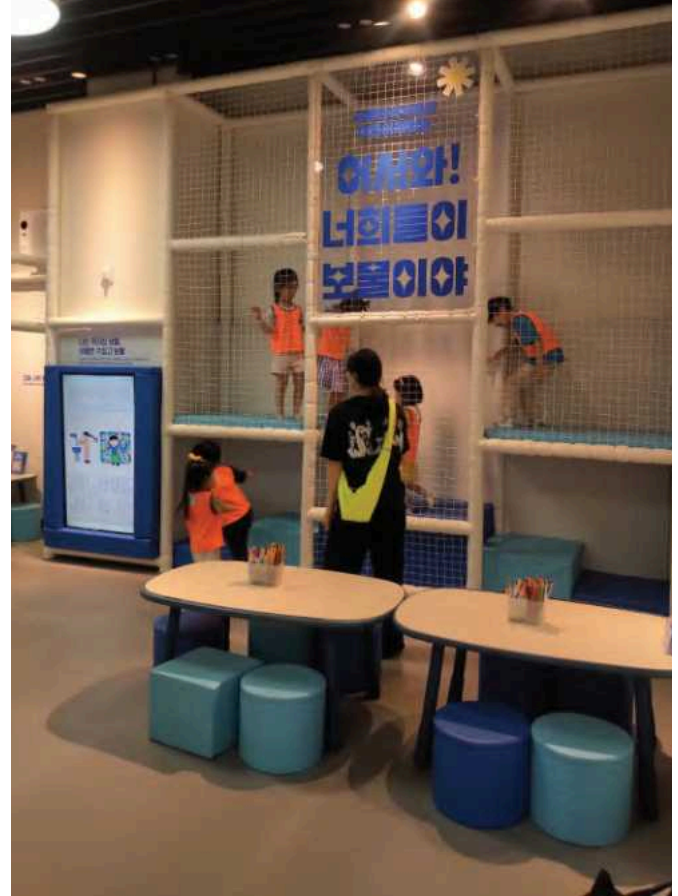
The Children's Experience Room is designed to familiarize children and their guardians with the concept of open storage—a concept that may be unfamiliar even to





Archive lab of National Folk Museum of Korea, Paju.

adults—through engaging, play-based experiences aimed primarily at preschool-aged children. The structure, which resembles a jungle gym, is inspired by the storage tower in the lobby, where relics are replaced by children, who metaphorically become the “treasures” within the space. The primary activities involve children engaging in tasks such as shoe storage, hand sanitizing, dusting, writing their names with toy blocks, and measuring their height and weight. These activities mirror the processes of storing and recording relics. At the conclusion of this experience, children are encouraged to draw their activities in a picture diary, serving as a child-friendly form of archiving. Additionally, an activity sheet modeled after an advent calendar helps guardians guide children through these activities, making this space a popular attraction at NFMK Paju.



Children's Experience Room. of National Folk Museum of Korea, Paju 2.



Children's Experience Room of National Folk Museum of Korea, Paju 1.

## 5. A new way of Exhibition viewing: The storage-type Exhibition

The storage-type exhibition at Paju Hall bears resemblance to the innovative theatrical experience of “Sleep No More” in New York, where the audience actively moves through



The Staff in uniform of Children's Experience Room.



*The storage-type Exhibition 1 (top). The storage-type Exhibition 2 (bottom).*

various spaces to observe the performance, rather than remaining seated in a traditional theater setting. Similarly, in Paju's storage-type exhibition, artifacts remain in their original storage locations, and the exhibition is curated in such a way that visitors follow a designed scenario, leading them to discover the artifacts in situ. For instance, during the "Glass Garden" special exhibition, the museum's facade was digitally mapped with graphics depicting a giant botanical garden, encouraging visitors to explore different areas of the museum to find artifacts with botanical motifs. Another exhibition, "Zoo," was designed to guide visitors in discovering artifacts with animal patterns. This innovative approach to exhibition design represents a new paradigm, tailored to the unique characteristics of an open storage facility.

## 6. Mission Statement in Open Storage - Open x Shared x Extend

The National Folk Museum of Korea Paju serves not only as a storage facility for its collection but also as an open platform, where its resources and artifacts can be utilized for research, study, design, writing, and more. This embodies the true essence of open storage. While there are other examples of partially open museum storage or open museum corners, the National Folk Museum of Korea Paju is the first facility designed entirely as open storage. Since its opening, over 200 domestic and international institutions have visited for benchmarking purposes, and as of the first half of 2024, the museum has welcomed more than 60,000 visitors. The exhibition and operational methods demonstrated here represent a new paradigm for museums and serve as a compelling example of how museums can contribute to a sustainable society.

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Born in 1974, in Korea/ Doctor of architecture. Currently, Curator and Exhibition designer in National Folk Museum of Korea.

**Design:** 'Sunbi-Classical Scholar', 'Babsangjigyo: Cultural exchange on the table between Korea and Japan', 'Sejong City 2005:2015, Remarkable transformation and distant memories', 'Junk x User's Guide', 'Wintering', 'Our Lives beyond Epidemics' etc.

**Award-winning career:** Winner of 2016 Japan Good Design Award, 2017 iF Design Award, 2018 German Design Award Best Researcher Award (2020, 2022) - Korean Society of Exhibition Design

Awarded the Achievement Award at the Korea Design Awards(2023)

**Book:** '100 Designers(2010)', 'European museum which walk down the street (Coauthor/2015)', 'Museum X Journey(2019)', Children's Museum(2023)

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# MUSEU.XYZ: Bridging tangible, intangible, and digital realms in exhibition design

Caroline Pires Ting, Ana Claudia da Cunha, Marlus Mendonça Silva Araujo

Federal University of Rio de Janeiro  
Brazil

## Abstract

In the context of Encountering Transition, this presentation examines the evolving landscape of exhibition design, focusing on the integration of tangible, intangible, and digital elements. As museums adapt to rapidly changing global and local environments, innovative approaches in exhibition design are crucial for enhancing visitor engagement and cultural appreciation. The metaverse represents a transformative shift in how art is created, curated, and experienced, offering immersive and interactive virtual spaces that transcend the limitations of traditional physical environments. As a pioneering digital-native museum, Museu.xyz leverages the metaverse to push the boundaries of exhibition design, embracing the potential of blockchain technology, non-fungible tokens (NFTs), and Web3 tools to redefine access to art and culture.

Founded in 2021 within the decentralized metaverse platform Voxels, Museu.xyz serves as a space for experimenting with digital art, education, and Brazilian culture, while elevating the voices of artists from the Global South. By highlighting projects such as "Metaversidade," "CryptoRastas," "Feminu", and "NFTrans," we will discuss how the metaverse facilitates engaging and culturally enriched experiences, bridging traditional and digital exhibition modalities.

Through strategic planning rooted in co-creation, Museu.xyz challenges conventional models of cultural production by fostering a decentralized, community-driven ecosystem that evolves continuously, mirroring the fluid nature of digital environments. The museum advocates for digital platforms to ensure open and global accessibility to knowledge and culture, removing geographic barriers and enabling new forms of engagement. This paper explores Museu.xyz's innovative approaches to exhibition design, community-driven content, and decentralized curation, highlighting the museum's commitment to inclusivity, diversity, and collaborative digital practices.

**Keywords:** Metaverse, exhibition design, digital art, decentralized curation, digital accessibility, NFTs, Brazilian culture



## Introduction

The concept of the metaverse has gained significant traction in recent years, offering new possibilities for the creation, curation, and consumption of art. It is a persistent, shared virtual space that allows for immersive and interactive experiences, fundamentally transforming how we engage with cultural and artistic content. The term “metaverse,” originally coined by Neal Stephenson in his 1992 science fiction novel *Snow Crash*, has evolved into a complex digital ecosystem where real-world and virtual experiences blend seamlessly. Today, the metaverse is not just a futuristic vision but a reality that brands and art institutions are beginning to explore, leveraging blockchain technology, non-fungible tokens (NFTs), and Web3 tools to redefine the boundaries of emerging markets.

Museu.xyz is a pioneering example of a museum that is entirely native to the metaverse. Founded in 2021 by Marlus Araujo and Ana Cunha—former colleagues from the Master’s in Creative Media program at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (PPGMC/ECO/UFRJ)—along with visual artist Alberto Brant (aka Ottis), Museu.xyz was conceived as a space for experimenting with digital art, education, and Brazilian culture in a virtual environment. Unlike traditional museums, Museu.xyz is not bound by physical space or geography; it exists within the digital realm of Voxels, a decentralized metaverse platform, allowing for limitless creativity in curatorial practices and exhibition design. The team has continued to grow over time, bringing in new collaborators and expanding its capacity for innovation.



*The foundational art occupation at Museu.xyz by CryptoArtBR artists, constructing virtual walls with NFTs, marking the museum’s entry into the metaverse. © Museu.xyz, 2021. Reproduced with permission.*

Central to the mission of Museu.xyz is the representation and elevation of Brazilian digital artists and creators from the Global South in the global metaverse. The evolution of digital art and the rise of NFTs have significantly impacted the art market, enabling artists to mint, sell, and trade their works directly with global audiences. By leveraging NFTs and blockchain technology, the museum offers a platform for artists to gain visibility and engage in new economic

models where ownership, provenance, and direct sales are decentralized and transparent. This strategy aligns with the museum’s goal of democratizing access to art and culture, making the digital art world more inclusive and accessible.

The strategic planning behind Museu.xyz draws inspiration from the principles of co-creation (Uricchio & Cizek, 2022), where the production of art and cultural experiences is a collaborative process involving artists, curators, technologists, and audiences. This approach challenges conventional models of cultural production by promoting a decentralized, community-driven ecosystem. The result is a “persistent project”—a digital space that evolves continuously, reflecting the fluid and dynamic nature of the metaverse itself. Persistence and synchronicity are crucial concepts to understanding how digital spaces can mimic the experience of the “physical world.” Persistence refers to the idea that the museum is a continuously evolving environment where the visitor’s experience is synchronized with others (Araujo, 2022). When one visitor enters the museum, they see the same things as others, and when changes occur, these are updated simultaneously for everyone. This dynamic reflects the interplay of permanence and impermanence in digital spaces, where content is constantly transforming, yet a sense of continuity and history is maintained.

The creation of DISTRITO XYZ, a digital district with multiple galleries that fosters a neighborhood-like community within the Voxels metaverse, marks a significant expansion of Museu.xyz’s vision and commitment to decentralization and co-creation. By hosting artist residencies and inviting diverse participants, both individuals and collectives, to experiment within these digital spaces, the museum promotes extensive collaboration and cultural exchange, fueling the growth of a vibrant digital art community. The following chapters will explore in more detail how Museu.xyz is redefining exhibition design, advancing inclusivity, and addressing the challenges and future directions of digital art spaces.

## Exhibition Design in the metaverse

Exhibition design in the metaverse opens new possibilities that challenge and expand traditional curatorial practices. Unlike physical museums, which are restricted by architectural, financial, and spatial limitations, metaverse-based museums like Museu.xyz have the freedom to redefine what an exhibition can be. In digital spaces, the constraints of physical materials and space dissolve, allowing for dynamic, interactive environments that defy gravity, change form, and utilize virtually infinite digital resources. This flexibility enables Museu.xyz to create immersive experiences that push the boundaries of exhibition design, offering spaces where creativity is not limited by conventional architecture.

At Museu.xyz, the integration of digital architecture, community-driven content, and NFTs transforms the museum experience. The idea that “all shows in the physical world should also be in the metaverse” (Duarte, 2022) promotes the vision that access to knowledge should be open and globally accessible. By removing geographic barriers, digital exhibitions allow museums to reach a broader audience, creating opportunities for global visibility and interaction that are not possible in traditional art spaces. This approach encourages physical museums and other cultural institutions to promote their presence in the metaverse, thus fostering an inclusive environment where art and culture can be experienced and appreciated by people worldwide, regardless of their location.



*“Museu.xyz’s fifth occupation: The International Festival of Performing Arts of Bahia (FIAC), featuring live streams during the pandemic in November 2021. © Museu.xyz, 2021. Reproduced with permission.”*

Furthermore, the metaverse provides a platform where traditional art institutions can experiment with new forms of engagement and participation. Digital exhibitions in the metaverse are not merely replicas of their physical counterparts; they offer unique, interactive, and evolving experiences that respond to user interactions and inputs. This interactivity transforms visitors from passive observers into active participants, deepening their engagement with the artworks and the presented narratives. By embracing the metaverse, Museu.xyz demonstrates how digital spaces can complement and enhance physical exhibitions, enriching the cultural landscape and redefining how art and knowledge are shared and experienced.

### **A Museum for Community-Driven Content and Decentralized Curation**

A distinguishing feature of Museu.xyz’s approach to exhibition design is its commitment to decentralized curation, a concept rooted in the principles of blockchain technology and Web3. Decentralized curation refers to a curatorial model where the decision-making process is distributed among a community rather than centralized in the hands of a few curators or directors. At Museu.xyz, this approach is reflected in the collaborative and participatory

nature of its exhibitions, where artists, technologists, and audiences are involved in the curation process.

The first year of Museu.xyz was marked by a dedication to creating space for digital art and cultural projects within the persistent metaverse of Voxels, a decentralized virtual world where land is sold in finite quantities. This model, based on the marketplace of virtual terrains, presents a challenge for many emerging artists in the NFT scene, who may find these digital spaces financially inaccessible. To address this barrier, Museu.xyz sought to curate exhibitions that would not only occupy these valuable digital terrains but also amplify the voices of underrepresented artists and cultural producers. By doing so, the museum aimed to democratize access to digital art platforms and foster a more inclusive digital art community.



*“Detail of Minerva, UFRJ’s symbol, as a voxel balloon over the ‘Metaversidade’ exhibition at the Festival of Knowledge. © Museu.xyz, 2021. Reproduced with permission.”*

“Metaversidade”, a wordplay combining ‘metaverse’ and ‘universidade’ (‘university’ in Portuguese language) was a foundational exhibition by Museu.xyz that embodied this mission. Featured at the annual event, *Festival do Conhecimento* (Festival of Knowledge), hosted by the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), the exhibition highlighted significant Brazilian projects by museums, festivals, artists, and musicians who had embraced digital platforms during the pandemic lockdown of 2020-2021. “Metaversidade” showcased how these entities leveraged digital tools to remain active and engage audiences in a time of restricted physical gatherings. This exhibition was a testament to the innovative spirit of the Brazilian art community in navigating the challenges posed by global health crises, using the metaverse as a space for knowledge exchange, cultural preservation, and creative experimentation.

Following this, Museu.xyz presented “CryptoRastas,” an exhibition centered around an NFT collection that, following its launch with the support of the museum, became one of Brazil’s most successful NFT projects. The “CryptoRastas”





Images from the 'CryptoRastas Big Drop' event, the second occupation at Museu.xyz, featuring a live music show streamed from the metaverse. © Museu.xyz, 2021. Reproduced with permission.

collection comprises 10,420 unique NFT collectibles that celebrate Brazilian reggae and the global Rastafarian movement, blending digital art with cultural narratives. Launched by Digital Dubs, a Brazilian music collective known for its reggae and dub music deeply influenced by Jamaican and Caribbean sounds, "CryptoRastas" became an intercultural project that linked the Brazilian music scene with its Caribbean roots. The exhibition explored themes of identity, resistance, and cultural exchange, highlighting the interconnectedness of music, art, and digital culture within the NFT space. Through "CryptoRastas," Museu. xyz not only promoted the Brazilian NFT scene but also underscored the power of NFTs to carry forward cultural stories and foster global dialogues.

Another significant exhibition was "Feminu," which focused exclusively on women and artists who identify with the feminine gender. This initiative was particularly crucial in addressing gender disparity within the Brazilian digital art and NFT community. "Feminu" provided a platform for female artists to showcase their work, thereby challenging the male-dominated narratives often seen in both traditional and digital art spheres. By highlighting diverse perspectives



View of the FEMINU exhibition at Museu.xyz, inspired by Lina Bo Bardi's MASP design, occupying a 1,000m<sup>2</sup> parcel now part of Distrito XYZ. © Museu.xyz, 2022. Reproduced with permission.

and artistic expressions, the exhibition sought to bring more visibility and representation to Brazilian women in the digital art scene. It emphasized the importance of inclusivity, diversity, and equity in cultural production, aligning with Museu.xyz's broader mission to create decentralized, community-driven spaces in the metaverse.

Through these exhibitions, Museu.xyz has demonstrated a commitment to promoting cultural diversity, accessibility, and innovation in the metaverse. Each project highlights different aspects of digital curation, from academic engagement and intercultural dialogues to gender inclusivity, establishing the museum as a leader in reimagining what digital art spaces can be.

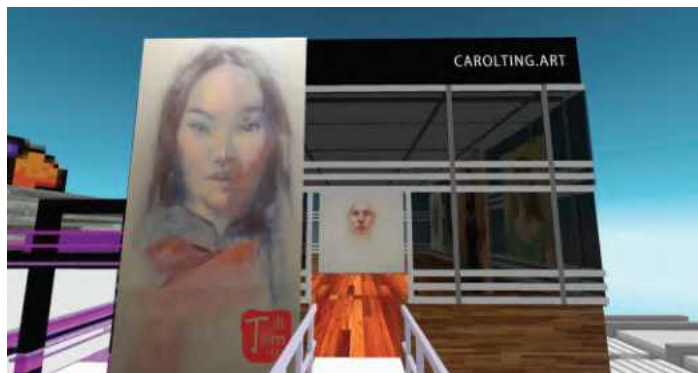
### XYZ District: A Step further on Decentralized Exhibition Ecosystems

One of the museum's key innovations following the success of the Feminu exhibition is the development of the DISTRITO XYZ project, which transformed Museu. xyz from focusing on one large exhibition featured for several months to creating a dynamic digital district with multiple simultaneous exhibitions. This expansion allows the museum to host a variety of galleries within the Voxels metaverse, each operating independently yet contributing to a cohesive digital ecosystem. DISTRITO XYZ functions as a decentralized hub for digital literacy, cultural engagement, and artistic experimentation, where different artists and collectives can curate their own spaces. This shift in strategy enables a continuous flow of exhibitions, promoting a more diverse and inclusive art ecosystem by allowing a broader range of voices and artistic practices to be represented concurrently.

Through this model, Museu.xyz now offers artist residency calls that encourage artists from various backgrounds to occupy and experiment within these digital galleries. By moving away from the format of a single, extended exhibition to a neighborhood model of multiple,



View of the first galleries and residents of District XYZ. © Museu.xyz, 2022. Reproduced with permission.



View of Caroline Ting's gallery in District XYZ. © Museu.xyz, 2022.  
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overlapping exhibitions, the museum fosters a more vibrant and collaborative environment. This approach not only enhances the visibility of a wider range of artists but also encourages the cross-pollination of ideas and practices across different art forms and disciplines, creating a continuously evolving cultural landscape within the metaverse.

DISTRITO XYZ embodies the museum's vision of creating a decentralized, co-created cultural space that serves as an aggregator for the Brazilian digital art community. The presence of multiple galleries within this digital district promotes an organic flow of visitors; by exploring one space, visitors are naturally inclined to discover other galleries in the vicinity. This neighborhood paradigm not only facilitates a continuous exchange of artistic and cultural assets, fostering knowledge sharing and innovation in digital art practices, but also empowers all resident projects by creating interconnected experiences and shared visibility. Such an approach challenges the traditional hierarchies and paradigms that have historically governed the art world, offering an alternative model for cultural production, distribution, and engagement in digital environments.

## CONCLUSION

Museu.xyz represents a transformative experiment in redefining the future of art, curation, and cultural engagement in the digital age. Leveraging the disruptive potential of blockchain technology, non-fungible tokens (NFTs), and Web3 tools, the museum has constructed an inclusive and decentralized platform that challenges the traditional constraints of physical space and institutional gatekeeping. This paradigm shift has enabled a broader and more equitable representation of artists, particularly those from the Global South, by providing them with a digital stage to engage global audiences and participate in decentralized economic models that emphasize transparency, provenance, and direct ownership. Through its innovative approaches to exhibition design and curation, Museu.xyz not only democratizes access to digital art but also fosters a more



View of NFTrans, a collective founded by Lea Arafah in 2023, occupying District XYZ during the latest artistic residency. Focused on creating a welcoming space for the artistic and professional development of the trans community in Web3, emphasizing affective onboarding and reciprocal inclusion through transdisciplinary art events and decolonial education. © Museu.xyz, 2023. Reproduced with permission.

participatory and dynamic art ecosystem that is constantly evolving to mirror the fluidity of the metaverse.

The evolution from single, large-scale exhibitions to the more expansive district model demonstrates Museu.xyz's commitment to decentralized curation and community-driven content. By shifting from an approach centered on individual exhibitions to a district model with multiple, simultaneous exhibitions, Museu.xyz has cultivated an ecosystem that allows a diverse range of voices and artistic practices to flourish concurrently. This strategic transition has transformed the museum into a vibrant digital neighborhood where cross-pollination of ideas and practices can occur organically, thereby encouraging a continuous exchange of artistic and cultural assets. DISTRITO XYZ embodies this shift towards a co-created, decentralized cultural space that serves as an aggregator for Brazilian digital art, promoting innovation in digital art practices and offering an alternative model for cultural production and engagement in virtual environments.

Looking ahead, the future of Museu.xyz lies in expanding its network beyond its current boundaries and establishing meaningful collaborations with cultural institutions and communities globally, with a particular focus on the Global South. By revealing different perspectives to the debate, especially those often marginalized in traditional art spaces, the museum aims to foster a more inclusive global dialogue that enriches the cultural landscape.

By positioning itself as a platform for other museums to explore and experiment within the metaverse, Museu.xyz seeks to provide a decentralized framework that supports curatorial innovation, cross-cultural dialogue, and inclusive audience engagement. This ambition to connect and collaborate internationally is driven by a commitment to further democratize access to the metaverse, ensuring that digital cultural spaces remain open, accessible, and representative of diverse voices. As Museu.xyz continues



to navigate the challenges of sustaining long-term visitor engagement, enhancing digital accessibility, and developing innovative governance models, it remains a pioneering example of how digital art institutions can not only adapt to but thrive within the rapidly evolving landscape of digital culture. The museum's ongoing evolution serves as a blueprint for how art and culture can be reshaped in the age of the metaverse, creating new possibilities for inclusivity, accessibility, and dynamic cultural production.

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## BIOGRAPHY

**Caroline Pires Ting**, Sino-Brazilian-American Professor and Visual Artist with a Postdoctorate in Philosophy and a PhD in Arts and Contemporary Culture, specializing in intercultural studies, former Copyist at the Louvre Museum (Paris, France). She has held significant academic roles across Europe, the USA, South America, and Asia. Her career is distinguished by a proven track record in editing international scholarly publications, speaking at global conferences, and leading seminars that effectively bridge traditional and contemporary cultural expressions.

**Marlus Mendonça Silva Araujo** is a designer, visual artist, and creative technologist. He holds an M.A. in Creative Media (PPGMC/ECO/UFRJ), with a research focus on games, metaverses, and virtual worlds. Marlus earned his undergraduate degree in Design from the School of Fine Arts at UFRJ and a postgraduate degree in Digital Projects from the Istituto Europeo di Design -- Rio. His work lies at the intersection of art, design, and technology, where he develops a wide range of digital projects, including games, data visualizations, web interfaces, interactive installations, and immersive environments.

**Ana Claudia da Cunha** is a Ph.D. student at the Technologies, Dialogues, and Sites Laboratory (LTDS) within the Production Engineering Program at COPPE/UFRJ. She holds an M.A. in Creative Media (ECO/UFRJ) and another in Cultural Goods (CPDOC/FGV). Her work explores the intersection of art, science, technology, and memory, examining how new technologies create new ways of storytelling. She also serves as the cultural manager of Museu XYZ, a space dedicated to art, education, and digital culture in the metaverse.

## How to display Outsider Art in a Contemporary Way

Peter Stohler

Kunstmuseum Thurgau, Warth  
Switzerland

### Abstract

Outsider Art, also known as *art brut* (literally 'raw art', a term defined by the French artist Jean Dubuffet), refers to works created by self-taught artists outside the mainstream. Since the 1990s the Kunstmuseum Thurgau, a non-specialist museum, has held the largest collection of Outsider Art in Switzerland (including Aloïse Corbaz, Hans Krüsi and Adolf Wölfli). Until now, however, the museum has shown very few works in its permanent exhibition. A new presentation of the collection aims to redress the situation. For this, we first need to decide which works to select. Also, we need to rethink what Outsider Art means in a global context. Once a phenomenon of Europe and the USA, Outsider Art now reaches as far as Taiwan, where the works by Hung Tung (1920–2015) and Wang Ting-Yu (b. 1961) are well known, as is a group exhibition on the subject ('Outsider Art in Taiwan', Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 2008). In addition to the selection of works, there is another important question: how are works by outsider artists shown? I will discuss this in a series of case studies focusing on works from specialist and non-specialist art museums, always in the contexts of the chosen form of presentation. My analysis is based on the 'mysterious' presentation in the dark (Collection de l'art brut, Lausanne, Switzerland, which opened in 1976), which was seen as natural and appropriate for decades. The central question is this: How neutral should the surrounding space, the display, be? How 'charged' the presentation, for example by using spotlights? I will discuss new forms of presentation such as those seen at the LAM (Lille/France) or the SAAM (Washington D.C./USA). Furthermore, I would like to explore how museums can better convey the history of objects, i. e. their cultural context, through digital means.

**Keywords:** Outsider Art, collection presentation, exhibition design, cultural context

## Intro: a museum visit in Lausanne in the late 1980s

Never before have I begun a talk with a personal experience. Such an introduction could easily be criticised as ‘too personal’, or at least as ‘too anecdotal’ and not sufficiently detached and academic. But in spite of this, I would like to start in exactly this way, because it is about something very special. Over the last few decades I have visited a huge number of museums on almost every continent, so I cannot remember every single one of them. However, I do remember very well my first encounter with *art brut*. Let me expand a little.

It was in the second half of the 1980s, I cannot remember exactly when. About twenty years old, I had left the place where I grew up and went to school (Belp and Bern) and moved west to Lausanne, a city on the shores of Lake Geneva in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, to attend the art college there. At the time, it was the only institution that offered a degree in filmmaking. Yes, I wanted to be a filmmaker. But not only was I an avid cinema-goer who loved films, I was also very interested in art and often visited the local art museum and the museum of photography. One day I was also a guest at the ‘Collection de l’art brut’, which is located some way above the city centre and not within easy walking distance.

Sadly, I can no longer remember individual works, but what I do remember distinctly is the way they were presented: the collection was shown in total darkness, with spotlights illuminating the works and lifting them out of the darkness. This was across three storeys, right up to the roof. There were no windows anywhere that would have made it possible to relate to the outside. So I was immediately taken in, fascinated, and yet I also felt like a prisoner in a way – a prisoner in a world of art created by outsiders, by people marginalised by society. The museum was showing a collection, and that’s why it was called ‘collection’, ‘Collection de l’art brut’.<sup>1</sup> In other words, a collection of works of an art form that was labelled ‘raw art’.<sup>2</sup> If one talks about ‘raw’, it does not take long to wonder about the opposite, i.e. to get to the bottom of a pair of terms: something between ‘raw’ and ‘cooked’<sup>3</sup>, between warm and cold, between new and old. Here, the French adjective *brut* (raw) was meant to denote something very special: the rawness of art gathered in this place. A gathering of art that was *brut* should certainly be understood as a quality label. I did not fully understand

the context on my first visit. But I soon realised that this was about the contrast between raw art creation<sup>4</sup> and educated art creation, or in other words: between original-authentic and academic-educated. Yes, I could remember visits to museums in Bern, where since 1975 a foundation had been preserving and researching the work of the outsider Adolf Wölfli (1864–1930), who was interned for three decades in a psychiatric clinic called Waldau, just a few kilometres from where I was born. Parts of Wölfli’s work were regularly shown in the art museum, and later confronted with other positions in themed exhibitions. In 1987, for example, works by Rebecca Horn, Paul Klee or Joseph Beuys were juxtaposed with those of Adolf Wölfli.<sup>5</sup> And in 1963, Harald Szeemann, who was to become one of the most famous curators of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, organised the exhibition ‘Bildnerei der Geisteskranken – Art Brut – Insania Pingens’ at the Kunsthalle Bern, which showed works from the collection of the psychiatric clinic in Bern and from the Prinzhorn Collection in Heidelberg.<sup>6</sup>

## For three decades, it remained a peripheral issue for me

Soon after my first visit, during my studies in Lausanne, I learnt more about the connections, such as the fact that the collection was originally based in Paris, only to move to the rather ‘peripheral’ and provincial Lausanne. Today, however, I consider myself lucky to have had a first visit where, almost out of the blue, I encountered the phenomenon of *art brut* (literally translated as ‘raw art’).

The subject of *art brut* was to accompany me for another three decades, but always only selectively. However, during my art history studies in the 1990s and my work as a curator of contemporary art from the late 1990s onwards, it always remained just one topic among many, or to put it another way: a topic on the fringes of the art world. I myself never exhibited an artist who could be described as an outsider.

## Autumn 2023: meeting with ‘outsider’ Hans Krüsi

Since my appointment as director of the Kunstmuseum Thurgau in October 2023, the topic of outsider art has moved from the periphery of my interests to the centre. I had already formulated my interest in outsider art in the application process, which began a year before I took up the post. The collection of the Kunstmuseum Thurgau

<sup>4</sup> ‘Raw Vision’, a quarterly English-language periodical dedicated exclusively to ‘outsider art, art brut and contemporary folk art’, as the subtitle puts it, has been in existence since 1989. The magazine, edited by John Maizels, had a circulation of around 8,000 copies in 2007, compared to a few hundred when it was founded. The title refers to Dubuffet’s *brut* (raw) and adds ‘vision’ to the title, as the spectrum of art forms covered includes not only ‘art brut’, but also outsider art and folk art. Rawvision.com

<sup>5</sup> Curated by Jürgen Glaesemer. Cf. Glaesemer, J. (1987). *Die Gleichzeitigkeit des Anderen. Materialien zu einer Ausstellung*, Stuttgart: Verlag Gerd Hatje.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Bezzola, T. & Kurzmeyer, R. (2007). *Harald Szeemann – with by through because towards despite. Catalogue of all Exhibitions 1957–2005*, Zurich: Edition Voldemeer.

<sup>1</sup> In 1971, Jean Dubuffet (1901–1985) donated his collection to the City of Lausanne. The ‘Collection de l’art brut’ was opened in 1976 and expanded several times. It is housed in the Chateau de Beaulieu, an 18th manor house owned by the City of Lausanne. [www.artbrut.ch](http://www.artbrut.ch)

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Faupin, S. & Gibault, F. (2005). *Dubuffet & l’Art Brut*, Milan/Lausanne: Editions 5 Continents/Collection de l’Art Brut.

<sup>3</sup> This is the subtitle of Claude Lévi-Strauss’ first volume of his ‘Mythologiques’, originally published in French as ‘Le cru et le cuit’, and published in English in 1971 as ‘The Raw and the Cooked’.

comprises almost half of what could be described as outsider art, and probably the best-known artist from this canton, Adolf Dietrich (1877–1957), is a self-taught artist who can be categorised as naïve or as belonging to the New Objectivity movement. In fact, the topic of outsider creativity leads us straight to the heart of the debate about art and the question of how art expresses itself. Or indeed: how directly does art express itself? These are questions that are asked time and again, and even art experts find themselves in need of an explanation. In the face of contemporary art practice that is often perceived as ‘cerebral’, experts and laypeople alike long for an art that can be described as pleasantly direct or raw. However, I did not want to pursue this debate in the application process, but explained that I found it interesting that outsider art was important in this museum, but not the only theme, as it is in those museums that are exclusively dedicated to this subject.<sup>7</sup> When I began my work, a major solo exhibition on Hans Krüsi (1925–1995) opened at the Kunstmuseum Thurgau, accompanied by a comprehensive publication.<sup>8</sup>

### March 2024: museum visits in Baltimore and Washington DC

While I was in the USA for further training, I had time to explore museums that show outsider art in different ways: a specialist private museum in Baltimore (‘American Visionary Art Museum’), and the largest museums of American art of all, the ‘Smithsonian American Art Museum’ (SAAM) in the US capital. The ‘Visionary Art Museum’ is a specialist museum that displays its art in a rather old-fashioned way, i.e. the presentation is not ‘cool’ or ‘stylised’, but rather crammed and overloaded. At the SAAM, Outsider Art is combined with Folk Art and presented as one of the important chapters in US-American history (together with other chapters such as Asian American or African American Art, Native and Indigenous Art).

### April 2024: Aloïse moves to the centre of the global art world

In 2024, the Venice Biennale announced that, for the first time in the Biennale’s history, it was showing a very special position from Switzerland in the main exhibition curated

<sup>7</sup> In Switzerland, the ‘Open Art Museum’ in St. Gallen exclusively shows Outsider Art, as its other name ‘Centre for Outsider Art’ reveals. The museum was opened in 1988 under the name ‘Museum im Lagerhaus’, because it was in fact located in a converted warehouse, as it still is today, albeit at a different address. [www.openartmuseum.ch](http://www.openartmuseum.ch). In the USA, there is the ‘American Visionary Art Museum’ in Baltimore, which was founded in 1995 as a private museum by Rebecca Ann Hoffberger, who also served as director until 2022. According to its website, the museum, which is located in Baltimore Harbour and consists of three converted buildings and an outdoor sculpture park and atrium, attracts around 100,000 visitors a year. Rebecca Hoffberger put it as follows in her speech at the opening: ‘... the American Visionary Art Museum opens its doors of perception not in an effort to make war on academic or institutionalised learning, but to create a place where the best of self-taught, intuitive contributions of all kinds will be duly recognised, explored, and then championed in a clear strong voice.’ [www.Avam.org](http://www.Avam.org)

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Landert, M. & Wullschlegel, G. (2024). *Hans Krüsi: Jeder kann nicht machen was er will*, Zurich: Verlag Scheidegger & Spiess.

by Adriano Pedrosa: Aloïse or Aloyse, as she was usually referred to by her first name only, but actually Aloïse Corbaz (born 1886 in Lausanne, died 1964 in Gimel). Yes, the same Aloïse who was also shown in the ‘Collection de l’art brut’. Aloïse Corbaz’ life was a tragic one: she spent two years in the university hospital in Lausanne (1918–1920) and then over forty years in a home.

### Summer 2024: works snatched from the darkness

In the summer of 2024, I returned to Lausanne after more than three decades to take another look at the ‘Collection de l’art brut’. When I got off the bus that brought me to the somewhat remote area, I saw a black entrance protruding slightly from the building. Walking inside; I came to the entrance area with the ticket office and bookshop. From there, I went through a door and up a gently sloping ramp into an exhibition room where everything was black. As black as it was three decades ago. I looked at scrolls of paintings by Aloïse, several metres high. And there I saw works by Hans Krüsi, whom I knew from the Thurgau Art Museum. The overall impression was as haunting as it had been back then. However, it became clear that this type of presentation cannot be transferred to other museums. Because it gives the impression of a discovery. It seems to me like a metaphor: something that needs to be brought out of the darkness with spotlights, something, a form of art that has been overlooked.

### Looking to the future: how to show outsider art?

When the Hans Krüsi exhibition came to a successful close in June 2024, only one work by an outsider (Erich Bödeker, 1904–1971) remained in an area dedicated to parts of the Kunstmuseum’s collection. The sculptures *Self-Portrait seated on a Chair* (undated) and *Brigitte Bardot* (undated) are presented in a monk’s cell used as an exhibition space, although it is far from what an exhibition space for contemporary art usually looks like: a so-called ‘white cube’.<sup>9</sup> It is separated from the rest of the art museum by a heavy glass door. I am not very happy with this presentation. It makes me want to show Outsider Art more widely and better. But how can this plan be realised, especially as the rooms of the art museum are usually almost completely taken up by temporary exhibitions?

Here are my questions, which refer to the title of my paper: How should ‘outsiders’ be shown today in a contemporary way? Which ‘outsiders’ from the collection should be shown? How should they be shown? In their own rooms, or alongside non-outsiders?<sup>10</sup> I assume that it will not be

<sup>9</sup> Cf. O’Doherty, B. (1999). *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

<sup>10</sup> As in the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington DC. The collection combines ‘folk and self-taught art’ and thus elegantly avoids the problematic term ‘outsider’. The section ‘folk and self-taught art’ comprises 400 artists and includes



a presentation in the dark. At best, the daylight can be dimmed if this is necessary for conservation reasons. In addition, new questions have arisen since the phenomenon of Outsider Art has been discussed all over the world. How much context is needed? One of my ideas, which I would like to realise in 2026 or later, is a kind of summer school with impulses from different perspectives, ideally also from countries as geographically and culturally diverse as Switzerland and Taiwan.

The central question is certainly this: how neutrally should works by 'outsiders' be shown? This is not only about the presentation of the individual works, but also about how charged the wider environment is. The question of how to contextualise these works must also be asked: Do they need long explanations? Or should, as in Lausanne, a biographical outline of the artist's life be enough to understand the work? Or are there completely new forms of mediation: via QR codes on digital platforms, where one could work with sounds and/or music in addition to narrative voices, as we know them from audio guides? Or even with the voices of the artists?

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## BIOGRAPHY

**Peter Stohler** (b. 1967 in Belp, Switzerland) is a curator of contemporary art, museum director, writer and art consultant. After completing his studies in art and film studies at the University of Zurich, Stohler worked in museums and galleries, where he organised thematic exhibitions (e.g. 'Body Extensions', 2004, or 'Risk and Allure', 2006) as well as solo shows. He has also curated many group and solo exhibitions with contemporary artists, such as Karim Noureldin (2014), Rachel Lumsden (2018) and Necla Rüzgar (2019), and directed various art and cultural history museums in Switzerland and Germany. Furthermore, he has edited numerous publications, including collection catalogues ('From Anselm to Zilla. The collection of P. and E. Bosshard', Lars Müller, 2018), interview compilations ('Tomograph', Arnoldsche, 1999), and monographs, most recently 'My Name Was Written on Every Page. Necla Rüzgar', modo, 2021). He is currently the director of the Kunstmuseum Thurgau and Ittinger Museum in Warth, Switzerland.

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1300 works. A selection of these is on permanent display, as part of a comprehensive presentation of American art that spans several buildings. The large installation 'The Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations' Millennium General Assembly' by James Hampton, created around 1950–1964, is one of its highlights. It was bequeathed to the museum by anonymous donors in 1970. <https://americanart.si.edu>

# Steven Holl's Concept of Parallax as a Tool for Motivating Visitors' Movement, Space Syntax Analysis of the Kiasma Museum, Helsinki

Majed Awadh Alghaemdi

University of Nottingham, Nottingham

United Kingdom

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## Abstract

This paper investigates the role of bodily experience in engaging with the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, focusing on Steven Holl's Parallax concept and its relationship to movement and spatial perception. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty's Lived Body concept and James J. Gibson's theories of visual perception, Holl's architectural approach emphasises parallax as a key visual phenomenon. This study uses space syntax as an analytical framework to examine how the interaction between perception and action shapes cognition and communication within architectural spaces. The findings reveal a strong correlation between Holl's parallax-driven design strategies and the creation of a continuously unfolding spatial sequence, which fosters feelings of mystery, curiosity, and exploration. Elements such as spatial transitions, asymmetrical doors and lighting changes incorporated through parallax demonstrate how movement and sensory shifts influence perception, making the museum a dynamic and ever-changing experience. Visitors are encouraged to "grasp" their surroundings through movement, deepening their engagement with the space. This paper concludes that Holl's design enhances the role of the body in architectural interaction, utilising movement, sensory, and cognitive processes to generate an emergent spatial narrative that enriches the visitor's experience of the environment.

**Keywords:** Steven Holl, Parallax, Kiasma Museum, Space Syntax, Enactivism

## Introduction

The criticism of modernist architecture, especially the functional and geometric approach, has created a lot of discussion in architectural theory. Charles Jencks (1973) and Bernard Tschumi (1977) pointed out that modern architecture fails to address the human experience and its relation to the architectural space and instead focuses on the rationality of the process. This critique led to the phenomenological approaches that focus on the function of architecture in placing experience. The idea of *genius loci* or 'spirit of place' was first brought into the architectural discourse by Christian Norberg-Schulz in 1980, who argued that architecture should provide a meaningful link between people and their environment. Steven Holl's concept of "parallax", exemplified in the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art design in Helsinki, represents a key expression of this phenomenological shift. Holl's design manipulates perspectives and spatial layers to encourage dynamic interaction as visitors move through the space, aligning with Merleau-Ponty's (1962) theory of bodily intentionality, which suggests that our physical movement deeply shapes our perception of space through it.

This parallax concept is well illustrated in the circulation system of the Kiasma Museum, which contains a labyrinthine, spiral and maze-like circulation. Instead of following the strict linear pattern character of most modernist buildings, Kiasma encourages exploration and interaction, just like Wright's Guggenheim Museum with its spiralling path that enriches the viewer's experience of the space and the objects it contains. This study uses space syntax analysis to examine how Holl's design facilitates visitor engagement and shows the applicability of spatial configurations for movement and perception in the museum environment (Norberg-Schulz, 1980). The hypothesis proposed here is that Steven Holl designed the spatial configuration of the Kiasma Museum with a unified intentionality to encourage active engagement through movement.

## Holl's Phenomenological Architecture

Steven Holl's architectural approach, informed by Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, pays much attention to the body as a medium of space. According to Holl, architecture should stimulate the body's movement through space and, not just sight or touch, as proposed by Merleau-Ponty's 'The Intertwining—The Chiasm'. He believes that architecture can precipitate human experience, which, in turn, can produce meaning through touch rather than through cultural or visual signification (Holl, 2000, p. 9).

David Leatherbarrow points out that architecture has a role that 'shows and serves' while embodying and performing culture (Leatherbarrow, 2009, p. 8). In parallel, Holl argues that architecture cannot be just functional and

has to involve the user more actively and progressively, in which meaning is constructed through use (Holl, 1997, p. 9). This approach is based on Merleau-Ponty's Lived Body idea. This concept of proprioception is defined as the sense of the position and movement of the body in space. Merleau-Ponty believes that "the body is our general medium for having a world" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 147) and notes that space is not an empty nothingness but is created through the body's movement and actions. This is evident in Holl's designs, where bodily movement is elicited through changes in light, form, and layout of the structures, as supported by Merleau-Ponty's perception of the process as active.

## Parallax as a Motivational Tool in Kiasma Museum

Steven Holl's parallax concept emphasises the body's motion as a key factor in forming the spatial experience. He defines parallax as "the change in the arrangement of surfaces that define space as a result of the change in the position of a viewer," stressing that space is in a constant process of transformation as the body moves, and as a result, the space is redefined (Holl, 2000, p. 26). This movement through overlapping geometries, light and form transforms architecture into an ongoing process of experience, which is in tune with Merleau-Ponty's notion of the body as the core of perception – space as being experienced (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 133).

Holl's design strategy aligns with James Gibson's affordances theory, which posits that objects call for specific uses depending on their appearance. Likewise, areas such as the Kiasma Museum afford movements and sensations that change as the body interacts with the structures. As reflected in Holl's work, Gibson's motion parallax also stressed that motion is required to perceive the spatial structure. Also, Noë's enactive theory of perception supports Holl's view, stating that perception is an active probing of the environment through changes in sensory input that occur with movement (Noë, 2004). This perspective presents architecture as a body experience, that is, as a result of the body in motion. Noë and O'Regan argue that sensorimotor patterns direct our actions and perceptions, confirming Holl's emphasis on the body as a way to interact with architecture (Djebbara et al., 2022).

Both Top-Down and Bottom-Up processes form our architectural perception. Bottom-up is based on the direct input from the senses, whereas Top-Down is based on memory and expectation (Eysenck, 1998). This duality is evident in Holl's design, in which spaces such as Kiasma promote an active engagement of the body and the mind. Further, Seth's (2014) predictive processing framework expands that perception is influenced by actions that orchestrate sensory input, while Eric Kandel emphasises that both processes are crucial for experiencing contemporary art and architecture, which demands more cognitive

work to decipher (Kandel, 2016). Holl further develops these ideas by arguing that abstraction in architecture, as in art, requires work on the part of the viewer (2019, p.12). In addition, motor planning comes into play when visitors adapt to spatial changes and optical flow, enabling them to respond appropriately to the environment (Rao & Ballard, 1999). In support of this, Gibson's theory of self-motion and optic flow shows how movement and visual stimuli are interrelated in constructing a dynamic perception of space (Gibson, 1986). Also, the sensorimotor contingency theory notes that the bodily action of the environment influences perception. In the case of Kiasma, the asymmetrical doorways increase the parallax effect by creating visual permeability, facilitating smooth changes, and increasing both the visual and physical links. In combination, these design elements allow the visitor to be engaged continuously throughout their visit.

### **Kiasma Museum as an Organised Space**

This shift is evident in Kiasma through the spatial uncertainty and utilisation of parallax, which encourages visitors to re-interpret and engage with the space in new ways. In Holl's museum designs, spaces are constructed to stimulate the dynamics of the body, altering sensory experiences as visitors move through them. Elements such as varied lighting and doorway designs – whether diagonal, offset, or breaking at corners – create a seamless flow that reflects how the human body navigates space and adjusts perception and interaction (Drake, 2005, p. 12). The theme of unfolding is central to Holl's works, and in discussing Kiasma, he refers to the "continuity of the internal space" and the unfolding of a limitless series of shifting perspectives (Holl, 1996, p. 90). He aims to create an "open-ended" organisation that allows visitors to chart their own paths through the galleries (Holl, 1996, pp. 44–45).

Merleau-Ponty's concept of habitation supports this approach, which is closely linked to temporality. Merleau-Ponty asserts that "to look at an object is to dwell in it" (1962, p. 68), suggesting that space is not merely seen but lived and experienced over time. This temporal aspect is crucial to Holl's parallax concept, as the experience of space shifts with the body's movement. Holl's manipulation of spatial and lighting elements dematerialises conventional patterns of perception, inviting visitors to engage with familiar spaces in unfamiliar ways over time. This resonates with Merleau-Ponty's notion of wonder – a shift in perception that deepens the relationship with the world (Pérez-Gómez, 2005, p. 45). The dynamic interaction between space, body, and time through parallax creates a continuously evolving spatial narrative where habitation unfolds through movement and sensory engagement.

This engagement extends beyond the physical space into Kiasma's pedagogical philosophy, which reflects a similar duality. According to Kalja Kaitavuori, Kiasma's educational

philosophy evolved from two perspectives: an intellectual understanding of contemporary art's principles and traditions and encouraging personal, sensory experiences that foster subjective interpretations (Kaitavuori, 1998, p. 41). This mirrors Holl's design, where visitors are guided not by predetermined paths but by their perceptions. Kiasma's pedagogy embraces self-guided exploration, offering tools like story-crafting and conversational guidance to encourage personal meaning-making, much like Holl's spatial design invites re-interpretation. Kaitavuori's "participator function" concept extends this active engagement by transforming the traditional artist-audience relationship. Just as Holl's spaces invite participation, the participator function allows visitors to become co-creators in the artistic process. Projects such as *Day Bed* by Michael Lin and *One Minute Sculptures* by Erwin Wurm demonstrate how participation is essential to completing the artwork, blurring the boundaries between creator and viewer (Kaitavuori, 2018, p. 11). This participatory model deepens the art experience by fostering immersive engagement, much like Holl's parallax, which encourages evolving interaction with space.

Ultimately, Holl's architectural design and Kiasma's educational philosophy promote an active, participatory experience where visitors play a central role in shaping their engagement with art and space. By intertwining intellectual and sensory experiences, both approaches cultivate deeper personal connections and redefine the dynamic relationship between the creator, the space, and the audience. This model creates an inclusive environment, emphasising the individual's role in interpreting and experiencing both art and architecture (figure 1-2).

### **Methodology**

Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson first developed the space syntax methodology to represent the configurational characteristics of architectural space through complex diagramming and graphing methods (Hillier, 1996; Hillier & Hanson, 1984; Hanson, 1998). In the context of Kiasma, two key spatial concepts are central to space syntax methodology: the convexity of space and the configuration of multiple spaces. Hillier posits that human movement and interaction are inherently linear activities, making the fundamental spatial unit a convex one – where an individual can see all other points within the same space (Hillier, 2005, p. 97). Specifically, the Justified Graph (J-graph) method will be applied in this analysis to visually represent the spatial structure of Kiasma's gallery layouts, capturing critical differences in how the space guides movement and interaction (Hillier, 1996, p. 22).

The j-graph method is useful for understanding how Kiasma's architectural layout influences visitor movement. By graphically representing the relationships between spaces – such as the depth and connectivity between



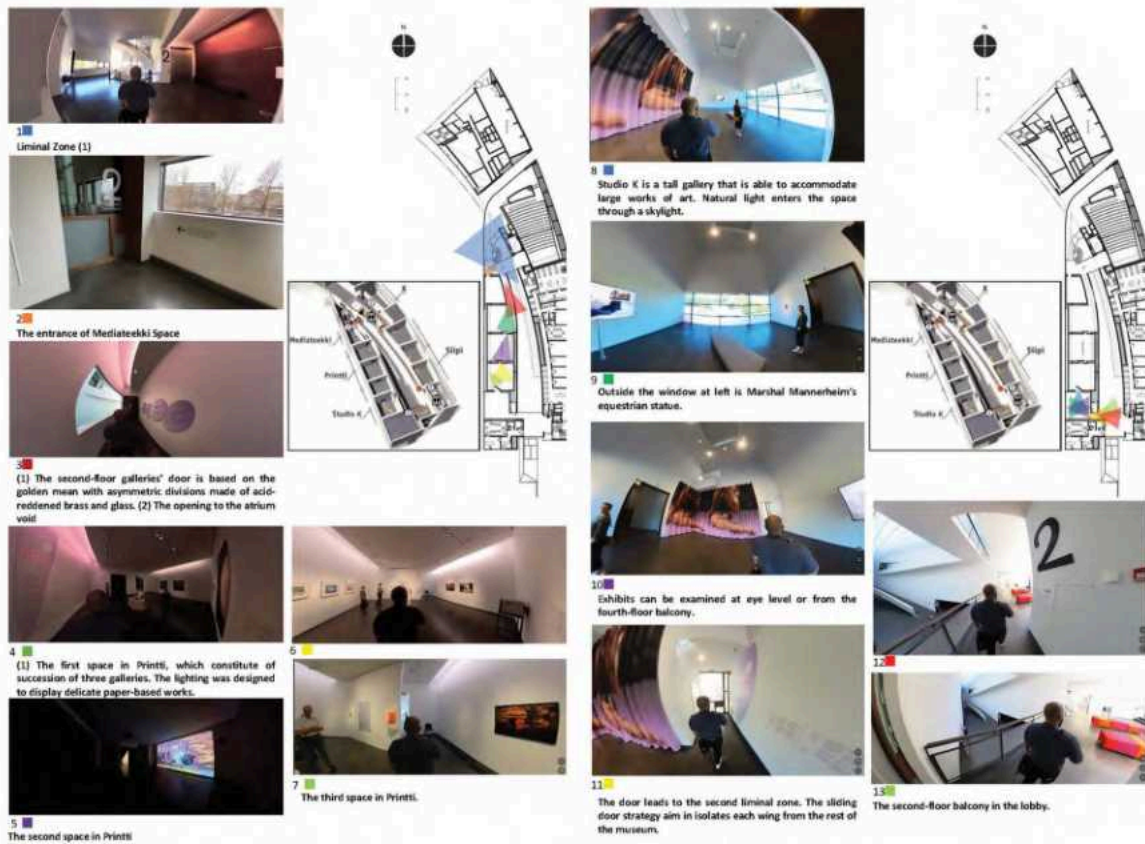


Fig.1

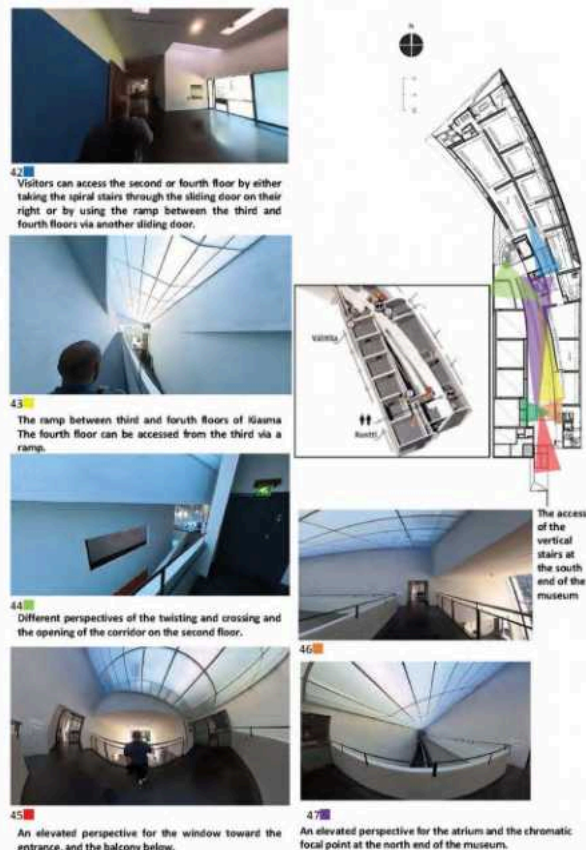
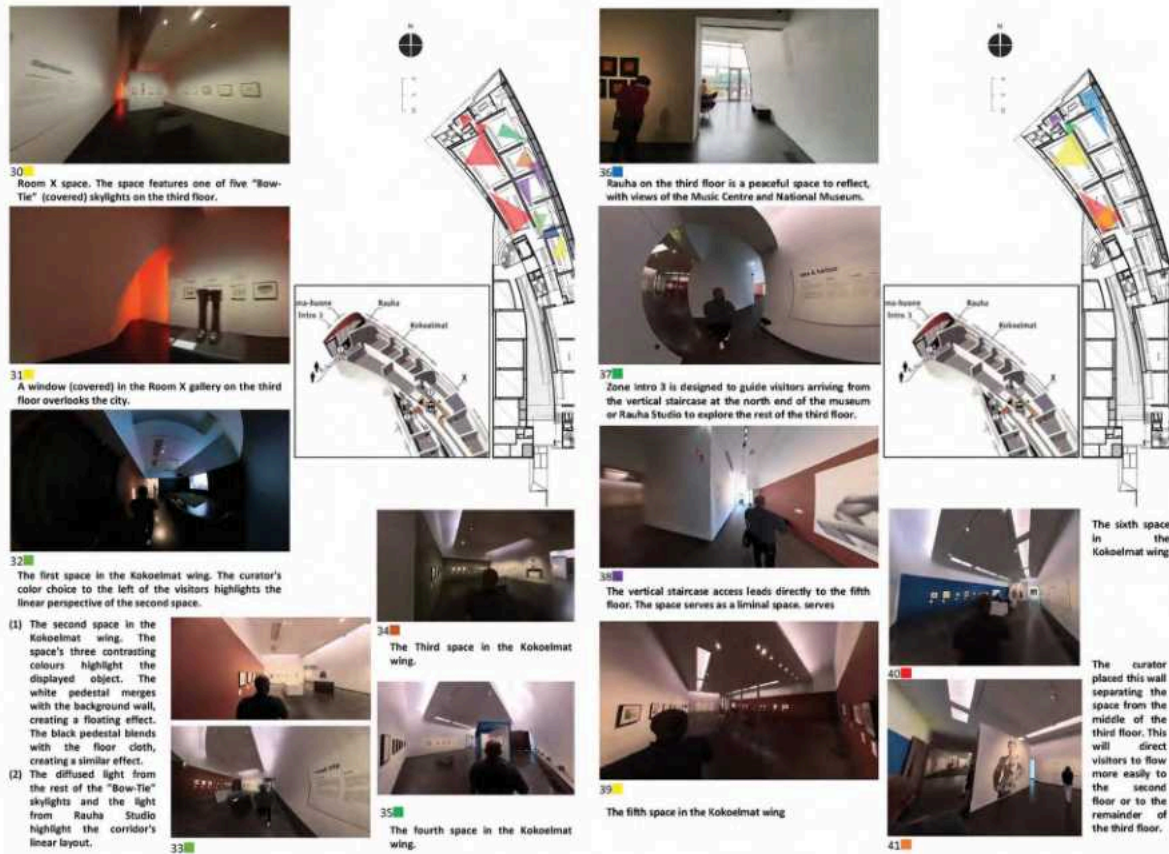


Fig.2



galleries – the J-graph highlights the ease of navigation and flow through the museum’s non-hierarchical layout. This reflects Holl’s intention to create an “open-ended” structure where visitors can chart their own paths through the galleries (Holl, 1996, pp. 44–45). Holl describes the museum’s structure as made up of “two intertwined geometries – the gently curved half and the straight half which intersects” (Holl, 2007, p. 21). The sequence of spaces traversed by the body was designed to provide constant reorientation, where the body becomes an instrument to measure the spatial experience (Holl, 2007, p. 21). In terms of the visual field, the concept of the *isovist*, as defined by Michael Benedikt (1979), will be used to analyse Kiasma’s visual fields. An *isovist Area* ( $A_v$ ), or visible polygon from a specific vantage point, is determined by the real surfaces, occluding radial and region-boundary surfaces within the museum. This method reveals how much space is visually accessible from any given point. Larger areas correspond to more open spaces, whereas smaller areas indicate more enclosed or visually constrained environments.

### Spatial Layout and Visitor Movement

The justified graph (J-graph) analysis of Kiasma’s second and third floors reveals a structured yet flexible spatial configuration, where the depth of spaces ranges consistently between 8 and 10 levels (Figure 3). This consistency in spatial depth highlights the design’s intention to allow visitors to explore freely while maintaining overall orientation.

The mean depth (MDn) values for most individual spaces range between 3 and 6, indicating that no space is isolated from key areas by more than six steps. This moderate depth ensures that visitors are never far from central or highly connected areas, allowing for ease of navigation. Such a layout facilitates fluid movement throughout the museum, aligning with Steven Holl’s aim to create a well-integrated and interconnected architectural environment. In addition to depth, the control values (CV) provide insight into how the spaces influence movement within the layout. Control values range from 0 to 2, with higher values concentrated at central nodes, where multiple spaces branch out. These central nodes act as key control points, offering visitors various movement options. The control values suggest these nodes are critical in facilitating choice and decision-making as visitors move between galleries. This strategic distribution of control points reflects the intention to promote exploration without rigidly directing visitor movement. The combination of moderate depth and strategic control points also supports the spatial experience Holl aimed to create. Visitors encounter a series of interconnected spaces where visual and spatial cues change dynamically as they move through the museum. This interaction between space and movement, where shifting perspectives encourage further exploration, aligns with phenomenological principles that emphasise the role of the body in shaping perception.

The overall structure of the J-graph indicates a non-hierarchical layout, characterised by its ring-like configuration. Unlike tree-like structures, Kiasma’s layout offers multiple routes and paths, which impose a more linear and directed movement. This reinforces Holl’s design of creating an “open-ended” space where visitors can determine their routes through the galleries. The absence of a dominant, predefined route ensures that the layout is adaptable to individual preferences, enhancing the visitor’s ability to engage with the space on their terms. The ring structure, supported by the calculated depth and control values, fosters exploration by allowing visitors to engage with different spaces at varying levels of depth. The parallax effect is integral to this process, as the layout reveals new visual experiences as visitors progress through the space. This dynamic engagement between movement and perception is a key feature of the museum’s design, providing visitors with an active, participatory experience.

### Visual Narrative

In Kiasma’s circulatory system, parallax values relate to tangible spatial qualities, such as area, exclusivity, and drift, and intangible spatial qualities, such as lighting and views. Holl defines architecture as “a slow viscosity of fluid space in motion,” where parallax changes between curvilinear and orthogonal spaces, thus changing the way visitors experience movement and light (Holl, 1998, p. 14). This is due to the flexibility of the space, which is complemented by natural and artificial lighting, making it a dynamic place. Holl’s approach is based on Merleau-Ponty’s idea of embodiment in which movement and touch define perception. The visitors experience Kiasma’s space through their physical movement, which supports the embodied experience (Thompson, 2007).

The second and third floors are made up of 14 convex areas that have different parallaxes. The first area is the Liminal Zone (C) (Figure 4), which can be reached by the spiral staircase (S1) or ramp (R1) and provides views of the city and information that prepares visitors to further exhibition areas. As the visitor moves up, parallax rises, thus making the view change as the visitor moves up. In the Kokoelmat Galleries (10–15), lighting differences contribute to the perception of space. There are ‘Bow-Tie’ skylights that change light throughout the day and increase parallax, while other areas, such as Intro Space 3 (C3), have low light to reduce parallax. This interaction of light and materials activates the “Where” and “What” visual systems that are responsible for depth and movement perception (Livingstone, 2002). When visitors retrace their steps back to the Liminal Zone (C), parallax is high before visitors access other enclosed areas, such as the ramp (R2), where spatial viscosity rises with the floors. This manipulation of space and parallax makes visitors immersed.

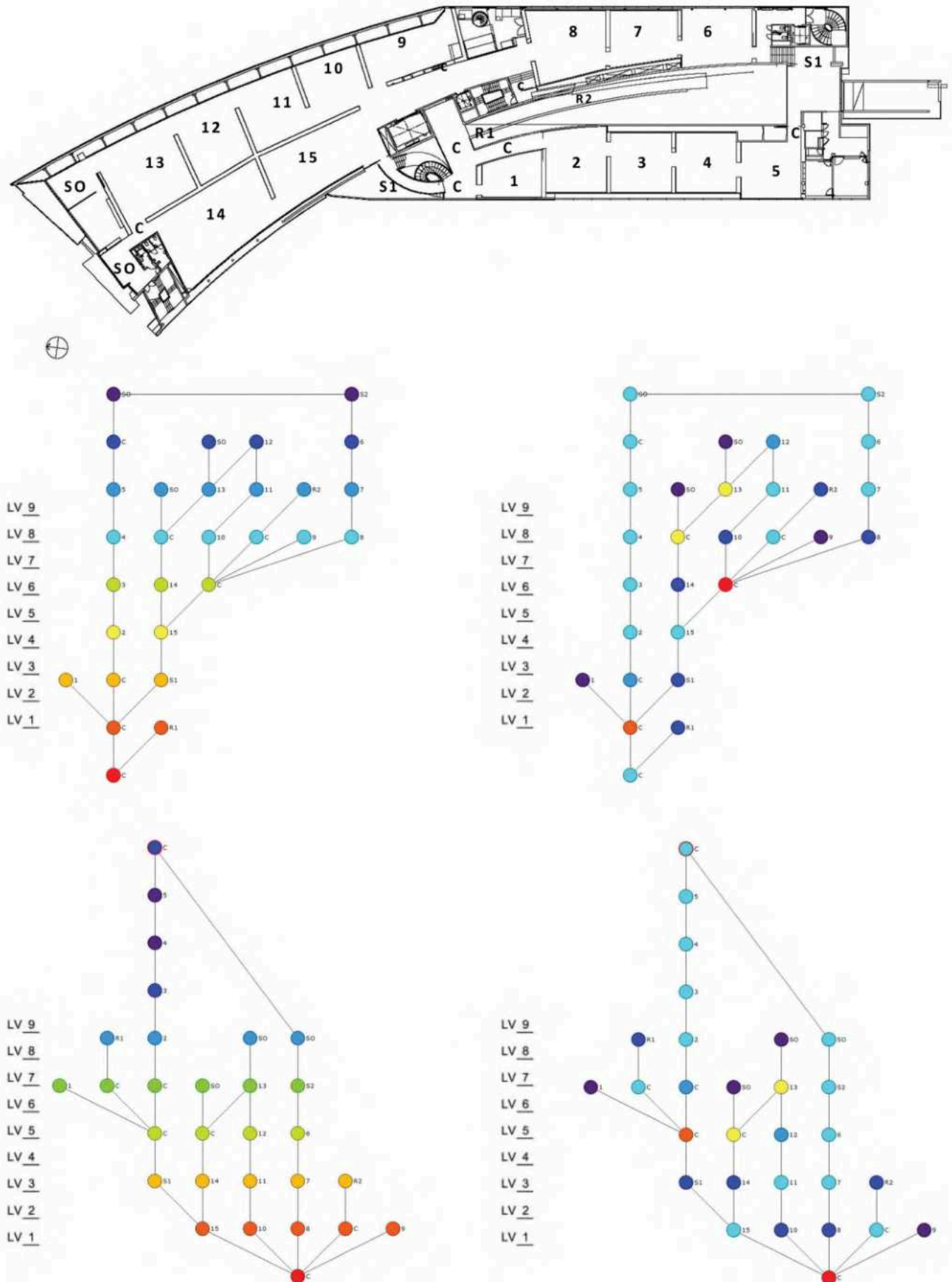
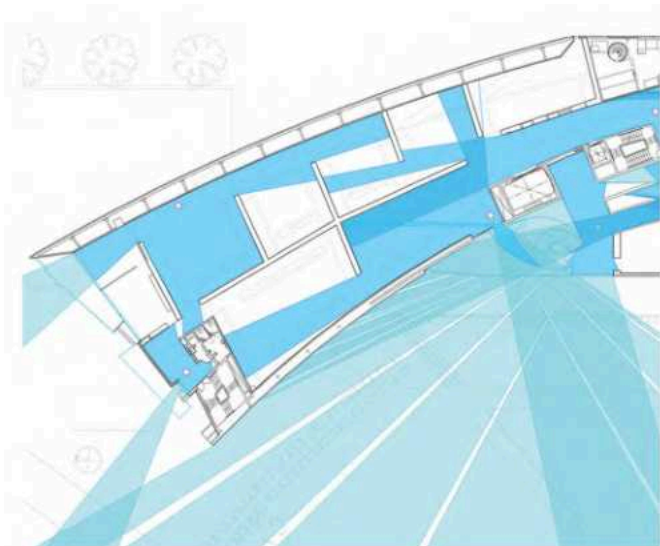
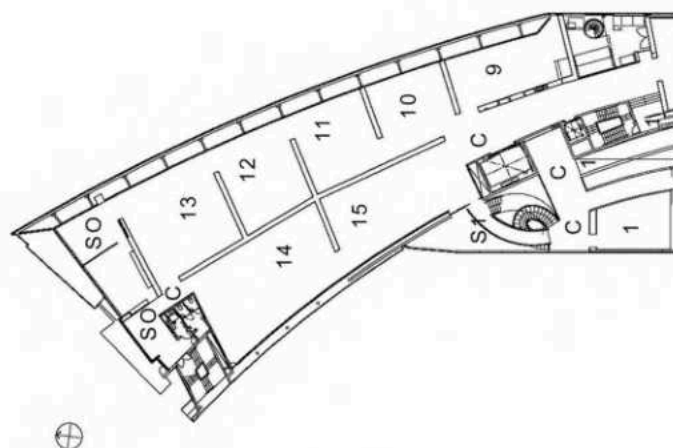


Fig. 3

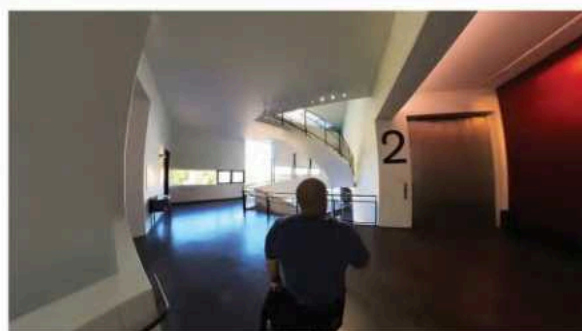




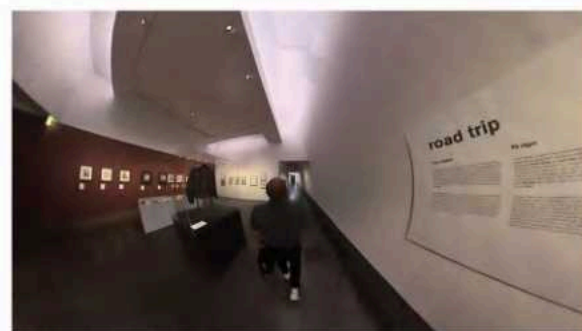
Overlapping Perspective



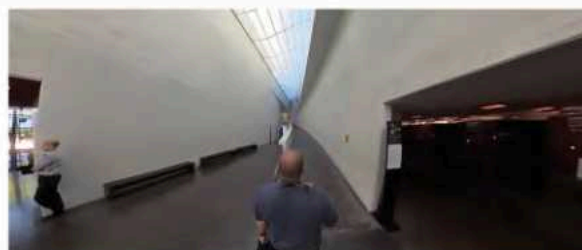
Part of the 2nd and 3rd Floor



C



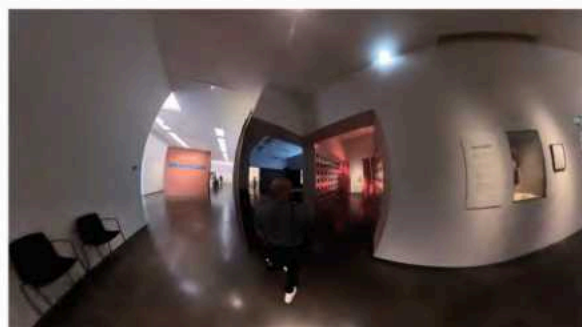
Kokoelmat Galleries (10-13)



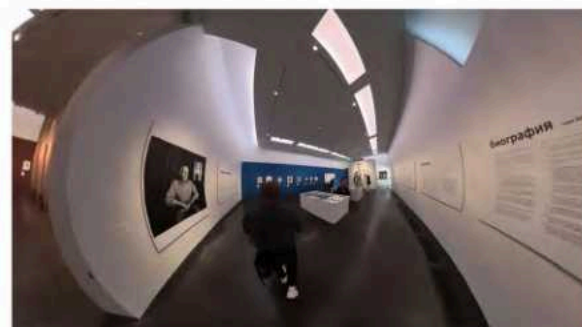
R1



Intro 3



Kokoelmat Galleries (10-15)



Kokoelmat Galleries (14-15)

Fig. 4

## CONCLUSION

This paper examines the concept of parallax in the architectural design of the Kiasma Museum by Steven Holl to show how movement and sensory perception in architecture are dynamic and ever-changing experiences. Some architectural features include asymmetrical doorways, Bow-Tie skylights and a complex circulation plan, which encourages exploration. Applying space syntax analysis such as J-graph and isovist, it was found that Kiasma's ring structure encourages free movement, and there are up to 12 levels of spatial hierarchy. Thus, there are many ways to explore. The isovist analysis also showed how dynamic visual fields, especially in convex spaces such as the Kokoelmat Galleries, promote constant reinterpretation of the space through light. It was found that having doorways of different sizes and lighting differences effectively created the parallax effect, increasing the sensory appeal and the element of surprise. Areas that were more visually connected, like the upper galleries and the spiral ramp, were used more frequently. Holl's idea of direct, haptic contact with the space aligns with the phenomenological approach to movement that Merleau-Ponty espouses. Holl's design at Kiasma is thus about spatial contiguity and sensory experience where the visitor is an active agent in constructing the encounter.

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## BIOGRAPHY

**Majed Awadh Alghaemdi** is a PhD student in the Architecture, Culture, and Tectonics research group in the Department of Architecture at the University of Nottingham under the supervision of Professor Jonathan Hale and Dr Laura Hanks. In 2010, Majed received a bachelor's degree in architecture and Building Sciences from King Saud University. In 2015, Majed received his M.Arch 2 degree from the Southern California Institute of Architecture. Currently, he is involved in the Doctor of Philosophy PhD program at the University of Nottingham. His project focuses on the role of movement in the perception of architectural space. Majed has more than ten years of experience working as a practitioner and an educator at the architecture department at King Saud University, Saudi Arabia.

# Where to go when everything became ashes? An analysis of the audience-targeted activities during the reconstruction of cultural institutions and cultural heritage sites after a destructive fire.

Nicolle Manuelle Bahia Bittencourt

Waseda University, Tokyo

Japan

## Abstract

**Keywords:** Cultural Heritage; Disaster; Recovery

From the moment a cultural institution is faced with an unexpected event that results in destruction, many challenges arise. The physical space doesn't exist anymore. The collection is now ashes. What now? The obvious answer is to save what you can, assess the destruction, and reconstruct. The museum definition from ICOM was reviewed in 2022 and it makes clear the museum as an institution in service of society, its connection with tangible and intangible heritage, and most significantly the importance of community participation with the offer of varied experiences. The focus of this paper is to explore how diverse the experiences and the participation of the community can be in a post-disaster context. What solutions have the institution teams found to still provide services to society while their physical space is closed for years while the reconstruction is happening? That's the question this paper aims to answer through two study cases: Brazil's National Museum Reconstruction Campaign 'Museu Nacional Vive' (National Museum Lives), which was released in 2018 after the fire that destroyed millions of pieces of its collections, and the Shuri Castle, in Japan, Reconstruction Campaign 首里城復興へのあゆみ (Road to Revival SHURIJO), which was released in 2019 after other big fire that destroyed its multiple constructions and the historical collection. Both institutions have provided different types of activities for their audiences, offering actions to the general public, the specialized public, and the international public. The goal of this paper is to develop a timeline that illustrates various activities, which encompass in-person exhibitions and programs, an online gallery of videos and images, online museums and exhibitions, and other related events.

## INTRODUCTION

After a review of the definition of museums by ICOM in 2022, the role of this type of institution in society was expanded, having a more explicit connection with people and the type of service it must provide. The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) Toolkit for Museum Collection follows three approaches to showcase a collection while also guaranteeing its integrity and contact between society and the objects: storytelling, co-creation, and mentoring. Every approach differs in the level of interactivity, but they all explore the connection between what is tangible and intangible. In ICCROM's campaign called 'Our Collection Matter, Iwasaki and Pederzoli (2023) conducted a study to better understand the impacts of heritage collections on people's lives, resulting in the individual's perception of the heritage present in their lives, which constitutes one of the significant challenges for museums or other cultural institutions. A view similar to what Bosch (1999) addresses as the cultural identity of a society, in which the acceptance or recognition of differences and particularities defines it as part of the phenomenon of multiculturalism. Considering the studies above as starting points, this paper aims to explore the diversity of experiences provided by a cultural heritage institution to its audience in a post-disaster context, investigating the solutions they have implemented to keep the service to society while their physical space remains closed to reconstruction.

## COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

It is a common view of cultural heritage for those who are not from the field that heritage is something frozen in time and selected by someone to be passed down to the future while showcasing the past. At the beginning, when you had a more European view of collectors and collection, this was mostly true, but centuries after with a more interdisciplinary approach, it is possible to see that an object in an exhibition is more than only a display of something. The use of cultural goods is diverse in society, and in our daily lives, it is possible to recognize them everywhere in every part of existence. In Chagas' (1994) words, museums, archives, and libraries are places where there are things to be used, as they are places where specific cultural goods can be reunited and preserved, but these actions do not set it back on social use. When discussing documents, cultural heritage, and memory, the author highlights the concepts of preservation, communication, and investigation, but when the document is considered support for information, the challenge goes beyond the necessity of preserving the support, while preserving the possibility of information.

## TECHNOLOGY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Furthermore, Cavalcanti and Tucherman (2011) affirmed that it is a privilege of museums to transform themselves into places to observe the construction of social identity and discover new uses for science and technology. Inside a cultural institution, it is possible to find different formats and uses of technology. Technology can be found in the manufacturing of an object, on the object itself, on a document, as support for information, or even as a communication channel. According to Bittencourt et al. (2019), it can also appear as a method of interactivity with the audience, transforming its role inside an exhibition from passive to more active. In addition, referring to Kobashi and Talamo's (2003) views on contemporary society, the right to information is fundamental, as a cultural object is something made to answer the satisfaction of the physical or cultural of men, independent of its material or symbolic nature.

## DISASTER MANAGEMENT

According to Ocón (2021), destruction in museums and cultural heritage sites is often irreversible, and little can be done after the damage has already taken place, reminding us of its fragility. To the author, digitalization can help not only with reconstruction but also with the preservation of memories. Moreover, to Nishi (2022), the value of a property does not change after damage because restoration can be put in place quickly, and the author calls attention to the exception of loss of properties because of a fire, where restoration work cannot be carried out. Another point made by the author is how cultural heritage buildings are often found in a more vulnerable state within public perception, so if a recovery has a good social flow, it is easier for the public to decide to continue using heritage.

## STUDY CASES

### BRAZIL'S NATIONAL MUSEUM

The National Museum was created in 1818 with the name of The Royal Museum by King John VI, in the period when Portugal Kingdom and the capital of Brazil was Rio de Janeiro, its ownership currently is of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (previously known as Brazil's University) and the collection of the museum was estimated at 20 million items, hosting one of the largest and most diverse collections in Latin America (Guedes & Kellner, 2022).

In 2018, the museum planned an extensive agenda for its bicentennials. However, on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, a shortcut in an air-conditioning machine would start a fire that quickly consumed the palace in the flames. The conservation material of the scientific collection acted as a boost for the



fire, and pieces that were very sensitive to the collection were mostly destroyed. In 2021, the museum released a book called 500 Days of Rescue to tell the story of the fire, the rescue of collection pieces, the management of the reconstruction, and provide more details of the reconstruction campaign named Museu Nacional Vive or National Museum Lives. With the reopening planned for 2026, rescue was divided into planning, rescue of collections, screening, sieving, photographic record, sanitization and stabilization, and packaging. Even though the teams involved in the reconstruction are optimistic and the great advances made, news reports this year indicate that the reconstruction could potentially stop and be delayed because of the lack of funds.

## SHURI CASTLE

Located in Okinawa, Shuri Castle, or Shurijo, is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with the castle divided into inner and outer wards. The castle is a representation of exchanges between the island, mainland Japan, and China. Similar to the previous institution shown above, Shuri Castle has a long history of changes in its role in society, since it was also a residence for the royal family, Okinawa Prefecture, a military post, and later a campus for the University of the Ryukyus. The last large-scale destruction of the castle occurred during World War II, in the battle of Okinawa. According to Mukai (2022), the postwar reconstruction of the castle gained force when Okinawa was returned to Japan in 1972, considering that after the battle, the island command was given to the United States, and since then, the management of the site was divided between the National Okinawa Memorial Park Office, Okinawa General Bureau Cabinet Office, and Okinawa Prefectural Board of Education. In October 2019, the site faced one more large-scale fire on its main hall, where the wooden structures were destroyed quickly, nine buildings were destroyed, and 391 artifacts were lost to fire (Notredame-Shurijo Project, 2019). The reconstruction of the castle is being led by the campaign called Road to Revival Shurijo or 里城復興へのあゆみ.

## AFTER THE DESTRUCTION WHERE SHOULD WE GO?

Information and Communication Technologies can be great allies to a recovery or reconstruction campaign as digital products can reach a wider audience and be a way of communication between the institution and the audience, not only for updates about the reconstruction but also for new projects that are produced. As this is an ongoing thesis, only a few examples have been discussed. Here, we address two types of content: First, digital products, considered as a more passive approach, where the contact created is either to showcase images of updates or stories,

but the balance between what is provided and the feedback is unbalanced. The digital products produced were quite diverse, divided into websites, virtual exhibitions, videos, manga, e-books, reports, web or hybrid courses, virtual models, metaverse, manga, and audio guides. Taking their main website as a starting point and selecting some examples for this paper.

## FORTNITE

Fortnite is an online collaborative open-world game launched in 2017 by Epic Games, who won several awards that you can play in single-player mode or co-operative. In this game, it is possible to create their own environment and mini-games, using the creation mode in which the Ashibi Company launched the “Shuri Castle Parkour” as part of the Virtual Okinawa project. On this map, you can interact with characters who exist in this virtual world and collect stamps by completing different missions. Virtual Okinawa is also responsible for the 3D map of Shuri Castle on the Metaverse, where you can visit online and learn more about the castle.

## OUR SHURIJO

Our Shurijo project was conducted by researchers, students, and engineers to help the restoration of Shuri Castle and cheer up those affected by the fire, using design computer algorithms and images to reconstruct objects (Our Shurijo website, 2020). This is an important project of 3D representation, which is available to anyone to visit, and their objective was not only to revive memories of the past but also to have 3D models for each era of the castle, so they also asked people to share their memories, pictures, and videos. Seven 3D models can be found on the website.

## GOOGLE ART & CULTURE

Launched as the Google Art Project in 2011, Google Arts & Culture is an online platform created to provide high-resolution images and videos of artwork and cultural artifacts, and later added online visits using Google Street View technology and showcasing cultural institutions around the globe. Both study cases have pages and contributions to this platform. First, the National Museum had a project called “Inside Brazil’s National Museum” displaying a 360° tour inside the main rooms of the palace, divided into 11 focal points. The project was planned as part of a bicentennial celebration and became one of the most complete digitalizations of the space before the fire, which is accessible to the audience. Other project from the museum is the virtual exhibition inside the museum own website titled ‘Os Primeiros Brasileiros’ or ‘The First Brazilians’ available in Brazilian Portuguese and English.

Their activities are not only digital, but there are also different activities provided in their physical space, keeping in mind that both institutions are inside a park. They hold annual festivals for reconstruction. In 2024, the National Museum realized the event on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September with a very diverse agenda, which included musical shows, talkshows with academics and indigenous groups, a visit to their herbarium, a fair with local products being sold, different educational activities, specimen exhibition, the introduction to the project ColDigi (showcasing how the museum digitalized its collection), an introduction to the rescue of the museum (showcasing the process of rescue after the fire, and the method used to rescue pieces and which equipment where used), and many more.

Shuri Castle also has a long list of in-person activities provided to the public, with the restoration itself being more displayed than the National Museum. The reconstruction takes place in a format where everyone can visit and see what is happening, with the main hall being rebuilt inside a protection structure with some transparent walls that allow visitors to watch the work that it is being done on that day. In the spring of 2024, the castle gave free pieces of wood that were leftover from the wood used on the building, and any visitor could take a small piece as a memory from their visit to the ground. Throughout the year, there are special events involving different activities for different ages, such as special treasure hunts for children, musical shows until disaster prevention training, and special art and culinary workshops. And on the month of November they will also held their annual festival for the castle restoration, with a special parade that recreates the Ryukyu Dynasty era, showing actors portraying the Ryukyu king and queen inside "Sapposhi" on the famous Kokusai street, a reenactment of the Three Temple Pilgrimage Imperial Visit procession and a special visit to the inside of the restoration, where you can look very close up, and many others.

These are some examples of the digital activities that Shuri Castle and the National Museum are making available to the public as a way to maintain their interest and participation in their activities. But both institutions provide a long diversity of material, as shown before, using another google platform: Youtube. You can find current updates, documentaries, and other type of videos there. Most of them do not have a translation for English and are available in each institution's native language (Japanese and Brazilian Portuguese).

## CONCLUSION

This brief exploration of the 'Museu Nacional Vive' and the Road to Revival Shurijo campaigns highlights how important community engagement in the challenge of the post-

disaster context. Despite the temporary loss of their physical spaces, both institutions have adapted to digital platforms to maintain certain level of connection with their public. At the same time, they recognized the importance of continuing to host in-person experiences, organizing special events that go around diverse areas of knowledge, and creating a collective sense of healing or continuity. By embracing both digital and traditional forms of engagement, these cases demonstrate the vital role that cultural heritage institutions play while serving society, transforming themselves into a source of resilience and hope.

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## BIOGRAPHY

*Nicolle Bittencourt* is a Museologist from the Amazon region in Brazil. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. degree at the Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies at Waseda University, Japan. With a bachelor's degree in Museology, a master's degree in information science, and a professional degree in Scenography, all from the Federal University of Pará (UFPA). She was a Research Student at the University of Tokyo, at the Graduate School of Interdisciplinary Information Studies. Also, with experience in Intangible Cultural Heritage and Exhibition Practices, worked as a Professor in the Museology Baccalaureate Course at UFPA, in Intangible Cultural Heritage Management at Brazil's National Institute of Historical and Artistic Heritage, along with experiences in different museums and art practices in the Amazon region of Brazil. Recently, in 2023, her paper "Brazil's National Museum and ICT Strategies: aftermath of the Fire and the Reconstruction Processes" was awarded the Student Paper Award from NBTC at the 16th ITS Asia-Pacific in Bangkok, Thailand.

# Cross-Domain Curatorial Dialogue and Interaction, and the Integration of Multiculturalism: A Case Study of Digital Interactive Exhibitions in Multi-Museum Collaboration

Ruen-Ya Yu, Shao-Chun Wu

National Palace Museum, Taipei

Taiwan

## Abstract

This study examines the integration of digital technology in curatorial practices through the “Imaginary Taiwan” exhibition in 2020. It illustrates how digital technology can facilitate the unified presentation of diverse perspectives from multiple museums, foster a cross-disciplinary approach, and enhance multi-layered archival interpretation, thereby transforming the exhibition into a progressive and adaptable entity.

The article is divided into three sections. In the first, it brings attention to the organization of the “Imaginary Taiwan” exhibition by several Taiwan museums, highlighting the effective utilization of digital platforms, including video meetings and cloud-based collaborative writing software, during its initial phases. This integration maintained a coherent curatorial discourse while respecting each museum’s subjectivity and promoting efficient resource management and collaboration.

The second section discusses how “Imaginary Taiwan” used digital technology to make the exhibition’s content flexible and capable of offering audiences a variety of interactive experiences. It also showcases complex academic theories through interactive displays, overcoming the limitations of lacking physical artifacts. Moreover, digital technologies were crucial post-exhibition, enabling the deconstruction and reconfiguration of the exhibit for future touring.

The third section analyzes how the utilization of digital technology across various stages, from planning to execution and adaptation, serves to emphasize its significance in modern curatorial practice. It supports continuity and innovation in exhibitions, while also enhancing the ability for ongoing reinterpretation. The “Imaginary Taiwan” exhibition exemplifies the dynamic adaptability of contemporary exhibitions across different museum environments, thereby highlighting their evolution into responsive cultural organisms.

**Keywords:** digital exhibition, curatorial practices, museum collaboration, digital interactive installation



## Introduction

In recent years, digital technology has exerted a profound influence on various cultural and artistic domains such as theaters, exhibitions, and cinemas. By reinterpreting culture, art, and historical sources, it has enabled the creation of interdisciplinary virtual environments. This study delves into the transformative power of digital technology in curatorial practices, using the groundbreaking 2020 “Imaginary Taiwan” exhibition as a focal point. In an era where museums must evolve to engage diverse audiences, this exhibition showcased how digital tools can seamlessly unite multiple institutions and disciplines. Through innovative use of video conferencing, cloud-based collaboration, and interactive digital displays, “Imaginary Taiwan” broke traditional boundaries, offering dynamic, multi-layered experiences to its audiences. By making complex theories accessible and allowing the exhibition to be reshaped for future tours, this case study illuminates how digital technology is reshaping the future of museums, turning exhibitions into ever-evolving cultural narratives.

## Diversified and integrated cross-domain curation

### 1. The role of digital technology in contemporary exhibitions

With the rapid advancements in digital technology in terms of performance, cost, and ease of use, the landscape of museum exhibitions is undergoing significant transformation. Specifically, digital technology has altered curatorial practices in two primary aspects. First, visitors no longer engage with exhibitions solely through visual observation but increasingly interact with various forms of digital media. Second, curators themselves must now operate a range of digital tools, such as video conferencing and cloud-based collaborative writing platforms, and perform various digitization tasks, such as 3D modeling or gigapixel scanning of collections. Additionally, they are tasked with conceptualizing interactive designs. These two aspects are interrelated, with each influencing the other.

Under the impact of COVID-19, museums faced unprecedented challenges, including lockdowns that prevented curators from engaging in in-person discussions and collaborations, while visitors were required to experience exhibitions in a touchless manner (Dasgupta, 2021). For example, the National Palace Museum (NPM) began planning the “Imaginary Taiwan” digital exhibition between 2020 and 2021. This exhibition aimed to combine the collections of multiple museums, including the NPM, National Taiwan Museum, National Museum of Taiwan History, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Shung Ye Museum of Formosan Aborigines, and the Anthropology Museum of National Taiwan University. The exhibition intended to present the records, artifacts,

and remnants left by the diverse groups of people who intersected throughout Taiwan’s history, highlighting the interactions, conflicts, and cultural exchanges of various eras.

To enhance visitor experience, the exhibition sought to incorporate diverse digital media. However, due to the impact of COVID-19 and the need to coordinate with seven or more collaborating museums, traditional curatorial practices, such as holding multiple in-person meetings, were abandoned. Instead, the curators extensively employed video conferencing to discuss curatorial concepts and select items for the exhibition. Additionally, cloud-based collaborative writing software were used to share and draft curatorial ideas and detailed exhibition descriptions. To facilitate the design of digital experience installations, the NPM simultaneously initiated high-resolution gigapixel photography, 3D modeling, and 8K video recording of the artifacts, laying the groundwork for the digital elements of the exhibition.

### (1) Curating practice of multiple story lines

Specifically, during the curatorial process of the “Imaginary Taiwan” digital exhibition, aside from an in-person discussion with representatives from several museums, including the National Taiwan Museum, during the early stage of planning in 2019, the remaining curatorial content was largely shaped through video conferencing. Curators from museums primarily used Google Meet for video discussions. They also collaborated using shared cloud documents, where the gradually developing main themes and sub-themes of the exhibition were outlined. Curators from each museum could not only express their opinions during video meetings but also edit and refine these shared documents, allowing all participants to see modifications in real-time and provide feedback on each other’s input.

This curatorial approach offered two significant advantages. First, it overcame the challenge of not being able to hold face-to-face discussions due to COVID-19. Second, it was particularly beneficial for the “Imaginary Taiwan” exhibition, which featured multiple perspectives and a wide range of collections. The collaborative nature of the cloud-based documents enabled curators with differing viewpoints to express their thoughts, review others’ perspectives, and reflect on or revise their own ideas after receiving feedback from their peers. Through this multi-directional interaction, the main theme of the exhibition gradually took shape. In this sense, the cloud collaboration tool created a platform for generating multi-perspective curatorial texts. Combined with video conferencing, this approach proved especially suitable for an exhibition like “Imaginary Taiwan” which involved collaboration across multiple museums and required the interpretation of the subject matter from various viewpoints.



Figure 1. illustrates the curatorial team's use of video conferencing and cloud-based collaborative writing. Photo courtesy of Office of Digital Information Services

## (2) Preparation of digital materials for exhibition

In addition to utilizing cloud-based collaborative writing to develop the exhibition's multiple narrative threads and diverse interpretative angles, the "Imaginary Taiwan" exhibition will also employ digital media as its primary presentation mode. On the one hand, the curatorial team reviewed whether the selected artifacts from each collaborating museum had already been digitized based on the exhibition's selections. On the other hand, for artifacts that were chosen for the exhibition but had not yet undergone digitization, the NPM worked closely with other museums to carry out advanced digitization processes. These included gigapixel photography, 3D modeling, and 8K video recording, tailored to the characteristics of the selected artifacts.

Since the "Imaginary Taiwan" exhibition is a collaborative effort between the NPM and six other museums, the selected pieces primarily come from the collections of these partner museums. If advanced digitization processes, such as gigapixel photography or 3D modeling, were required, coordination between the NPM and the collaborating museums was necessary. After discussions, an initial decision was made that each museum could independently select 30 works for gigapixel photography, 10 three-dimensional artifacts for 3D scanning and modeling, and 3 items for 8K video recording. If a museum was unable to fully utilize its allotted quota due to the characteristics of its artifacts, it could transfer the remaining capacity to other partner museums. The digitization outcomes of this project, specially conducted for the "Imaginary Taiwan" exhibition, will not only be used in this digital exhibition but also for a separate, fully online exhibition with the same title but a different thematic focus (Wu, 2024). This dual use of the same digitized collection will maximize the value and utility of the digitization efforts.

## 2. Digital technology transforms exhibitions into an organic whole

In summary, the curatorial practices of the "Imaginary Taiwan" exhibition demonstrate how the NPM, in collaboration with other museums, employed digital technologies such as online video conferencing and cloud-based collaborative writing to develop a multi-directional text. This allowed for the shaping of an exhibition that can be interpreted from diverse perspectives and structured around multiple narrative threads. Concurrently, the curatorial team selected artifacts based on the developing curatorial text and prepared them through advanced digitization processes, including gigapixel photography and 3D scanning, to provide a foundation for interactive and digital experience design.

These digitized materials will be utilized in a variety of experiential designs, including projection, motion-based interaction, mechanical light sculptures, immersive theaters, videos, and augmented reality (AR), thereby transforming the collaborative efforts in cloud-based writing into a digital exhibition that audiences can directly engage with. This process illustrates how digital technology not only changes the ways in which audiences experience and engage with exhibitions but also transforms the curatorial discussion process from a traditionally linear and uni-directional approach into a more flexible and multidirectional one. As a result, the entire exhibition process—from thematic content discussions, artifact digitization, and experience design, to audience participation—becomes highly adaptable, with each stage influencing the others. This creates an interconnected, dynamic system.

## The Blending of Cultural Diversity and Digital Exhibition

"Imaginary Taiwan" is Taiwan's first exhibition to digitally link various types of museums. It presents artifacts from different eras and ethnic groups through the anthropological concept of "cultural hybridity" and digital display techniques, evoking impressions of "people" as encountered in everyday life. The exhibition centered around two key themes: the "outsider's gaze" and "local agency." By featuring maps, landscapes, and local products, the exhibition explores imperial exploration and governance of Taiwan, while rethinking the categorization of the Taiwan's ethnic groups. It encourages reflection on the relationships between diverse groups in Taiwanese society, opening opportunities for contemporary multicultural dialogue.

In terms of exhibition strategy, the curatorial team employs a range of research methods, including the investigation of historical documents, the study of artifacts, and field surveys, to analyze the complex anthropological concept of "cultural hybridity" and related historical concepts. By

leveraging advanced technologies, such as 5G applications, mechanical interactive installations, and augmented reality, the exhibition is transformed into easily comprehensible digital content, which can be divided into the following three types:

### 1. Informative type device

The informative digital installations aim to translate complex academic theories into dynamic visuals that deconstruct the original appearance of cultural history. For example, “The Intersecting of Peoples” section illustrates how rulers of different periods classified people into groups. These classifications, like a puzzle, were constantly disrupted and reassembled by factors such as population movement and intermarriage. This section focuses on the 18th-century Anli tribal leader Pan Dun-Zai, using artifacts from the National Taiwan Museum such as Portrait of Chief Ton-a of the An-li Village, Pazeh Tribe and Leisure Painting of Prime Headman Dun-Zai to present his multifaceted image as both a tribal leader and an official of the Qing Empire. This approach shows how minority groups lived in the “gaps” or “overlaps” created by historical changes.



Figure 2. The video exhibits “The Two Faces of Pan Dun-Zai”. Photo courtesy of Office of Digital Information Services, NPM

### 2. Interactive type device

“Imaginary Taiwan” aims to use digital technology to facilitate the interpretation of historical artifacts and to increase visitors’ willingness to engage physically and sensorially. The exhibition invites the public to explore the historical and contemporary experiences of the people of Taiwan, from ancient times through the lens of historical outsiders to modern issues such as indigenous cultural revival and migrant worker rights.

For example, in the “Cultural Hybridity” section, the curatorial team focuses on the cultural products resulting from the fusion of different ethnic groups, highlighting the diverse cultural imaginations of these groups. This part of the exhibition showcases the unique characteristics of the Beigang Chao-Tian Temple in Yunlin, using a point cloud virtual space that closely resembles the original architecture, enhanced with temple decorations and video documentation. Visitors can immerse themselves in the Mazu worship practices of the Taiwanese people at different times. The unique visual presentation of point cloud data gives visitors the feeling of moving freely through the temple. In addition, 720-degree panoramic views are integrated into the point cloud space in the San Chuan Hall and Main Hall sections of the temple to provide a more realistic experience.

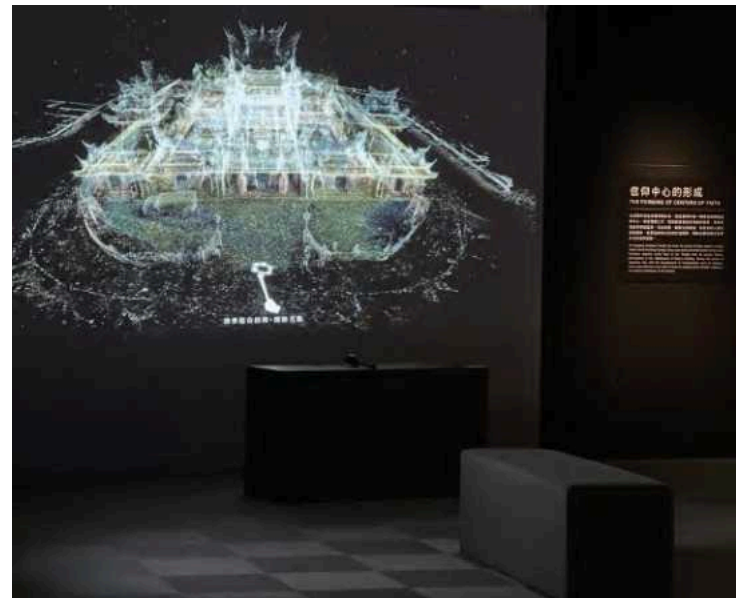


Figure 3. The digital exhibits “Beigang Chao-Tian Temple”. Photo courtesy of Office of Digital Information Services, NPM.

### 3. Immersive type device

In recent years, immersive exhibitions focused on light and shadow effects have become a popular choice for exhibition design in museums and cultural venues. In fact, although digital immersive exhibitions have only recently emerged as a phenomenon in the exhibition world, cultural venues have been experimenting with digital technologies to create immersive experiences since the 1990s (Kelomees, Jansen and Hoppu, 2023). It was only in the last decade, after digital artis such as Teamlab developed the aesthetic forms of immersive art exhibitions and explored feasible business models, along with the reduction of technology costs and the discovery of ways to integrate cultural content through narrative or thematic means compatible with museum ideologies, that immersive exhibitions became a viable option for attracting audience attention in museums (McGovern, 2019).



The curatorial team of the “Imaginary Taiwan” believed that since the exhibition incorporates the collections of at least seven different museums and presents content from multiple perspectives and narratives, using immersive theater to project and blend content from diverse museums, with changing sequences and rotations, would best showcase the exhibition’s diverse thematic characteristics. Furthermore, this approach would help attract audiences and leave lasting impressions of the exhibition.

The immersive theater features a cubic projection space where seven productions are screened. It aims to showcase the cultural significance of the museum’s collections while providing a fully immersive experience for contemporary audiences. By reinterpreting ancient traditions through modern digital media, it offers a fresh perspective on appreciating these works. The immersive theater employs techniques for image processing that build on existing research to enhance visual presentation. As Oliver Grau defines immersive spaces, “These images integrate the audience into a unified 360-degree illusory space where time and space merge” (Oliver, 2003). The theater reinterprets artifacts from different museums through the reassembly and segmentation of images on projection screens, incorporating perspective and depth to generate a virtual realm within the physical environment, thereby delivering a profound sense of presence to viewers.

### Reassemble Glocalization: Practice “Digital Touring Exhibition”

Following the opening of “Imaginary Taiwan,” the innovative model of cross-museum collaboration and digital exhibition technology has attracted considerable public interest. The distinctive quality of digital exhibitions lies in their capacity to “reconfigure” digital exhibits, reorganizing their constituent parts, modifying the exhibition narrative, and incorporating local elements, before presenting them as a novel exhibit in a different venue. To illustrate, in 2022, NPM collaborated with the Taiwan Hakka Culture Development Center to extend the “Imaginary Taiwan” project by incorporating materials from the Hakka culture of Miaoli and Pingtung’s Liudui region, thereby inaugurating the “Digital Touring Exhibition.”

This approach highlights a significant trend in “exhibition localization,” where museums increasingly focus on embedding local historical and cultural contexts. By aligning exhibitions with regional narratives, this strategy not only resonates with local audiences but also deepens the understanding of regional history and identity. The “Imaginary Taiwan” digital tour at the Miaoli Tanglo Taiwan Hakka Museum exemplifies this trend, demonstrating how localized adaptations can enhance the relevance and impact of an exhibition.

The exhibition itself features two principal highlights. Firstly, it incorporates Hakka cultural content, utilizing advanced digital display techniques to present heritage in a more diverse manner to contemporary Taiwanese audiences. For example, the “Map of Taiwan, Qing Dynasty” projection device, originally designed to showcase pivotal locations in central Taiwan, has been adapted to include elements of Hakka culture. This modification illustrates the evolution of place names in 25 villages from Taoyuan to Yunlin, providing viewers with a unique “Hakka perspective” on Taiwan’s history.

The second highlight concerns the modular nature of digital tours. This feature allows curatorial teams to continuously adapt the exhibition narrative and incorporate localized elements to meet various themes and institutional needs. For instance, the original Augmented Reality (AR) exhibit in “Imaginary Taiwan” combined works by renowned early 20th-century Taiwanese artists with historical maps and photographs, showcasing how these artists depicted their homeland under colonial rule. In contrast, the Hakka Cultural Development Center’s digital touring exhibition repurposed the AR devices to focus on the history of the Chuhuangkeng Oil Field and Hakka settlements in Miaoli, using historical photos and maps.



Figure 4. The augmented reality devices in the exhibition “Outsider’s Gaze at Taiwan’s Landscape and Products”. Photo courtesy of Office of Digital Information Services, NPM.

Thus, the original “Imaginary Taiwan” serves as the exhibition’s “core,” with its digital content being continuously updated and tailored to suit future exhibitions and the specific needs of collaborating institutions.

### CONCLUSION

The “Imaginary Taiwan” exhibition represents a significant advancement, evolving into an “cultural organism” with the capacity for continuous adaptation and transformation. In the initial stages of the project, the use of cloud-based



collaborative writing software enabled curators from various regions and institutions to share their daily research and collection resources in real time. This collaboration formed the foundation of the exhibition. The collective input of these curators led to the creation of an exhibition narrative centered on the cultural hybridity of Taiwan, showcasing the unique features of each institution while integrating their collections into a unified story.

Moreover, the digital nature of "Imaginary Taiwan" allows it to align with a wide range of inter-museum exhibitions, facilitating ongoing evolution through digital touring exhibitions. The use of digital techniques offers innovative ways to display and interact with intricate historical materials and artifacts that are not easily transportable. Additionally, the exhibition's adaptability enables the incorporation of new content at any time, providing a fresh approach to inter-museum collaborations in Taiwan.

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## BIOGRAPHY

**Ruen-Ya Yu** is Assistant Research Fellow, the Office of Digital Information Services at the National Palace Museum.

"I am currently working as an Assistant Research Fellow in the Office of Digital Information Services at the National Palace Museum.

My research focuses on modern East Asian art history, Taiwanese art history, and digital curation. Recently, I have been interested in the application of digital archives in museums and how traditional art history can collaborate with emerging digital technologies to facilitate exhibitions, revitalization, and interpretation."

**Shao-Chun Wu** is Researcher Fellow, the Office of Digital Information Services at the National Palace Museum.

"I am currently a Researcher Fellow in the Office of Digital Information Services at the National Palace Museum. I have previously served as an Associate Research Fellow and Section Chief in the same department and have worked in university libraries. Over the years at the National Palace Museum, I have managed various tasks including open data, digital archive, digital education promotion, digital exhibitions, digital content, academia-industry collaboration, and project management for technology plans.

I have also served as an adjunct lecturer at National Taiwan University of Arts, Fu Jen Catholic University, and National Chengchi University. My academic specialties include the application of technology in museums, information organization, electronic publishing, digital learning, and library and information science"

# Sub-theme #3 – MUSEUM TECHNIQUES & Sustainability

JINGYUAN LING

CECILIE RØRSTAD, AUDHILD GREGORIUSDOTTER ROTEVATN

YASAMAN ESMALI, KIMIA AMINI

TEEMU KIRJONEN

# Sustainable Futures: Innovations in Museum Architecture, Perspective of Asia and Europe

Jingyuan, LING

Université Paris1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris

France

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## Abstract

As global and local pressures transformation, in the cultural sector, the sustainability is increasing emphasised. Museum architecture, as where the important cultural institution situated, is making efforts to integrate the sustainability concern into the practice. This paper examines how approaches in museum architecture, particularly in Asia and Europe, contribute to sustainability goals. It explores adaptive reuse and new construction strategies, as well as the potential of vernacular techniques and materials. Through analysis of cases from both regions, this study highlights how museum architecture is addressing environmental and social challenges for a sustainable futures. The research offers actionable insights for professionals seeking to balance cultural preservation with sustainability concerns.

**Keywords:** Museum, Museum architecture, Sustainability, SDGs, Sustainable development

## INTRODUCTION

In the context of global crises, “the great transition” accompanied with new values that emphasize quality of life, human solidarity and environmental concern, where the “new sustainability paradigm” (Raskin et al. 2002) is considered as the route for transformation. The concept of “sustainable development” has been introduced and refined since being mentioned in the publications of international organizations specificized in environment issues<sup>1</sup>. However, it is not until “the three pillars” - economic, social and environmental being integrated to global agenda (2030 Agenda, 2015) and concretised as SDGs (UN, 2015) that the aspects other than environmental begin to draw attention.

Since culture has been affirmed as an “enabler of sustainability” (UNESCO, 2013), museums, as cultural institutions, are positioned to address and enhance sustainability<sup>2</sup> by not only supporting climate action but also fostering inclusivity<sup>3</sup> (ICOM). The establishment of a Working Group on Sustainability in 2018 marks an important step of institutionalisation of the sustainable initiatives in museum sector. The 2023 International Museum Day theme of “Museums, Sustainability and Well-being” highlight and transfer the initiatives to a border public.

In previous research, (Garthe, 2023) provides guidance on implementing changes for sustainability across different aspects of museum operations. (Babic, 2024) explored contemporary practices in museum management, demonstrating how strategic vision and effective leadership foster the sustainability. (Legget and Labrador, 2024) observed the ambiguity of the definition of “museum sustainability” and proposed “Holistic Approaches”. While the add-up of “the 4<sup>th</sup> pillar”<sup>4</sup> is still questionable, this article adopts the holistic approach and set museum architecture as the scope for achieving various sustainable goals. Past studies on museum architecture often concentrated on allegorical interpretations (e.g. by architectural historians in France) or architectural design with a focus on spatial syntax (e.g. by architecture and urban morphologist in UK), while architectural engineers tend to engage in technical analyses of specific technologies, which can be challenging for museum professionals (the majority are with archaeology, history or art history background) to grasp. There is a research gap in bringing innovations in architecture to museum architecture practice which could inform the decision making. Additionally, there is a lack of cross-perspective analysis between Europe and Asia.

Europe, being a pioneer in museum architecture, and Asia, experiencing a museum boom, offer complementary insights that can significantly contribute to current research and practice.

## PART 1

### ADAPTIVE REUSE - PRIMITIVE FORM OF SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE

The adaptive reuse of palaces, mansions or castles as museums is deeply embedded in the history of museum, tracing back to the origins of the museum concept and is recognized as approach to preserve historic monuments<sup>5</sup>. “Repairing and restoring existing buildings for new or continued use”<sup>6</sup> offers an alternative solution when economic constraints limit new construction. The sites, as “places of memory” (Nora, 1992) that carries cultural connotation is well accepted for the emplacement of museum in both Europe and Asia.

In contemporary museum architecture, several treatments (*traitement*) have been observed: one involves constructing new *edifice* adjacent to historic buildings, creating a cohesive complex. For instance, Suzhou Museum, by I.M. Pei, emplaced next to Zhong Wang Fu, harmonizes modern and traditional elements to fulfil contemporary functions while keeping link to historical context. Another is adding new elements or modifying existing parts of historic buildings to meet service delivery needs. The exterior-mounted elevator at Museo Gustavo de Maeztu, with its translucent volume, contrasts with the solid brick facade, create a dialogue with the historic structure. This integration of the previously unused courtyard into the exhibition spaces, and connexion of various floors, enhanced the circulation and accessibility without deranging the historic structure. Similarly, Castelvecchio Museum in Verona, by Carlo Scarpa, incorporates modern elements into the medieval castle to create spaces negotiate the past and today. These strategies—installation, insertion, and intervention (Fisher-Gewirtzman, 2016)—extend the life of historic buildings.

Past adaptive reuse practices have focused on transforming historical monuments into buildings that meet contemporary needs for conservation and exhibition, which can be seen as a **primitive form of sustainable practice**. However, in the face of global changes and the evolving definition of museums, integrating environmental and social equity concerns into adaptive reuse calls for innovative approaches. Previous attempts include the implementation of thermal insulation, energy efficiency system for lower carbon footprint, or the deployment

<sup>1</sup> Noted by author: international organizations such as IUCN, WWF, UNEP

<sup>2</sup> <https://icom.museum/en/research/sustainability-and-local-development/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://icom.museum/en/news/international-museum-day-2023-theme/>

<sup>4</sup> Some scholars propose culture as the 4<sup>th</sup> pillar of sustainability

<sup>5</sup> by Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879)

<sup>6</sup> Plevoets, B., & Van Cleempoel, K. (2019). *Adaptive Reuse of the Built Heritage: Concepts and Cases of an Emerging Discipline* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315161440>



of barrier-free facilities such as ramps and elevators, wheelchairs friendly restrooms, adjustable furniture, signage with large, readable fonts and high-contrast colors for better accessibility. Several EU-funded projects, including 3ENCULT and RIBuild, explore both passive and active solutions in the retrofit. European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage and collaborative efforts such as IEA-SHC Task 59 advance knowledge sharing and innovative practices for energy retrofiting<sup>7</sup>.

### **"BUILDINGS CAN BE A LIMITATION TO ACHIEVING SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES"**

Balancing "the conservation of a building's tangible and intangible features" with "the transformative actions" presents "multi-scalar and multi-faceted calsh"<sup>8</sup> (Bogoni & Montanari, 2023). From the perspective of museum practitioners, historic buildings often limit the achievement of sustainable objectives<sup>9</sup>. Christopher Garthe notes that many European museums, housed in old buildings, struggle with adapting to environmental standards. In Germany, for example, museums managed by city and state authorities often face restrictions on transformative changes<sup>10</sup>. Nanna Løkka highlights similar challenges in Norway, where the Planning and Building Act encourages cross-sectoral collaboration, but the cultural sector has limited experience with such initiatives, especially at the state level<sup>11</sup>.

These issues are not confined to Europe, historic buildings in brick-and-timber structure in Asia, for example in China frequently pose hurdles for achieving sustainability. Not designed with modern standards or technologies in mind, issues such as inadequate load-bearing capacities, ceiling heights, and floor plans that hinder the installation of climate-controlled storage or conservation equipment is well presented. Limited spaces lead to overcrowded reserves. Incorporating ramps and elevators for accessibility is also constrained. In addition, museums are often city or state-owned, thus renovations should be approved by authorities. Proprietors are frequently reluctant to permit extensive modifications, especially those altering the exterior or significant architectural features of protected

historic structures. When "Undoing Conflict in Museums"<sup>12</sup> be a great challenge, it is moment to resort to solutions outside the museums.

### **EUROPE: EXTERNALISATION – ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION FOR SUSTAINABILITY**

Since the Burra Charter (1979) legitimated the adaptive reuse of heritage buildings, more and more practices have taken place. Particularly in the post-industrial era, as cities seek to regenerate urban spaces while preserving their collective memories, the adaptive reuse of industrial heritage is becoming a significant trend, with buildings such as train stations, factories, and warehouses being transformed into museums. Beyond the conversion into museums, adaptive reuse is also applies to museum facilities for storage and conservation. In 2021, Strasbourg inaugurated its museum study and conservation center in the former Union Sociale building, a food storage space of the Coop (Union of Alsatian Cooperators) built in 1954. Led by Alexandre Chemetoff, this rehabilitation exemplifies how adaptive reuse can align with conservation needs, extending the lifecycle of existing structures.

Externalising museum storage to purpose-adapted facilities show significant advantage, compared to historic buildings. Such facilities can be designed with advanced environmental controls, secure shelving, and robust security measures that are often challenging to implement in heritage structures. This approach ensures optimal preservation conditions, including stable temperature and humidity, which are crucial for maintaining artifacts but difficult to achieve in older buildings. Additionally, relocating collections to external sites maximizes space within the historic museum, allowing for more effective use of the building for exhibitions and public activities, and alleviates overcrowding. This strategy provides flexibility, thus museums could expand their collections and adapt to growing needs without the constraints of modifying or expanding the historic structure itself.

## **PART 2**

### **NEW CONSTRUCTION SUSTAINABILITY FROM SETUP**

Given that the construction sector is the largest emitter of greenhouse gases, responsible for a staggering 37% of global emissions, during which the production and use of materials such as cement, steel, and aluminium have a significant carbon footprint<sup>13</sup> (UNEP, 2023). Detractors

<sup>7</sup> OVERVIEW | Energy Efficiency in Historic Buildings: A State of the Art | BUILD UP, <https://build-up.ec.europa.eu/en/resources-and-tools/articles/overview-energy-efficiency-historic-buildings-state-art>, consulted in 2024

<sup>8</sup> Bogoni, B & Montanari, E (2023). Posters Exploiting conflicts in designing Museums in heritage buildings: Ongoing experimentations In the portuguese area, in Proceeding of ICAMT 49TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2023 Undoing conflict in museums: materiality and meaning of museum architecture and exhibition design. ISBN 978-989-9082-99-1

<sup>9</sup> Noted by author, according to interviews with the museum professionals both in Europe and Asia.

<sup>10</sup> Noted by author, in the Q&A of an online talk on cultural sustainability organised by Professor of Museology, Ane Hejlskov Larsen on August 26

<sup>11</sup> økka, N. (2023). Towards a Green and Sustainable Cultural Sector A Status Report from Norway. p16.

<sup>12</sup> Theme of ICAMT 49th International Conference 2023 <https://icamt.mini.icom.museum/icamt-49th-annual-conference-porto-2023/>

<sup>13</sup> UNEP (2023), Building Materials and the Climate: Constructing a New Future, United Nations Environment Programme and Yale Center for Ecosystems + Architecture, *Building Materials and the Climate: Constructing a New Future*. [online]. Available: <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/43293;jsessionid=FA19BB59AED8AD-398C4E4181918ACC07>. [Accessed: Aug. 26, 2024]

have reason to question the necessity of new construction for “useless objects” while the culture promoters propose “the urgent need to lead a ‘green revolution’ in architecture”<sup>14</sup>. In the practice, the transformation is ongoing: new construction permits an incorporation of sustainability from the setup, rather than struggling the modifications during the museum operation. When energy efficiency, eco-friendly materials, and minimal environmental impact is integrated in the museum its self’s practice, not only direct sustainability goals are achieved, but also indirect goals such as quality education relevant to sustainable futures is reinforced.

Museum of tomorrow in Rio de Janeiro with its systems of solar energy control and water recycling systems has provided an example of sustainable museum architecture. Developments in architecture and construction, such as generative design, digital twins, daylighting & thermodynamic modelling, 3D-printing, the modular construction and BIM (Building Information Modelling)<sup>15</sup>, enable precise planning, resource optimization, and waste reduction, suggest that building in a more sustainable, cost-efficient manner is increasingly feasible.

### “BUILDINGS COULD BE AN OPPORTUNITY TO ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE OBJECTIVES”

Sustainability isn’t just about linking the past to the present, but also the present to the future. World Expo Museum in Shanghai (WEM) in Shanghai, adopt passive energy-saving strategies, such as optimizing outdoor wind conditions, utilizing natural ventilation, and incorporating innovative basement lighting design, all aligned with a green-first design approach. These are complemented by insulation technologies for the building envelope, rainwater harvesting systems, permeable surfaces, rooftop greening, water-saving irrigation techniques, and intelligent building systems. In term of social inclusivity, the project includes barrier-free design elements. Accessible pedestrian walkways and public green space entrances are equipped with tactile paving for the visually impaired. The main entrance has a ramp with a slope of less than 1:50. Accessible doors, including swing, automatic, and sliding types, are installed at key locations such as the main entrance, exhibition hall entrances, auditorium, and passageways.

WEM adopt life-cycle Building Information Modeling (BIM), which enhances sustainability by optimizing resource use and energy efficiency. Through performance simulations, BIM allows architects and engineers to analyze factors like lighting, thermal conditions, and airflow, ensuring designs maximize energy conservation. BIM enabled

precise material usage, reducing waste during construction and improving long-term operational efficiency. The lifecycle management facilitate the following maintenance after construction, reducing energy consumption in the building’s operation.

During the 2022 epidemic, Shanghai World Expo Museum (WEM) was repurposed as a makeshift hospital. In the post-covid era, it is encouraged to take future adaptive use in mind, particular to urgent community needs. **Setup for future adaptability** is a proactive approach that ensures structures and systems can easily accommodate change over time. This is a possible response in a world that’s constantly evolving due to technological advancements, societal shifts, and environmental challenges.

### ASIA: ARCHI-TECH & VERNACULAR REVIVAL

In addition to arch-tech, there’s a tendency for vernacular revival in Asia, where the construction industry has been dominated by concrete for half a century. **Bamboo, for instance, is a material with great potential for sustainable museum architecture.** The highlight of M+ Museum’s sustainability efforts is its extensive use of engineered bamboo — a testament to bamboo’s innovation in environmentally friendly construction materials. Engineered bamboo materials are featured throughout the building, including bamboo flooring, wall cladding, ceilings, and custom joinery. Notably, specially crafted batten ceilings, staircases, balustrades, and handrails celebrate the versatility and aesthetic appeal of bamboo.

Earth materials, as seen in projects like Ningbo Museum and Lin’An Museum by Wang Shu, have also demonstrated their potential in sustainability. Emerging materials like salt, in Dubai’s “Wetland” project, released at the Venice Biennale of Architecture, explores ways to create construction materials using brine waste from seawater desalination plants, to be verified by the application. Contemporary museum designs, such as the Suzhou Museum New Site, revive the vernacular natural ventilation to reduce energy use offers an example in technique revival.

The revival of vernacular architectural materials and techniques can significantly contribute to both environmental sustainability and cultural preservation. By integrating traditional methods and locally sourced, eco-friendly materials, such as bamboo and earthen construction, modern architecture can reduce its carbon footprint while maintaining a connection to cultural heritage. This approach not only promotes environmental resilience but also enhances the cultural significance of buildings, ensuring that traditional wisdom is preserved and adapted for contemporary use. Such practices demonstrate how architecture can serve as a bridge between the past and a more sustainable future.

<sup>14</sup> Audrey Azoulay (2024), Editorial, in The UNESCO Courier January-March 2024, Future Building: Towards a Sustainable Habitat

<sup>15</sup> Sawant, S (2024) The archi-tech generation, in The UNESCO Courier January-March 2024, Future Building: Towards a Sustainable Habitat

## CONCLUSION

Museum architecture at the confluence of cultural preservation and sustainability—both environmental and social, for the response to the challenges. Whether through the adaptive reuse of historic buildings or the new construction with sustainability concern, museums have the potential to play an essential role in the global transition toward ecological and cultural resilience. Europe's long-standing of architecture for museum adaptive reuse provides primitive example of sustainability, while Asia's recent efforts in museum construction offers forward-thinking solutions in sustainability. In Europe, where many museums are housed in historic buildings, sustainability efforts often focus on retrofitting existing structures with energy-efficient systems while preserving their architectural heritage. Asia's rapid urbanization has allowed for sustainability to be integrated from the setup in new museum constructions, incorporating green building initiatives such as passive solar design, rainwater harvesting, and smart technologies.

The ancient Chinese principle of “因地制宜” (yin di zhi yi), which advocates for solutions tailored to the specific characteristics of an environment, underscores the importance of context-sensitive approaches in both regions. This principal is crucial as museums work to balance the demands of energy efficiency (SDG 7), innovative infrastructure (SDG 9), and waste reduction (SDG 12), while fostering inclusive spaces (SDG 10) that contribute to sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11) and promote climate action (SDG 13).

This paper is part of a broader research examining the three pillars of sustainable development—social, environmental, and economic—within the cultural sector. As the continuity of my previous presentation, “Making Cultural Infrastructure in Non-Metropolitan Areas More Inclusive: Physical and Digital Solutions,” delivered at the 2024 International Conference on Sustainable Development, which was focus on social inclusivity, this paper explores sustainability in museum architecture in a more holistic way, while with emphasis on environmental aspects such as energy-saving technologies, and eco-friendly materials. As museums continue to evolve, museum architecture is in the dynamic to response to changes.

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## BIOGRAPHY

**Jingyuan Ling** is a Ph.D. candidate with a Master's degree in History of Architecture from the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. Her master research centers on the museum history and museum architecture of the 30s in Boulogne-Billancourt, situated in the Parisian periphery, exploring its significance within urban and regional contexts. Her research interests encompass Museology and Heritage Studies, focusing on Museum Sustainability and Heritage Resilience. She is particularly interested in history and dynamics of cultural institutions in urban development, especially in peripheral areas and towns. Actively engaged in professional museum associations, she has presented papers at museology conferences. She is the curator of an architecture photography exhibition *Antes & Delante* in 2023.

## Landscapes on display

Cecilie Rørstad & Audhild Gregoriusdotter Rotevatn

The Viti foundation, Ålesund  
Norway

### Abstract

The Brudavolltunet museum is an authentic, traditional farmstead. It consists of farm buildings (the oldest dating back to 1622) and 10,000 m<sup>2</sup> of surrounding farmland. A living museum collection and exhibition, the farm is situated in Ørsta in rural Western Norway.

Our method of dissemination links conservation and dissemination to the biological processes in the fields and to the seasonal changes. The method focuses on historical farmland, sustainability and how changing demands and climate change impact this landscape in particular, but also nature and ecosystems in general.

The method represents a different approach towards exhibition design and environmental awareness for museums. It focuses on how a single farm like this can play an important role in developing a more sustainable society. The visitor is invited to connect with the landscape and take part in the processes of cultivating. This can lead to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of natural processes and of the vulnerability of ecosystems. The proliferation of soft rush (*Juncus effusus*) at Brudavolltunet threatens the vulnerable traditional species. Our aim is to reduce its prevalence. The method differs substantially from a traditional museum exhibition, which has limitations when the object of study is a living landscape. There is no need for physical exhibition systems or staged themes. Nature and nature's changes are the nucleus of dissemination and offer a range of solutions to reduce the need for exhibition infrastructure and cut the eco-footprint. The method demands and encourages interdisciplinary approaches involving biology, intangible knowledge, ecology and agriculture.

Our method can be transferred and adapted to other living landscapes and inspire museums throughout the world. To maintain the diversity of species globally, local action is necessary. This is an opportunity for museums, museum visitors and volunteers to play a role.

**Keywords:** Biodiversity, intangible heritage, agriculture, sustainability, IN SITU



Brudavolltunet is a complete and authentic farmstead in Ørsta in Western Norway. The farmstead is now in the ownership of the Viti museum foundation. It was established in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and now comprises seven old timber buildings, one of which is listed. The farmstead is authentic and untouched since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. There is no electricity or running water. Brudavolltunet sits in a picturesque cultural landscape with meadows, pastures and gardens. All of the buildings and surrounding landscape are now a museum – without a single display case. The buildings, history, landscape and objects are all part of our living heritage, and managed accordingly. The seven historical buildings on the farm (farmhouse, annex with brewhouse, storehouse, barn, forge and wheelhouse) are all authentic.

It is rare to see an in situ farmstead serve as a museum. Most open-air museums in Norway and Europe are curated buildings which have been dismantled and moved from their original location to a central museum site before being rebuilt. That is not the case with Brudavolltunet.

The idea of a village museum in Ørsta was first mooted in the local newspaper *Ørsta Avis* on 16 March 1934 (Grøvik, Ivar "Ørsta Bygdemuseumsvalg gjennom 25 år", Volda Trykkeri 1979). Other buildings from Ørsta were moved to Sunnmøre Museum in Ålesund just two years later in 1936. The prevailing trend at the time was to move buildings from the villages to a more central location and then display them in a curated folk museum. Yet many local people were calling for a museum of their own. The Ørsta village museum association was founded in 1951 (Grøvik, 1979). The initial idea was to create a village museum in a suitable premises. Exhibiting an old farmstead in situ was not on the cards at this stage. In 1958 the museum association purchased Brudavolltunet. It presented a petition with 201 signatures in support of the purchase. On 25 April 1958 the local council voted 17-8 in favour of awarding a grant of NOK 35,000. Private individuals donated NOK 18,000 towards the purchase. The museum association would be responsible for managing and maintaining the farmstead (Grøvik, 1979). The buildings were in a dilapidated state. The original idea had been to modernise the farmstead, not return it to its original condition. In 1960 there were plans to install running water in the farmhouse, for example (Grøvik, 1979). In 1963 the museum association staged an exhibition of objects at the old dairy in the centre of Ørsta. On display were items from Brudavolltunet along with other items collected by the association from a wider geographical area. Also exhibited were a model of an old farmstead with 13 buildings, a scene from a mountain pasture with livestock and "trolls and nymphs" (Grøvik, 1979). Even in 1963 the preferred method was to take objects from an original farmstead and display them in a different building accompanied by a curated story linking the buildings and farmstead with folklore from the fairy tales. This is in line with the very tradition of Norwegian open-air museums. Using an original farmstead as an in situ museum was not yet a fully established concept. The museum association was simultaneously working to

restore the original Brudavolltunet. In 1966 the association began holding its meetings at the farmstead (Grøvik, 1979). A proper road was built in 1969, prompting the local farmer's wives association to hold its annual gathering there. The national broadcaster NRK and the regional newspaper *Sunnmørsposten* were also in attendance. More people should come and visit, the participants told the *Sunnmørsposten*. They were promulgating the idea that people should come to the museum rather than the other way around. Only in 1973 did the farmstead officially open to the public. In a monologue written and performed at the opening by Knut J. Myklebust he says "... it is good to come here to the old farmstead ...", "here the fathers with their scythes cut the green grassy banks ... and on these well worn flagstones they have trod: mother, father and many small and big children". Myklebust puts into words the value of being in situ. Such an encounter with the past can be felt both physically and intellectually in this very place. It contrasts with the idea and experience of curated multipurpose open-air museums, where buildings from different places and periods are brought together in a single location, away from their original home. During the 60s there was disagreement within the museum association around adding new buildings. In 1960 the association was offered custody of what was known as the Åmbø house. Many members wanted to move the house to Brudavolltunet, but the majority did not wish to introduce buildings from elsewhere to the farmstead (Grøvik, 1979). The dispute became heated, especially after the last resident, Sigrid Brudevoll, moved out of the farmstead in 1963. During 1964, 1965 and 1966 the issue of the Åmbø house was intensely debated. The house was eventually dismantled and transported to Brudavolltunet, where it was temporarily stored in the barn. Ivar Grøvik writes: "many people felt that if you start moving other old houses to Brudavolltunet, you interfere with the old farmstead." In the end the Åmbø house was rebuilt on a neighbouring farm, where it was used for agritourism.

In 2001 Brudavolltunet was described as a "knowledge bank" (Roald, 2001). Roald continues: "a people who do not preserve their past have no future." The Viti museum foundation took full ownership of Brudavolltunet in 2021.

### Changes in climate, biodiversity and consumption

There are no traditional exhibitions at Brudavolltunet. The cultural landscape is the exhibition. Visitors can explore it with us. What impact do the seasons have on Brudavolltunet, its buildings and flora? We are doing the exact opposite of what a traditional museum does, where objects, buildings and plants are removed from their original context and introduced to a new setting. Brudavolltunet is located in the middle of a busy farming countryside. This allows visitors to compare with their own eyes the past and the present, what is new, what has been lost.

A museum where the exhibitions are not curated with traditional methods, or put in display cases, offers different experiences and maybe new insights for visitors.

There are few remaining working farms in Norway and few people still working in agriculture. This means that only a minority of our visitors have first-hand experience of farming and the biological processes involved in producing food, much less of how we can influence and enable these processes, i.e. applied agronomy. For that reason, our education activities are based on the fundamentals of agronomy. We aim to provide an understanding of why the cultural landscape looks the way it does, why we are growing grass and not other crops, and why this farm and village are part of and impacted by the major global food systems.

The biological processes taking place in large and small ecosystems all over the world are key to preserving biodiversity. A variety of sustainable populations of living organisms – plants, animals and microorganisms – helps make nature and society better prepared to withstand climate change and can also reduce the impact of the changes.

Biological processes are complex, even at a micro level, and a continually evolving field of knowledge. With that in mind, museums such as ours are important for generating engagement with the issue. Engagement is crucial in order to learn and then effect change in patterns of behaviour and established practices that threaten the environment and climate.

Traditional meadows, such as those at Brudavolltunet, are endangered habitats. The biggest threat against these habitats is that meadows are not cultivated using traditional methods or not being cut at all. In a region like Western Norway, where there is ample rainfall, favourable temperatures and rich soil, the land quickly becomes overgrown. This tendency is easily noticeable at Brudavolltunet and the surrounding landscape, too.

The introduction of new species affects the cultural and natural landscape. Spruce does not grow naturally in the region, but over the past century it has been planted across large swathes of land for timber and cellulose production. These plantations and the absence of vegetation once the trees are felled are clearly visible from Brudavolltunet.

Petasites, spruce and acer have all been planted at Brudavolltunet, while the invasive species soft rush and marsh thistle have emerged because of their ability to establish themselves and disperse. They are also displacing the more vulnerable native species.

Farming practices at Brudavolltunet have evolved over its 400-year history. Before the 20<sup>th</sup> century people grew both oats and barley here. The climate in Western Norway is not optimal for growing cereals. Precipitation is too high and temperatures during the growing season too low. Improved trade links at the turn of the century therefore led to more ready access to cereals from other parts of Norway where growing conditions were better. The farmers at Brudavolltunet instead turned to grass and

potatoes. In the past, grass harvests primarily came from untilled or non-arable land on the mountainsides near the farms. These harvests were also gradually reduced. This land is now mostly overgrown by deciduous forest or planted with spruce.

The roofs of the farm buildings are covered with turf and living grasses. This was a common roofing method in Norway in the past. It was inexpensive as people could use local turf on top of a layer of wooden planks which would often have been previously used for cladding or boat-building. Recycled timber can also be seen in traditional stave constructions in Western Norway, a region with limited access to timber for house-building. Different parts of the tree have their unique strengths and properties that make them suitable for different building elements.

Every part of the tree was utilised. The timber was used as a building material and the wood and bark for roofing to create a layer between the rafters and turf. Bark, leaves and branches were also used for animal feed during winter.

### Exhibition method

The museum is continuing to work with local schools to accommodate school children throughout the academic year. Using the museum as a starting point, this allows the pupils to engage with and explore how seasonal variations, the climate and changing patterns of consumption impact the farm, buildings and biodiversity. They are able to try their hand at seasonal chores in the cultural landscape. Such participation helps raise awareness of sustainability and gives them practical knowledge of science, architecture, history and cultural heritage. The children are invited to learn using multiple senses and take an active part in their own learning. They see, do, hear, feel, smell and wonder.

Brudavolltunet represents a living collection in its original setting. There are correlations between the positioning and function of the buildings and the plants and animals both on the farm and in nature.

We invite visitors to explore and discover connections between the climate, landscape, buildings and technical infrastructure and the way in which the past and present climate plays a part.

There is great potential in involving visitors and volunteers in looking after the meadows, gardens and pastures. Such engagement and involvement can be rewarding and meaningful for visitors and volunteers alike. Their contribution is also a major resource for the museum. Facilitating visitor engagement requires a different kind of involvement and knowledge on the part of the museum compared with developing and giving tours of an ordinary museum exhibition.

We organise field tours of the farm throughout the year. Together with our visitors we examine how the different species are developing and what they can tell us about

climatic factors and growing conditions. What steps can be taken to improve the management of the meadow, and how would they impact the species that grow there? This dialogue with visitors is informative for museum staff, too. We respond to questions and hear about personal experiences of meadows, farming and individual species. This can help improve our management and dissemination practices and make even more people engage with the museum. It can raise public awareness of sustainability at a local level and how we can all play a part.

In a broader perspective, the cultural landscape is in constant flux. These changes, both historical and current, occur as a result of human interaction with and in the landscape in question. The cultural landscape at Brudavolltunet is also a good example of interaction between different social classes. When Nils Brudevoll established a garden here as far back as the 1830s, he took his inspiration from the gardens of the urban upper classes. Conversely, the agricultural landscape served as inspiration for upper-class gardens and parklands. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century the farm became a museum, inspired by established national open-air museums. The people behind the museum were visionary and believed it was important for both their contemporaries and future generations to make their cultural heritage available locally.

### Social sustainability

The museum invites visitors to explore the connections between culture and nature, between buildings, the positioning of the buildings relative to each other and to the terrain, building methods, ways of life, crops and use of resources. Brudavolltunet sits there as it always has done, in the middle of a busy agricultural countryside. This authentic living environment allows us to reflect on our own lives in a very different way compared with actively seeking out an ordinary museum building and exhibition. The farmstead plays a role in people's lives simply by existing. They are welcome to explore the relevance of the museum to their own lives. It is a place for slow contemplation, and many people visit the museum numerous times over the course of their lives: as children in kindergarten, together with parents, grandparents and siblings on activity days, as a stopover on holiday, as a meeting place on life's big occasions. Locals use the farmstead as a backdrop to wedding photos. On visiting the farmstead, the modern individual can take one step into an authentic past and reflect on the present and future. It is a quiet place with no wi-fi, lighting or electricity. Nor are the grounds lit up during the dark winter months. This way the museum creates identity and belonging both locally and regionally. The farmstead is open all year round. There are no tickets, no fences. Only the doors to the buildings are locked.

The farm was established in this landscape because it was already an active agricultural community. With large pastures nearby, the site lent itself to livestock. In a regional 16<sup>th</sup> century perspective, it was also possible to

grow cereals in some of the outfields. This far north, with low temperatures and plenty of rainfall during the growing season, the farmers grew barley and oats. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century saw improved access to cereals from elsewhere in Norway and abroad, where growing conditions were better. The availability of cheaper imported grain combined with better machinery and equipment for tilling and harvesting of grass led to the end of cereal-growing in the region. It was replaced by more intensive grass production which was used to feed the livestock indoors during the winter months.

In the past the grass was harvested manually using scythes in the outlying fields, then dried on the ground or on racks before being transported back to the farm by horse and cart or sleigh. This is why the barn has a bridge and doors on both sides. They enabled the horse pulling the large, heavy hay cart to continue straight through the barn after unloading the hay. Anyone who has tried persuading a horse pulling a cart to reverse downhill knows that it is a tricky feat.

By inviting visitors to participate, experience and engage using all their senses, the museum helps to create and promote awareness of sustainability and biodiversity (Frøyland 2010).

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*Cecilie Rørstad* is a conservator in Viti, the regional museum of Sunnmøre in Western Norway. Her work includes research, cultural landscape management and dissemination. Rørstad was project manager for the new main exhibition at Sunnmøre museum "I was here – the voices from Sunnmøre" opened in 2022. She has experience in involving volunteers in the museum's dissemination and the use of reference groups in the development of exhibitions. Dissemination of intangible heritage to different groups of audience is also part of Rørstad's work. Her research interest has a interdisciplinary focus centres around sustainability, biodiversity, intangible heritage, agriculture and to involve audiences in the museums dissemination practices.

Cecilie Rørstad hold a master in Public Administration (MPA). In her master thesis she investigated how different factors influence regional development in the region of Sunnmøre. Rørstad has worked as a researcher and advisor and with volunteers in folkdance- and music on Sunnmøre.

*Audhild Gregoriusdotter Rotevatn* is CEO of Viti Museums in Norway. She is educated as a broadcast journalist and holds an MA in literacy studies.

Rotevatn an award-winning broadcast journalist and editor in national TV and radio and was a board member at Norwegian Broadcasting Cooperation for 8 years. She is currently board member at International Council of Museums Norway and board member at section for management, Norwegian Museums Organization. Before Rotevatn was appointed CEO of Viti Museums, she worked as dean at the Faculty of media and journalism at Volda University College.



# Urban Waste Rethink - Museum, the Community, and Environmental Agency

Yasaman Esmaili, Kimia Amini

Studio Chahar, Tehran

Iran

## Abstract

The Urban Waste Workshop is designed to use the museum as a platform to study, design, and utilize recyclable materials in urban spaces, enhancing cultural, social, and environmental engagement. Originally conducted in Tehran's Sangelaj neighborhood with a focus on shoe production waste, this workshop has proven effective in raising awareness and fostering collaboration among locals, designers, and environmentalists. Building on its success, we are now working to expand this initiative to new urban settings. Utilizing house museums as dynamic platforms, the workshop underscores the potential of these spaces in driving social and environmental activism. While adaptable to various waste materials, the proposed sessions maintain a structured two-day format: the first day dedicated to understanding the materials, context, and history, and brainstorming initial ideas; followed by the second day focused on the making, installation and presentation of creative projects. This expansion aims to tailor the workshop's impact, adapting its core principles to meet local needs and resources.

**Keywords:** Urban Waste Repurposing, Environmental Activism, Sustainable Urban Development, Community Engagement

The Urban Waste Workshop, held in Tehran's historic Sangelaj neighborhood, is an initiative designed to integrate recyclable materials into urban spaces while fostering cultural, social, and environmental engagement. Focused on shoe production waste, the workshop engaged local communities, designers, and environmentalists, transforming waste into creative urban interventions around the Jalal Al-e Ahmad House Museum. This two-day workshop not only raised awareness about waste issues and solved the problem in the following weeks, but also activated this house museum as platforms for sustainability, education, and artistic expression. This article documents the process and outcomes of the workshop, highlighting the potential for using urban waste as a resource for public space transformation around museum spaces.

## Introduction

Urban waste is a growing challenge in cities worldwide, including Tehran. Addressing this issue requires innovative approaches that engage both the community and experts in design and sustainability. The *Jalal House Museum Urban Waste Workshop* was developed to explore the potential of recyclable materials as resources for creating cultural and environmental interventions in urban spaces. The workshop focused on the *Sangelaj* neighborhood, a historic area home to the *Jalal Al-e Ahmad House Museum*, with a particular emphasis on the shoe production waste generated by local shoe-making shops. The project aimed to bring together designers, environmentalists, shop keepers, and residents of *Sangelaj* neighborhood at the site of a future house museum planned for the neighborhood, to raise awareness about shoe production waste, foster collaboration, and generate creative solutions that enhance the urban environment by introducing the future museum as a space dedicated to the neighborhood.

The *Jalal Al-e Ahmad House Museum* in Tehran holds significant historical importance. This house, which is around 100 years old, was not only the residence of Seyyed Ahmad Hosseini Taleghani, a prominent cleric and activist during Reza Shah's reign, but also the childhood home of Jalal Al-e Ahmad, an intellectual, writer, and translator, and his brother Shams Al-e Ahmad, who was a writer as well. Once completed, the museum will showcase historical artifacts, documents, and photographs, while offering educational programs, exhibitions, and workshops to engage the public. It aims to become a cultural and tourist destination, with plans for a digital archive, an online store, and sustainable revenue generation to ensure its preservation for future generations.



Figure 1. Sangelaj

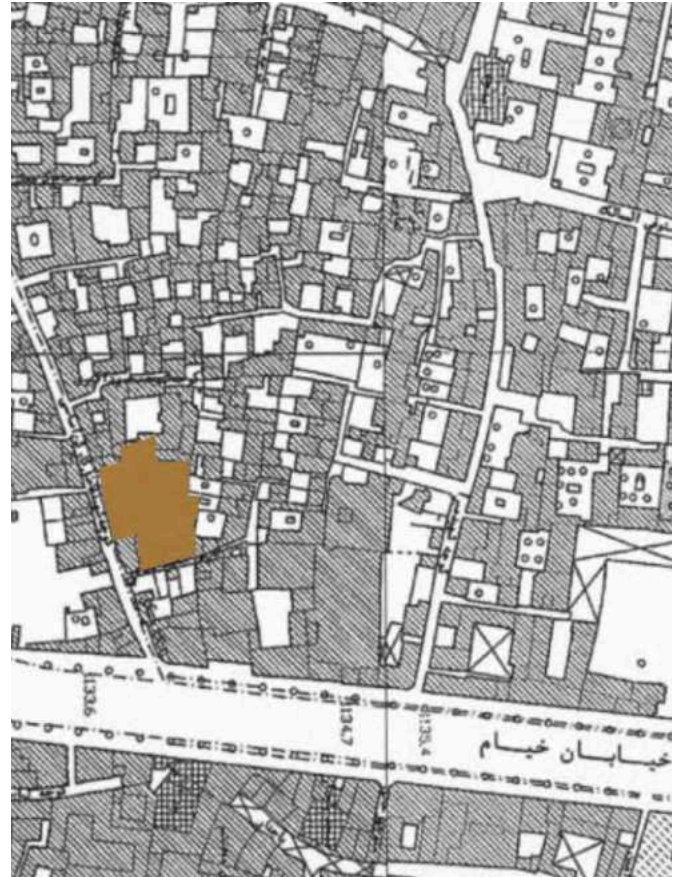


Figure 2. Jalal Al Ahmad House Museum

*Sangelaj* is one of Tehran's oldest and most historically significant neighborhoods, located within the fabric of grand Bazaar of Tehran. Originally part of the city's central urban fabric, *Sangelaj* has undergone various transformations over the centuries. In the 19th century, it was home to aristocrats and boasted Tehran's largest public garden, the *Sangelaj Park*, which later became a theater district, contributing to the cultural heritage of the area (Mostafavi & Rohani, 2016). As Tehran expanded, *Sangelaj's* proximity to the Bazaar influenced its evolution, with many sections of the neighborhood being converted into industrial and commercial zones. One of the most notable industries that grew in this area is shoemaking. The neighborhood's *Rasteh* of Shoes, a specialized section of the bazaar, became a hub for small-scale shoe production workshops, contributing significantly to both the local economy and the area's industrial landscape (Sajadzadeh, 2019).

This industrialization, however, led to certain urban challenges. The shoemaking industry generates large amounts of waste, including fabric and plastic remnants, which often end up littering the streets. This environmental issue has had a detrimental impact on *Sangelaj's* urban character, transforming what was once a culturally vibrant neighborhood into one struggling with waste management. The concentration of industrial spaces leaves the neighborhood deserted at night, creating

environments prone to crime and addiction. Despite these challenges, Sangelaj retains its rich architectural heritage, with many of its old houses and streets still standing, offering a juxtaposition of traditional urban fabric and modern-day industrial pressures (Mostafavi & Rohani, 2016).

### **Project background:**

The reuse of urban waste has become an important aspect of sustainable urban design, offering creative solutions to the environmental challenges posed by waste accumulation in cities. Scholars and architects have explored how materials typically discarded can be repurposed for public spaces, turning waste into functional and aesthetic urban features. Projects such as Copenhagen's Superkilen Urban Park use urban waste and recycled materials from various parts of the world, such as benches, swings, and lampposts, repurposing them into public installations that reflect the diversity of the local community. These interventions demonstrate how waste can be reinterpreted as resources for vibrant, inclusive spaces, highlighting the potential for waste reuse to contribute to sustainability and social engagement (DeSilvey & Edensor, 2013; Brand & Fisher, 2019).

Museums, traditionally seen as cultural preservation institutions, are increasingly becoming active participants in waste reuse projects. Exhibitions like the Victoria and Albert Museum's "Waste Age: What Can Design Do?" demonstrate how museums can raise awareness about urban waste through creative and educational displays (Vergo, 1989). Beyond exhibitions, museums are also incorporating waste materials into their architecture, as seen with Cape Town's Zeitz MOCAA, housed in a repurposed grain silo. This adaptive reuse links the historical with the contemporary, showing how waste materials can be part of both cultural preservation and sustainability efforts (Rypkema, 2005).

These initiatives demonstrate a growing relationship between waste reuse, museums, and the urban fabric. Museums are not isolated from the city but are embedded within its cultural and architectural landscape (Macdonald, 2002). By utilizing waste materials in exhibitions, architecture, and community-driven workshops, museums like the Jalal Al-e Ahmad House Museum in Tehran serve as platforms for environmental activism, community engagement, and urban regeneration. These efforts contribute to a sustainable, inclusive approach to urban development that integrates waste into the very fabric of city life.

### **Significance:**

Structured over two days, the workshop included two mentors specialized in environmental design and museum curation, one assistant for logistics and participant support, and one documentor of the creative process and outcomes.

The workshop began with an in-depth exploration of the local urban context and materials. Participants studied the historical and current environmental aspects related to the site, which provided a culturally rich backdrop that enhanced the learning experience. The second day focused on the practical application of these insights: designing and creating installations that responded to and reflected the unique characteristics of the museum's locale and shoe waste. These creations were then installed on-site, allowing the museum to serve not only as a venue but as an integral part of the artistic and environmental statement.

The primary objectives of the workshop were to:

1. Raise awareness of urban waste issues, specifically shoe production waste, in the Sangelaj neighborhood.
2. Promote the use of recyclable materials for creative and practical purposes in urban spaces.
3. Foster collaboration between local residents, designers, artists, and environmentalists.
4. Utilize the Jalal Al-e Ahmad House Museum as a platform for community engagement, cultural heritage preservation, and environmental activism.

By incorporating the Urban Waste Workshop, the house museum redefined its role, evolving from static exhibition spaces to an active center for sustainability and innovation. Beyond practical design and material reuse skills, the workshop instilled a deeper appreciation for environmental stewardship and community collaboration. It leveraged the historical and cultural layers of house museums to enrich the educational experience, thereby magnifying the impact of each installation. The Urban Waste Workshop highlighted the active participation of the museum in addressing contemporary challenges, positioning the museum as a crucial player in promoting sustainability and community engagement. This approach not only broadened the museum's appeal and educational mandate but also served as a model for other institutions aiming to blend cultural preservation with modern environmental and social activism.

### **Workshop Format:**

The workshop followed a structured two-day format, with 30 volunteer participants with backgrounds in design, environmental, museum, and urban studies. It enabled the participants to explore the potential of waste materials and collaborate on creative solutions.

- **Day One:** Focused on understanding the context, materials, and history of the site. Participants were introduced to the types of waste generated





Figure 3 & 4: Jalal Al Ahmad House Museum Urban Waste Workshop

by local shoe factories, primarily fabric and plastic cutoffs. The group engaged in discussions about the impact of waste on the environment and the possibilities for reuse. Participants then brainstormed ideas for transforming waste into urban interventions, producing initial sketches and concepts.

- **Day Two:** Dedicated to implementing the designs and installing creative interventions in public spaces around the museum. Using the waste materials from shoe production, participants created innovative installations that reflected both artistic expression and practical applications in the urban environment. The workshop concluded with presentations of the completed projects to invited guests and local residents, sparking discussions about the potential for similar initiatives in other parts of the city.

#### Outcome - physical:

The workshop successfully demonstrated the potential of using recyclable materials, such as shoe production waste, in urban interventions. Participants created a range of innovative installations, including temporary structures, street furniture, and artistic displays, all made from materials that would have otherwise been discarded. Below is a summary of the work produced, along with the artists' statements.



Figure 5: Jalal Al Ahmad House Museum Urban Waste Workshop Process





Figure 6: *The Cube*, Team: Fatemeh Mortazavi Moghaddam, Zahra Abdolkhani, Rojin Soltani, Saba Azami, Pourya Samandari

### First: The Cube

As the group wandered through and conducted a field study in the Karkon-e Asasi Passage, they spoke with locals and passersby, hearing brief stories of their lives in the neighborhood. A twisted mass of shoe waste from the Sangelaj neighborhood was turned into a few chairs, emphasizing interaction with the material.

### Second: Breaking the Habit

It is a human instinct to become accustomed to everything, including absences and the non-existence, and change. We become accustomed to the dead streets, Even if we once heard the endless sound of children's laughter here. Even if we saw the first steps of culture and modernity in this land.

Sangelaj, an old neighborhood rooted in this land's cultural modernity, has developed a "chronic" ailment. The dust settled on Sangelaj's streets is not just from Tehran's pollution, but from the pain of time-worn decay. The life and presence of years past have departed, and only signs remain—like doors and windows, many of which have been blocked. The team marked these traces with the shoe factory waste (as one of the most significant impacts on the old life of this neighborhood) to say: As you pass through the streets of Sangelaj, Don't become used to the lifeless, dead, and unsafe alleys. There was once beauty here, Right under these leather awnings.

### Third: *Domal*

Today's Sangelaj is divided into two parts: the ever-expanding shoe shops, due to their proximity to the bazaar, and the residents striving to live among these industrial spaces. The waste from these workshops has become like a *Domal* (a cone-shaped sore on the skin that exudes

pus and fluid.) on the city's surface. The team's task is to highlight this domain, using waste materials that, though familiar, have been transformed into new forms: hanging from somewhere, scattered on the ground, or even turned into decorative items. Yet, their core remains unchanged—they are still waste, a *Domal* on the city's face.

### Fourth: Leather and Weft

The team transformed thin, laser-cut synthetic leather pieces from shoe production into a decorative carpet. Inspired by the intricate weave of Persian carpets, they revitalized the tradition of washing and hanging

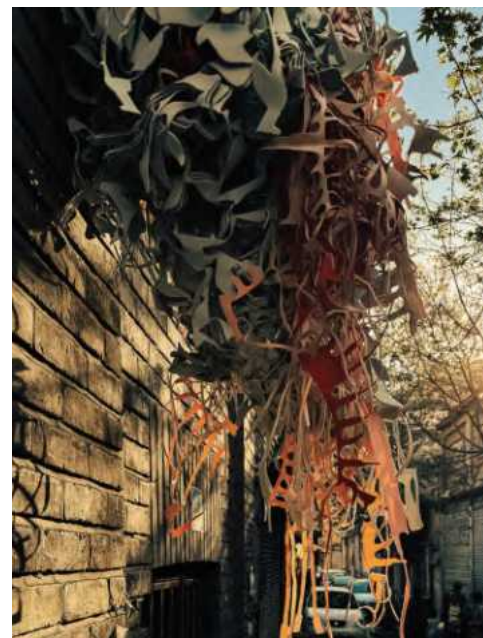


Figure 7: *Breaking the Habit*, Team: The Yellow Sangelaj Team, Hamidreza Naranji Nejad, Mehdi Gohari, Tina Sangelaji, Parastoo Manteghi, Donya Izadi (top). Figure 8: *Domal*, Team: Saba Rabati, Naeem Abdolkarimi, Negar Memarizadeh, Ali Mirzaei (bottom).



carpets by weaving the shoe waste into a leather carpet and displaying it from rooftops or walls. This creative installation both highlighted the environmental challenges of the neighborhood and reconnected the community with its cultural heritage, turning waste into a striking and meaningful visual statement.

### Fifth: The Corner

After visiting the site and conducting observations, the violence of the space and the neglect of passersby were the most prominent features, along with the growing disappearance of urban life in the emotional detachment of the day and night residents. We decided to highlight the difference between what could be and what is, emphasizing the lost human life, interaction with the environment, and the hidden beauty of the neighborhood amid the cold encounters of its residents.

### Sixth: Passage

In this unfamiliar world, discovery is defined by passage and adventure. The path takes on a new shape through windows and passageways. Amid the chaos, this passage plays with light and shadow, offering a glimpse of calm.

### Seventh: Lost Coexistence

The gift of civilization to humanity is coexistence. But it seems that in Sangelaj, coexistence is slowly becoming a forgotten memory. Shoe production workshops have gradually taken over the space, to the extent that there is little room left for human life. Old houses are now empty,



Figure 10: The Corner, Team: Fatemeh Soleimani, Hossein Torkaman, Reza Shamagani, Alireza Samadian, Mahmoud Mousavi.

having been turned into workshops. This spatial invasion became the core idea of the team's proposed intervention.

### Eight: The Light

This project centered on allowing waste materials to be transformed into functional products without altering their inherent qualities. The unique cuts and shapes of the discarded materials formed an ideal lens and filter for a light fixture, turning them into more than just illuminated



Figure 9: Leather and Weft, Team: Shadi Davari, Mahdieh Jafari, Rahim Moqaddas, Asghar Moharami.



Figure 11: The Passage, Team: Amirhossein Pashamoghadam, Dorna Lotfi, Ali Mirzaei.



Figure 13: *The Light*, Team: Mehrnoosh Kashi

reused scraps. When assembled, these pieces created a captivating interplay of light and shadow, transforming the once dark room of the museum into a magical, space. scraps. When assembled, these pieces created a captivating interplay of light and shadow, transforming the once dark room of the museum into a magical, illuminated space. scraps. When assembled, these pieces created a captivating interplay of light and shadow, transforming the once dark room of the museum into a magical, illuminated space.



Figure 14: *The Workshop in a Shot*

### Outcome - Social and Environmental:

As a direct outcome of the Urban Waste Workshop in Tehran's Sangelaj neighborhood, a significant shift occurred in local waste management practices in the street. Store owners, particularly those involved in shoemaking, began to rethink their disposal habits and stopped throwing out production waste indiscriminately. This change was complemented by more proactive measures from the municipal department, which started to take the issue of shoe waste management more seriously, ensuring that the streets were regularly cleaned and monitored. As a result, the neighborhood now remains much cleaner, free from the shoemaking waste that once littered its public spaces. This project demonstrates how targeted community interventions can lead to long-lasting improvements in urban waste practices.

More importantly, the local addicts, who were previously contributing to the waste problem by attempting to burn discarded materials for warmth, became engaged through conversations during the workshop. Being included in these discussions fostered a sense of responsibility and care for their surroundings. As a result, they started to participate more actively in keeping the neighborhood clean, significantly reducing the frequency of waste being thrown out for fires. This engagement highlights the importance of inclusive community dialogue in achieving meaningful and sustainable change.

The Urban Waste Workshop in Tehran's Sangelaj neighborhood successfully integrated recyclable materials into urban space design while engaging the community in a meaningful way. By focusing on the waste produced by local industries, the workshop highlighted the importance of addressing waste at the source and finding creative solutions that benefit both the environment and society. The Jalal Al-e Ahmad House Museum played a vital role as a hub for these activities, demonstrating the potential for house museums to serve as platforms for sustainability and social engagement. This workshop sets a precedent for future museum initiatives aimed at transforming waste into valuable resources while fostering environmental consciousness, community collaboration, and cultural preservation. More importantly, it repositions the museum as a hub for environmental and cultural engagement, showcasing its role as an active participant in addressing contemporary challenges.

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## BIOGRAPHY

**Yasaman Esmaili** is an architect and educator, and the founder of Studio Chahar, an award-winning research-based design studio established in 2018. The studio functions as a platform dedicated to fostering cultural expression, innovation, and community participation in the built environment through collaborative processes, with a particular emphasis on museum design and heritage conservation. Yasaman holds degrees from the University of Tehran, the University of Arizona (M.Arch and Sustainable Design), and the University of Washington (M.S. in Computational Design). A founding member of united4design, Yasaman has over seven years of experience with firms like Blokable, Hewitt Architects, and AE Architects. Yasaman's recent work has resulted in the realization of several highly acclaimed projects. Her projects have been shortlisted for Aga Khan Award 2022, and won the 2018 Global LafargeHolcim Silver Award and the 2017 Gold Award for the Middle East Africa region. She has received the 2020 Tamayouz Women in Architecture Rising Star award and the 2023 University of Washington Graduate of the Last Decade (GOLD) Award. Yasaman has taught at Wentworth Institute of Technology, Roger Williams University, and the University of Washington, and has been a guest critic at several universities including Harvard, the University of Washington, and Yale.

**Kimia Amini** is a project manager and curator based in Tehran and Isfahan, Iran. She holds degrees in archaeology and museology from the Higher Education Center of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage in Iran and has completed her master's studies in International Relations. Kimia has conducted digital archaeological research at Isfahan's Jameh Mosque (ADAMJI), a UNESCO World Heritage site, and has contributed to the expansion of several museum and archaeological projects. Since 2011, Kimia has been a member of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), organizing sustainability educational design workshops. In recent years, she has closely collaborated with the Iran National Museum of Science and Technology, leading multiple exhibitions and international projects. She currently serves as the secretary of the University Museums Council in the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology. She has also collaborated with Studio Chahar since 2021 as an exhibition project lead, museum design project manager, heritage expert, and sustainability event facilitator.



# Navigating with The Climate Issues in Different Cultural Fields

Teemu Kirjonen

Åbo Akademi University Foundation, Turku

Finland

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## Abstract

Teemu Kirjonen worked in 2003–22 for the Lahti Symphony Orchestra (Lahti, Finland) in different positions, from 2014 onwards as its general manager. Since August 2022, Kirjonen has managed the three museums of the Åbo Akademi University Foundation (Turku, Finland). This presentation is about climate projects in both of these organizations as case studies and raise ideas whether the same kind of elements that proved to be successful in the orchestra project could be applicable to the museums as well.

The principal ideas of the presentation include strengthening the position of a cultural organization in the surrounding society with 'non-cultural' elements (without compromising on the artistic content), using a cultural organization in an innovative way to support the goals of the host organization and committing the personnel of the whole organization to the project already before launching it.

The format of the presentation is presenting three cases, the last two of which being linked together.

**Keywords:** Participation, innovation, societal relevance, intersectoral, learning

### CASE 1: The carbon-free Lahti Symphony Orchestra

Some basic information about the project adapted from the website of the Lahti Symphony Orchestra ("The Carbon-free", 2018):

"To mark Sibelius's 150th anniversary year the Lahti Symphony Orchestra initiated in 2015 a project – a contribution to the efforts to reduce the pace of global climate change – by gradually making the orchestra's activities carbon-neutral. Behind the project was Myrskyvaroitus – Storm Warning Association, and the project was carried out in collaboration with the Lahti-based Environmental Technology unit of the Lappeenranta University of Technology (LUT) [nowadays: Lappeenranta–Lahti University of Technology LUT].

The orchestra's climate project was a natural part of the City of Lahti's environmental strategy, according to which the city is committed to halving per capita greenhouse gas emissions by 2025, compared to 1990 levels. The Lahti Symphony Orchestra's musicians and administrative staff were involved in making the decision to launch the project, and in associated brainstorming activities.

During the first phase of the project, the orchestra's carbon footprint was calculated. This calculation is based on a life-cycle assessment, a diploma thesis by the LUT student Pilvi Virolainen. The work's primary aims were to identify the orchestra's principal sources of greenhouse gas emissions, to examine how these could be reduced or compensated for, and to explore the orchestra's potential to influence its partners to reduce their carbon footprint. In accordance with the results of this research, the orchestra's activities will be designed to cause minimum damage to the environment.

Following the carbon footprint calculation the primary emission loads were carefully reviewed and an action plan was created according to the findings of the calculation. The audience has been engaged in the project with information. According to a survey the Lahti Symphony audience is strongly supporting the orchestra's initiative. The primary emission loads recognized were the following (plus recommendations in brackets):

#### 1. Transportation

- staff commuting (The staff and the audience are encouraged to use public transportation.)
- concert touring (Office staff to telecommute.)
- audience attending the concerts; appr. 60 % of the transportation load (Concert touring transportation with green energy service providers when possible.)

#### 2. Energy (Led lighting, efficient recycling, turning off the electronic devices when not in use)

- administration
- orchestra

- 3. Acquisitions (Clean technology as criteria of acquisitions.)
  - light and sound services
  - other services

#### 4. Promotional products (Environmentally responsible providers)

- printed materials; program booklets, season brochures, posters etc.
- t-shirts and other textile products

In 2017 the Lahti Symphony Orchestra partnered with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat's Climate Neutral Now initiative, in co-operation with the Myrskyvaroitus – Storm Warning association to enable concert ticket buyers to offset a part of their carbon footprint through a 'Green Button' campaign. When buying tickets online via Ticketmaster Finland the customer could make a donation through the Myrskyvaroitus association to UNFCCC's internationally certified development projects that aim to combat climate change.

The project has raised international attention; it has been presented e.g. at the Zero Emission Summit in New York in connection of the Climate Week NYC (Sep 2017) and in the program 'Music Matters' by BBC Radio 3 (Oct 2017). In May 2018 the project was a winner of the Classical:NEXT Innovation Award in Rotterdam."

A few key points can be highlighted from the initiation phase of the project:

1. It was important for the credibility and communicability of the project that it was based on scientific research (Virolainen, 2015).
2. The entire orchestra was engaged in the project even before the final decision to participate was made.
3. As collaborators and part of the network, recognized climate professionals were involved through the Myrskyvaroitus (Storm Warning) association.

The aim of the project was to find natural ways to bring up climate issues as part of the orchestra's daily life without compromising artistic ambition. One example is a community day where the entire orchestra planted thousands of spruce saplings — an event that seamlessly combined the joy of working together outside of their music activities, tangible actions for the environment, and the opportunity to highlight environmental issues in external communications.

The orchestra's project began in 2015 and lived independently as part of the structure of the city of Lahti for several years. The city of Lahti creatively utilized the orchestra's project on several occasions, such as in 2018 when a new mayor was being sought. The illustration used showed people wearing bicycle helmets with the slogan for the candidate being "A classical task, a modern actor."

("A facebook post", 2018). The orchestra's general manager was also presented with numerous opportunities to present the project in both Finnish and international contexts.

Lahti was selected as the European Green Capital for 2021. At this point, the orchestra's project became a natural part of the Green Capital's activities, and the orchestra was involved on several occasions, such as when international press visited the city. One successful example of combining artistic and environmental work was the composition commissioned by the city of Lahti for the Green Capital project — ICE, by Cecilia Damström, which won the prestigious Teosto Prize 2022. The name ICE stands both for ice and for "In Case of Emergency." ("ICE", 2022). Highlighting individual musicians from the orchestra was also a successful part of the communication strategy. ("City of Makers", 2021).

## **CASE 2: Climate Promise of Museums in Southwest Finland**

Some basic information about the project adapted from the material produced by project manager Maija Talja from the Museum Centre of Turku ("Climate Promise, 2022):

"Climate Promise was a joint project of 13 professionally maintained museums. The project consists of concrete actions that improve museums' environmental agency and make permanent changes in their operational models.

All the participating museum organizations committed to executing at least one concrete action by the end of the year 2023.

As the resources of the museums vary, the concrete actions that museums chose are very different in scale. They were all, however, making a permanent change in their operational practices.

Climate Promise was executed in 2022-2023, and funded by Finnish Heritage Agency.

Climate Promise was created as a result of a regional co-development network of professionally maintained museums in Southwest Finland. This network is organized by Turku City Museum, which is also the regional museum of Southwest Finland.

The regional co-development network is part of Turku City Museums regional duty of promoting museum operations, which includes developing partnerships and cooperation in the museum sector.

The project had a strong focus on shared knowledge and learning together. The project organized internal training sessions on various topics and also offered some training events that have been open to everybody working on museum sector.

As the project ended, the project wished to inspire and challenge other museums in Finland to follow our lead: to promote ecological sustainability by executing concrete actions and to form cooperation networks to strengthen museums' environmental agency.

### **Concrete Actions in Practice:**

1. Environmental management system and certificate
  - Four museum organizations are working towards EcoCompass, a Finnish EMS based on ISO14001 standard
2. General improvements of energy efficiency, waste management and use of renewable energy
  - Smaller museums have contributed to ecological sustainability by grass-root level improvements in energy saving, recycling and use of materials
  - Two museums installed a solar energy system to its premises
3. Biodiversity
  - Three museums worked towards biological diversity in their operational environments. Themes included biodiversity in cultural landscapes and genetically important plant species.
4. Cooperation with stakeholders
  - Two museums started (or re-established) a specific stakeholder cooperation to further environmental and climate awareness"

The three museums of the Åbo Akademi University Foundation participated in the Climate Promise project and this presented as Case 3.

## **CASE 3: The museums of the Åbo Akademi University Foundation gaining the EcoCompass certificate**

The three museums of the Åbo Akademi University Foundation – Sibelius Museum, Museum Ett Hem and Casa Haartman – participated in the Climate Promise project by gaining the EcoCompass certificate. The certificate was given on 12 December 2023 ("Stiftelsens för Åbo Akademi", 2023).

EcoCompass is an environmental management system (EMS) owned and managed by the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation (FANC), the oldest environmental organization in Finland, founded in 1938.

The Åbo Akademi University Foundation, one of the biggest foundations in Finland, maintains buildings of cultural and historical value with climate-smart solutions and aims for them to be carbon-neutral by 2025. Principles of sustainable development are applied in the assessment of investment targets, and the foundation only invests in companies with sustainable values ("Strategi", 2023). This

also provides a natural framework for the environmental work done by the foundation's museums.

The three museums' joint environmental pledge (translated from Swedish) established as a part of the EcoCompass process ("Hållbarhet", 2023):

*"The Foundation for Åbo Akademi's museums, including the Sibelius Museum, the Ett Hem Museum, and Casa Haartman, commits to considering how the museum activities of each institution impact the environment.*

*We encourage our staff and stakeholders to make sustainable choices, for example, by informing them about sustainable ways to reach our locations. We highlight ecological perspectives in our internal and external communications. We consider the diversity of the environment surrounding the museums by organizing programs that promote environmental awareness.*

*The focus of developing sustainability aspects in our operations includes procurement, electricity consumption, waste management, and the reuse of materials.*

*The Sibelius Museum focuses its environmental work on the reuse of materials both in exhibition work and in packing museum objects. We also concentrate on waste sorting and encourage our staff and stakeholders to engage in more environmentally friendly practices."*

Subareas and goals of the three museums (examples) established as a part of the EcoCompass process ("Subareas and goals", 2023):

1. Subarea: Energy
  - Goal: We reduce the annual consumption of electricity by 2%
    - o Change to LED lamps
    - o Procurement of more motion detectors
    - o The museum staff participates in the annual digital cleaning day = Clearing the e-mail inbox and among large image files
    - o We investigate and develop methods for efficient energy consumption in the museum buildings together with experts
  - Goal: A reduced use of heating energy
    - o We are investigating the possibility and need to restore and seal the windows in Casa Haartman
2. Subarea: Purchasing
  - Goal: We train the staff in purchasing eco-certified materials
    - o The staff is informed about the current practice of procuring eco-certified products
3. Subarea: Travel and logistics
  - Goal: We encourage our staff and our network to move more ecologically

- o A bicycle stand is procured for the Sibelius Museum
- o We are investigating the possibility of offering a service where a concert ticket includes a ticket for public transportation

#### 4. Subarea: Nature's diversity

- Goal: We draw attention to the diversity of nature in the museums' surroundings
  - o Species determination of old apple tree varieties in Casa Haartman's garden
  - o We update and highlight our environmental artwork
  - o Plants are planted around the museums that attract pollinators

#### 5. Subarea: Material use

- Goal: Reuse of materials
  - o We are investigating the possibilities of washing the textiles used to protect objects
  - o We investigate the possibilities of reusing materials from exhibitions
  - o We reuse materials in the packaging of museum objects

#### 6. Subarea: Communication

- Goal: We increase the focus on climate issues in external communication
  - o We draw attention to environment-related theme days on social media
    - International Day for Biological Diversity 22.5., Finnish Nature Day 26.8., etc.
  - o Visitors are encouraged to arrive at the Sibelius Museum by bicycle or public transport on the museum's website
  - o Garden bingo as a new activity for visitors to the museum's gardens
  - o We urge users of our Finna.fi pages not to download large files unnecessarily

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### **BIOGRAPHY**

Holding three master's degrees from the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, Finland, *Teemu Kirjonen's* educational background is strongly in music and arts management as is his professional career. In 2023, he finished his basic studies of museology at the University of Turku and he has also reinforced his knowledge on leadership with courses at the Harvard Kennedy School. In 2003–22, he worked for the Lahti Symphony Orchestra in different positions, from 2014 onwards as its general manager. Since August 2022, Kirjonen has managed the three museums of the Åbo Akademi University Foundation – one of the biggest foundations in Finland – Sibelius Museum, Ett Hem and Casa Haartman.

## IGNITE TALKS SESSIONS I – IV

# Sub-theme #1 – Cross-Cultural MUSEUM ARCHITECTURE

## Sub-theme #2 – EXHIBITION DESIGN

SZU WEI LEE

MEI-FANG KUO

HSINCHUN CHEN, CHIA-LI CHEN

WEN-QIAN LEE, HSU HUANG

CHIA-YI LIN

MING-YING TSAI

SEBASTIAN CHUN

JIAYI CHANG

YI-CHUN LU

MINGSHI CUI

YU-CHUN KAO

YI-FAN TSENG

YIAN CHEN

CHIH-WEN LAN

DENG TENG LEON SHIH, JEN-HAO CHANG

SOOAH KWAK

CHIH JU YANG

PO-SHENG KUO, HSIAO-PING CHUANG ALBA

DI LIETO

## The museum architecture in Old Taipei, in a perspective of modernity

Szu-wei Lee

Taipei National University of the Arts

Taiwan

The multiple historical situations in Taiwan intertwine coloniality and modernity in all aspects of the island's modernization process, with architecture playing a significant role. During the Japanese colonial period, Japanese architects left many architectural works in Taiwan that incorporated Western, Japanese, and local elements. Taiwanese society gradually recognized the value of Japanese-era architecture around the mid-1990s. On the other hand, architectural production in Taiwan after World War II reflects an even more complex context, including U.S. aid, Northern Palace style, modernist architecture, etc. Since the 2010s, the preservation of modern architectural heritage has received official attention. In fact, most of the museum architecture in Old Taipei today was not originally built as museums.

Where is Old Taipei? It is located south of Taipei Main Station, in a rectangular area of 1.4 square kilometers. In the late Qing Dynasty, the walled city was planned to balance the existing two Han settlements and host official agencies. The wall was demolished by the Japanese 17 years later, and the stones were displaced and reused. Today, traces of these stones can be found at other historical sites.

The National Taiwan Museum, located in the center of Old Taipei, was the only museum in this area during the Japanese colonial period, and it was originally established as a museum. The second museum opened in 1997 to commemorate the 228 Incident as a political response to the dark history of post-war Taiwan, during the tenure of Taipei City's first democratically elected mayor, Chen Shui-bian. Chen later became Taiwan's president in 2000, marking the first democratic transition of power. His staff initiated an integrative plan called the National Taiwan Museum System (NTMS). This cross-sector plan transformed three historical sites into museums, demonstrating the central government's commitment to preserving the city's history. Regarding the process of restoration and curation, I view this plan as a series of architectural collections, with each site representing the social meaning of modernity in Taiwan. Additionally, the municipal historic site, Futai Street Mansion, was restored and opened to the public in 2009.

In this context, there has been a trend toward the "musealization" of architectural heritage in Old Taipei since 2010. Today, among the 11 museums in this area, only one is private—the Shung Ye Museum of Formosa Fine Arts, renovated from a 70-year-old building. The rest

are public museums, and all of these museum buildings are officially recognized as cultural heritage. With public investment, these buildings serve as museal objects on display in the cityscape, while also sending new messages to society that reflect subjectivity and modernity.

Although it is generally believed that Taiwan's modernization occurred during the Japanese colonial period, the establishment of the Taipei Machinery Bureau, right after the completion of the walled city, can be seen as the birthplace of industrial technology. It later became a base for locomotive repairs and the administrative hub for railways across Taiwan. After the Japanese arrived, they carried out various infrastructure projects in Taipei, while also actively developing colonial resources and promoting monopoly businesses, such as camphor processing at the Nanmen Factory. Moreover, buildings left behind by Japanese companies like Takashi Group, Mitsui & Co., and Osaka Mercantile Co., Ltd. bear witness to the history of Japanese business activities in Taiwan. In the 1930s, the Taipei Post Office, Taipei Broadcasting Station, and Taipei branch of Nippon Kangyo Bank were built in succession, showcasing diverse architectural styles. Some of these buildings continue the original function attached with some exhibition space, such as the Postal Museum, while others have been repurposed, like the National Center of Photography and Images.

This talk attempts to create a perspective for reviewing museum architecture in Old Taipei through a museological approach. In terms of architectural history, most of these buildings were designed by Japanese architects, featuring diverse structures and styles, with restoration processes full of stories. If we further analyze their social context, we may find that they represent the modern significance of infrastructure, industry, finance, and natural history. Through a tour of these museum buildings, we can reflect on the meaning of modernity—what has civilization brought us? whose rights were deprived, including both human and non-human? Museum curators create dialogues with the public, and if the exhibition discourse can articulate reflections on modernity, these museum architectures will carry even more cultural significance. Viewing them as massive museal objects helps us understand the city's history more deeply, which is the root of cultural subjectivity.

**Keywords:** Modernity, museum architecture, Old Taipei.



## List of museum architecture in Old Taipei

Official status of cultural heritage	Building of original function	Built year	Open year	New function
national monument	Taiwan Governor-General Office Museum	1915	1915	natural history museum (NTMS)
municipal monument	Taipei branch office of Nippon Kangyo Bank	1933	2010	paleontology museum (NTMS)
national monument	Nanmen Factory – Red House / Little White House	1902/1915	2013	industrial museum (NTMS)
as above	Railway Department	1919-1934	2020	modernity museum (NTMS)
as above	Communication Department of Transportation Bureau	1925	2010	Academia Historica Taipei Branch
municipal monument	Taipei Branch of Osaka Mercantile Co., Ltd.	1937	2021	National Center of Photography and Images
municipal monument	Taipei Broadcasting Station	1930s	1997	Taipei 228 memorial museum
as above	Beimen Post office	1930	2015	Postal Museum Taipei Branch
as above	Takashi Group office	1910	2009	Futai Street Mansion
historic building	Mitsui Warehouse	1914	2018	Taipei Info Hub
N/A	Shung-ye trading house	1947	2020	Shung-ye Museum of Formosa Fine Arts

## BIOGRAPHY

*Szu-wei Lee's* major is architecture and planning, and he is currently a PhD candidate in Cultural Heritage and Arts Innovation Studies at TNUA. His research interests include museums, cultural heritage, and city cultural studies. He worked at the National Taiwan Museum and the Building and Planning Research Foundation, NTU, before his PhD studies. He has cross-disciplinary experience in architectural heritage and museums. His thesis discusses the making of museums, using a case study of the National Taiwan Museum System<sup>1</sup>.

His articles published in Taiwan's academic journals include: 'Reproducing memories: Wang Da-hong's house in the art museum', 'Collecting architecture: the museality of National Taiwan Museum System', and 'Social engagement in urban settlement conservation: a case of Toad Hill Settlement'. He also wrote a series of articles about post-war architecture in Taiwan, published in museum journals.

# The Development and Transformation in Building Form of the Museums in Taiwan

Mei-Fang Kuo

National Cheng Kung University Museum, Tainan City  
Taiwan

## Abstract

Formerly known as Formosa, Taiwan entered the international scene as a commercial outpost in East Asia operated by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in 1624. However, it wasn't until 1895, during the Japanese Colonial Period, that museums began to emerge. From the earliest to the most recent, the architectural appearance of Taiwanese museums has undergone significant changes during this brief century.

In summary, the transformation of museum architecture in Taiwan is influenced by the changes in social and cultural values, and be dated into periods as follows:

**Keywords:** Museum Architecture, Building form/ Type/ Style, Transformation, Changing times

1. Japanese Colonial Period: Reusing buildings of Taiwanese Han-style architecture. Later, museums were built in styles inspired by architecture from the West, such as the National Taiwan Museum.
2. After WW2, before the 1980s: new museum buildings were constructed with facades reflecting the Chinese Palace Architectural Style, with modern interior layouts, such as the National Museum of History.
3. The 1980s: National museums flourished during this decade marking Taiwan's economic boom, by extensively adopting Western modern architectural styles, such as the National Museum of Natural Science.
4. The 1990s: The rise of conservation and rejuvenation of historical sites and heritage, such as the Fort Santo Domingo as a historical museum in Tamsui.
5. The 2000s: New museums starring renowned architects both foreign and local, sparking collaborative efforts:
  - a. Taiwanese architects: Lanyang Museum designed by architect Kris Yao.
  - b. Foreign architects: Asia University Museum of Modern Art designed by architect Tadao Ando.
  - c. Collaborations: Museum of National Taipei University of Education by architects Zhih-Hao Jiang (Taiwan), NOIZ Architects (Taiwan), and Keisuke Toyoda (Japan).

The transformation of architectural styles in the museums of Taiwan is rich and diverse, sparking curiosity and exploration. This paper presents a brief analytical compendium to address how these changes have been influenced not only by the broader historical context, but also by shifts in political regimes, which is summarized as follows:

### **1. Japanese Colonial Period (1895-1945)**

During the early period of Japanese rule in Taiwan, the Government-General of Taiwan repurposed existing local structures, such as the Chaozhou Community Hall of Tainan as the "Tainan Museum" and the Yanshui Octagonal Pavilion as a historical memorial hall. After the political and governance system was stabilized, buildings designated to become museums were constructed, such as the present-day National Taiwan Museum, which was commissioned to promote the completion of Taiwan's railway network. Opened in 1915, the museum was designed by Ichiro Nomura, who has received Western architecture education. By taking inspiration from Greek, Roman, and Renaissance architecture, the museum is known for being an exemplary work of mid-Japanese Colonial Period. Architectural features included decorative elements, a Roman-style dome, Greek columns, and symmetrical layouts. The main hall was supported by towering Corinthian columns, creating a grand space under the dome, and after renovation, the building was even adorned with intricately designed stained glass. The distinctive architectural style exclusive to the period is coined as "Western Historicism" by Professor Chao-Ching Fu of the NCKU's Department of Architecture. While many official buildings in Taiwan were designed with this particular, the National Taiwan Museum remains the only one designed specifically as a museum.

### **2. Post-WW2 Period under the Kuomintang Government (1946-1970s)**

A prominent feature of museum architecture in Taiwan during this period was the adoption of traditional Chinese palace-style designs. By incorporating modern materials such as reinforced concrete for the structure, these buildings often featured large red pillars, lattice windows with Chinese motif, glazed tile roofs, and decorative Chinese-style paintings. Examples of this style include the National Museum of History and the National Taiwan Science Education Center, both located within the Nanhai Academy in Taipei, as well as the renowned National Palace Museum.

Architects who have migrated to Taiwan from China during this period were often trained in modern Western architectural philosophies such as Bauhaus, but also held a deep reverence for traditional Chinese architecture. Huang Baoyu, the architect of the National Palace Museum, whose

designs reflect a harmony of modern construction methods and classical Chinese aesthetics. He is an alumnus of the Central University in Chongqing and a student of Professor Liu Dunzhen's, who is head of the literature department at the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture, a private organization dedicated to preserving traditional Chinese building techniques.

### **3. The Taiwanese Economic Boom and the Rise of National Museums (Late 1970s)**

During late 1970s, Taiwan has embraced an economic boom, leading to more generous funding for national infrastructure projects including the new establishment of several national museums. These museums are managed by of the Ministry of Education's Department of Continuing Education, which orients museums as institutions for public education. This period also marked Taiwan's widespread adoption of modern Western architectural styles, including the National Museum of Natural Science (Taichung) and the National Museum of Prehistory (Taitung). The modernized architectural styles of these institutions reflect international architectural movements of the time, emphasizing functionality and innovation.

### **4. The Rise of Heritage Preservation and Historic Building Regeneration (post-1990s)**

In the 1990s, a movement towards the conservation and regeneration of historical sites in Taiwan began to rise, which emphasizes the preservation of historical and cultural value of old structures while adapting them for cultural enrichment, such as museums. Museums emerged during this period including Fort San Domingo (New Taipei City) and the Gold Museum (New Taipei City). Likewise in Tainan City, the National Museum of Taiwan Literature and the Tainan City Art Museum Building 1.

### **5. The Rise of International Design Competitions and Collaborative Architecture in Taiwan (post-2000s)**

At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Taiwan sees a trend in international design competitions and inviting renowned foreign architects to design major projects. Meanwhile, the government would also commission emerging Taiwanese architects to design museum buildings, leading to a blend of domestic and international collaborations for creating a new generation of Taiwanese cultural landmarks.

## BIOGRAPHY

*Dr. Mei-Fang Kuo* received a PhD in Architecture History and Theory from National Cheng Kung University (NCKU) in 2007 and has worked at the University Museum since then. She is currently an associate curator.

Based on these studies, has completed more than 16 exhibitions. Two are international cooperation - with the Museum of Asian Art, the University of Malaya, and three major Czech Republic museums. This exhibition won second place in the UMAC AWARD 2017.

She worked as an assistant curator at the National Museum of Natural Sciences (NMNS), Taiwan, from 1986 to 1993. she had been involved and in charge of the permanent exhibition of the NMNS Phase III Exhibition Hall. She also led the project of studying and reconstructing the "Astronomical Water Clock", which has become the major exhibition item in NMNS.

Since joining NCKUM, Dr. Kuo has been responsible for a variety of research and exhibition projects and collections. She is currently an associate curator and offers a few courses, including "Method and Theory in Museology", "Introduction to Museology", and "Guiding to Tainan History and Landscape".

Her research interests include museum architecture and exhibition, cultural heritage, Taiwanese aboriginal architecture, and traditional Chinese architecture.



# Let's Enjoy Art and Have Fun: A New Approach to Creative Interaction & Accessibility in Art Museum

**Hsinchun Chen**

Curator, Taiwan International Buton Association

**Chia-Li Chen**

Professor, Graduate Institute of Museum Studies

**Taiwan**

## Abstract

How can an art museum embody tolerance and diversity within its mission? Furthermore, how can it foster interactivity and ensure accessibility for all visitors? This presentation analyzes the design of space and exhibition of the Kumamoto Contemporary Art museum, which is located in the heart of Kumamoto city in Japan. The museum features an airy corridor that links diverse spaces: from an open art lab market that welcomes drop-in participation in workshops and shopping, to semi-open areas like a library and kids salon, and three distinct galleries showcasing art exhibitions. The kids salon offers a delightful experience where parents can not only play with their little ones but also consult parenting expert there. Moreover, the museum takes pride in its innovative library that encourages visitors to interact with artworks. Departing from conventional displays, these pieces are subtly embedded within the architecture, fostering a spirit of discovery and engagement. For instance, Marina Abramovic's "Library for Human Use" transforms bookshelves into interactive spaces where visitors can sit or lie down, becoming part of the exhibit itself, dissolving the serious atmosphere typically associated with library settings. Above, James Turrell's "Milk Run Sky" presents a ceiling installation that extends into a serene expanse of blue, inviting meditation and imagination. As evening falls, the color of the sky installation shifts into a warm pink hue, while volunteers grace the space with live piano performances, creating a wonderful music event that adds an enchanting layer to the overall experience.

The innovative design blurs boundaries between art and everyday life and creates a welcoming atmosphere for all. Here, visitors of all ages can relax, enjoy art playfully, and best of all, no need to buy coffee for a comfortable seat - plenty of lounging space and large tables await for resting and engaging conversations!

**Keywords:** Participatory Design, Interactive Artworks, Inclusion and Accessibility, Kids Salon & Consultant, Empowering Volunteers

How can an art museum embody tolerance and diversity within its mission? Furthermore, how can it foster interactivity and ensure accessibility for all visitors? This presentation analyzes the design of space and exhibition of the Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto (CAMK), which is located in the heart of Kumamoto city in Japan.

Established in 2002, the Contemporary Art Museum Kumamoto (CAMK) was founded. It plays a vital role in hosting a variety of special exhibitions, showcasing its compelling collections and attracting widespread public interest. Beyond serving as a cultural hub for the local community, the museum actively fosters regional identity among. By 2022, recognizing that its original design no longer aligned with contemporary demands and activities, the museum commissioned Tezzo Nishizawa Architects to undertake a comprehensive refurbishment.

### **Listen to the Needs: Participatory Design & Refurbishment**

Tezzo Nishizawa heeded the advices of museum staff and the director, conducting two major renewals. By combining the original museum shop and a previously unused café, the newly designated area named “ART LAB MARKET” creates an open space that connects the shop, café, and space for holding workshops. Additionally, the Home Gallery has been revitalized by incorporating tables of various colors and shapes. These tables are designed for easy movement and can be rearranged like puzzle pieces to accommodate different activities, enhancing both the flexibility and aesthetics of the space.

Furthermore, the museum building features an airy corridor that links diverse areas: from the open ART LAB MARKET, which encourages drop-in participation for workshops and purchasing goods, to semi-open spaces such as a library and a kids’ salon, as well as three distinct galleries showcasing art exhibitions. At the end of the corridor is the washroom, while the walls along the way are adorned with lovely paintings of animals. Alongside the corridor, Nishizawa intentionally placed a large table to blur the boundaries between the corridor, the Home Gallery, and the museum shop, allowing visitors to rest, engage in conversation, or even take a nap. To enhance the sense of spaciousness and airiness, Nishizawa replaced the walls of the shops facing the street with floor-to-ceiling windows, enabling visitors to enjoy both the city views and the museum’s interiors simultaneously.

### **More Than a Library! A Multifunctional Art Space**

Moreover, the museum takes pride in its innovative library that encourages visitors to interact with artworks. Departing from conventional displays, these pieces are subtly embedded within the architecture, fostering a spirit of discovery and engagement. For instance,

Marina Abramovic’s “Library for Human Use” transforms bookshelves into interactive spaces where visitors can sit or lie down, becoming part of the exhibit itself, dissolving the serious atmosphere typically associated with library settings. Above, James Turrell’s “Milk Run Sky” presents a ceiling installation that extends into a serene expanse of blue, inviting meditation and imagination. As evening falls, the color of the sky installation shifts into a warm pink hue, while volunteers are empowered and grace the space with live piano performances, creating a wonderful music event that adds an enchanting layer to the overall experience.

### **Inclusion and Accessible for All**

With a vision of promoting inclusion and accessibility, CAMK organized various activities, including a kids’ salon, an area dedicated to both caregivers and children to explore and enjoy art together. Additionally, the museum employs professional consultants on-site from 10 AM to 3 PM daily to provide advice and guidance for parenting.

Additionally, individuals with disabilities who do not possess official Japanese Disability Identification Cards can enter the museum for free with a companion by simply informing the staff of their needs and identity. The Contemporary Art Museum Kumamoto places people’s needs as a priority in its design considerations, embracing diverse communities and turning the concept of inclusion into a reality. Here, visitors of all ages can relax, enjoy art playfully, and best of all, no need to buy coffee for a comfortable seat - plenty of lounging space and large tables await for resting and engaging conversations!

## BIOGRAPHY

*Hsinchun Chen*, is a curator and serves as the President of the Taiwan International Buton Association. She held a master's degree in Building and Planning Studies from National Taiwan University. She has been involved in the historic settlement preservation movement, emphasizing community participation and the construction of public sphere, exploring cross-disciplinary relationships between art and civic engagement. She has also been actively involved in Taiwan's NPO and NGO organizations and platforms.

As an urban activist, she has frequently employed artistic strategies to engage in various projects, including the preservation of the historic Huashan Winery industrial heritage site in Taipei, the Treasure Hill Movement, and the preservation movement for the Sanchong Air Force Village in New Taipei City. From 2015 to 2016, she served as the Chief Cultural Officer of the Dahua 1935 Cultural Park, an industrial heritage site in Xi'an, China, responsible for the overall marketing and operations of the park's theater, galleries, and cultural spaces. Concurrently, she served as the Director of the largest textile museum in Northwest China. In 2018-2019, Hsinchun was the Head of the Department of social innovation and digital humanities of the Taiwan Contemporary Culture Lab.

With a Ph.D. in Museum Studies from the University of Leicester, *Chia-Li Chen's* research has centered on community engagement, the role of memorial museums, and human rights education. She is the author of *Museums and Cultural Identities: Learning and Recollection in Local Museums in Taiwan* (VDM Verlag), *Trauma on Wound: Notes on Memory & Trauma of Museums* (Artouch Press), and *From Margin to Representation: The Museum & Cultural Rights* (National Taiwan University Press). Currently, She serves as a consultant to the National History Museum and National Museum of Human Rights in Taiwan and as the editor-in-chief of the Museum Island Column for the Taiwanese Ministry of Culture.

Chia-Li Chen's scholarship explores three primary areas: 1) Museums and contemporary social issues, with a focus on the engagement and representation of disabled and minority communities; 2) The intersection of museums, traumatic memories, and human rights; and 3) The history and significance of community and literary museums. Across these domains, her research investigates how cultural institutions can amplify marginalized voices, preserve vital histories and memories, and promote human dignity through museum education and curatorship.

## Museum actions for animal conservation: constructing the exhibition framework for advocacy

Wen-Qian Lee

Taipei National University of the Arts, Taipei

Hsu Huang

National Museum of Natural Science, Taichung

Taiwan

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### Abstract

In the face of ecological crises and species extinction caused by drastic environmental changes, museum exhibitions are considered an important avenue for promoting public understanding and inspiring animal conservation practices. Research indicates that traditional exhibitions often fail to convey the urgency of conservation problems, lacking the motivation and impact to inspire action.

This study argues that advocacy is an important approach to conservation practice in museums. Museums can become active social actors, proactively engaging with real-world issues to bring social change. This perspective on advocacy suggests that museums can engage in tangible actions to advance the stance or demands associated with a particular issue, thereby changing public perceptions or practices. Advocacy exhibitions aim to encourage audience participation in conservation actions and practices. By establishing advocacy networks, formulating compelling advocacy appeals, and creating opportunities for public engagement and action, these exhibitions can contribute to changing the challenges of conservation.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the content of conservation exhibitions to construct an advocacy exhibition framework. Through a literature review, different dimensions of the advocacy exhibition framework are summarized and analyzed, and a schema of this framework is proposed. This study links to recent exhibitions at the National Museum of Natural Science to illustrate the relevance of the research topic. This study serves as a reference for the future development of advocacy exhibitions in museums.

**Keywords:** Museum exhibitions, Animal conservation, Museum Advocacy, Exhibitions Framework, Museum Activism



## Introduction

This study posits that “advocacy” is a crucial approach for museums to actively practice animal conservation. The focus of this study is to construct a reference framework for advocacy exhibitions, which integrates strategies from different theories, attempts to depict the types and characteristics of “advocacy exhibitions,” and provides a method for evaluating exhibition cases.

Advocacy broadly refers to actions that are intended to support or promote a particular activity or stance, with an aim to persuade others to achieve a specific goal. Jenkins (2006) specifically states that “advocacy” is the act of opposing or defending a specific stance for a reason. Thus, “advocacy” differs from dissemination and promotion, which aim to transmit information. Its purpose is to persuade the public to change behaviors or thoughts, thus impacting society.

Based on the previous discussion, this study views “advocacy” as museums taking practical steps to support specific issues and stances to change public perspectives or practices (Janes, 2009). Building on museum advocacy discourses, this study asserts that “advocacy exhibitions” must integrate the following five dimensions:

### Contemporary relevance

Advocacy exhibitions must closely align with pressing current social issues and aim to motivate audiences to act. Unlike traditional exhibitions that focus primarily on knowledge dissemination, advocacy exhibitions emphasize the urgency of current problems and the necessity for immediate change. Museums can collaborate with academic institutions, government agencies, and NGOs to ensure the content is relevant to current societal concerns and issues.

### Local community engagement

A number of scholars advocate that museum knowledge production must involve local community participation (Hopper-Greenhill, 1999; Davis, 2008), emphasize community-centered museums. By involving local communities, museums can bridge the gap between centralized knowledge and local needs, producing knowledge or solutions that resonate with social issues. local ecological conservation issues often depend on the acceptance and participation of local communities. Thus “local community ” refer those most closely related to conservation advocacy issues.

### Content contextualization

Contextualization refers to embedding scientific knowledge within its social, cultural, and environmental backgrounds. Traditionally, scientific knowledge is

presented neutrally and objectively, with museums often avoiding explicit support or opposition on current social issues. This neutrality results in a focus on biological taxonomy and species characteristics in animal displays, neglecting the relationships between animals and human society. In advocacy exhibitions, contextualization must showcase not only the biological characteristics of species but also their ecosystems and their interactions with local communities and cultures, with a particular focus on urgent conservation issues that need concern.

### Networking of advocacy communities

Connecting advocacy community networks means that museums mobilize multiple closely related communities and organizations through exhibitions to jointly promote animal conservation issues. Janes & Sandell (2019) and Huang Hsu (2020) note that museums can become trading zone, creating environments through exhibitions and educational activities that bring together individuals with diverse expertise to explore specific issues and establish dialogue among various stakeholders, allowing participants with different backgrounds to take actions together.

### Outreach advocacy actions

Advocacy exhibitions aim to prompt the audience to take tangible actions, transforming their concern for conservation into concrete behaviors. “Outreach advocacy actions” refer to the museum-inspired activities, such as community workshops, conservation-themed lectures, training programs for conservationists, and providing action guides. These actions should inspire immediate audience engagement and further commitment to conservation efforts in daily life.

### Conclusion

We argue that these five dimensions of “advocacy exhibitions” form a spectrum of exhibition types. Most exhibitions are located at a position on this continuous spectrum, rather than being dichotomously divided. Through subsequent case studies, we can evaluate and analyze the position of cases on the spectrum. What is worth further contemplation is the distribution pattern of “advocacy exhibitions” on the spectrum in specific social spaces (e.g., different types of museums), and the underlying reasons for its formation.

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**Wen-Qian Lee** is a museum enthusiast pursuing a master's degree in museology. She currently applies her expertise at the 921 Earthquake Museum of Taiwan, a department of the National Museum of Natural Science. Prior to her museum career, she honed her skills as a graphic designer, seamlessly integrating this experience with her museum work. As a Museum Educator, she participates in the development of exhibits, educational activities, and visitor services. This role has provided her with exposure to the intersection of museum advocacy, conservation, and exhibition, while Wen-Qian focuses on the power of museums to drive social change and ecological sustainability, particularly through social engagement and advocacy.

**Hsu Huang** is an associate curator at the National Museum of Natural Science in Taiwan. He has been working in the Department of Exhibition as the Director, and has conducted and designed many exhibitions in the past 30 years. One of the exhibitions curated by Hsu Huang is "When the South Wind Blows – the Documentary Photography of Taixi Village", which is the topic focusing on air pollution issues in Taiwan. And this exhibition had been nominated and entering the short list of TAISHIN Arts Award in 2015. Hsu Huang has also been the Editor-in-Chief of the academic journal: *Museology Quarterly* since 2011. Apart from his present job, Hsu Huang had been the first Director of the Lan-yang Museum of Yilan County in Taiwan, and a PhD candidate at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London. The practical experience generated his research interests in issues concerning, for example, relationships between knowledge and space, and the social responsibility of museum exhibitions.

## Beyond barriers: Exploring inclusive exhibition design and collaborative narratives

Chia-Yi LIN

National Museum of Taiwan History, Tainan City

Taiwan

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### Abstract

Museum as a hub for community engagement, diverse education, and knowledge dissemination, aiming to bridge visually impaired individuals with the objects to real-life experiences. To ensure inclusivity and accessibility, the National Taiwan Museum of History (NMTH) added seven tactile exhibit areas for visually impaired individuals as part of its permanent exhibition renewal project in 2019. This research aims to delve into the design process and outcomes of these tactile exhibit areas, highlighting the contributions to inclusivity and diversity.

In the design process of the tactile exhibit area, the curation team collaborated closely with the Public Services and Education Division (PSED) and special education experts. The involvement of the PSED and special education experts provided valuable insights into the needs of visually impaired individuals during the design process. Additionally, visually impaired individuals were invited to participate in design validation to ensure the practicality and effectiveness of the exhibit design.

One of the core challenges of this work was adjusting our own mindsets from being knowledge providers to becoming learners in the field of special education. While differing opinions on the arrangement, sizes of tactile objects, and article wording arose, these opinions posed challenges to the aesthetics and professionalism of the museum's display. Discussions revolved around presenting history through object displays and narratives, fostering curiosity about history, and enhancing inclusivity and accessibility for all visitors, particularly the visually impaired. Through intensive collaboration and dialogue, a consensus was reached, leading to the successful development of tactile exhibits catering to diverse needs.

The outcomes enhance the visiting experience for visually impaired individuals, promoting awareness of inclusivity and diversity in society. Through such endeavors, museums can authentically fulfill their mission in education, pleasure, reflection, and knowledge sharing in social service.

**Keywords:** Inclusivity, accessibility, visually impaired, tactile exhibit

## 1. NMTH: A Hub of Society

The National Museum of Taiwan History (NMTH) has long been dedicated to fostering community engagement and striving to provide a diverse range of experiences and learning opportunities. This paper illustrates how NMTH collaborated with the community to expand the inclusivity and universality of the tactile exhibit design using the seven tactile exhibit areas developed during the partial renewal of the NMTH permanent exhibition in 2019.

## 2. Inclusive Design and Objectives

The tactile exhibit design project at NMTH targeted visually impaired individuals, and aimed to achieve inclusivity combined with universal accessibility to ensure that the exhibition could be enjoyed by all.

The project team (PJT) was comprised of professionals from three different fields, each with specific roles and objectives:

- (1) Tactile Exhibit Area Learning Resource Planner (TLSP): Professional educators who focused on curating learning resources from an educational and service-oriented perspective. Due to their prior experience of hosting visually impaired individuals as museum guests, the TLSPs had a good understanding of the insights of tour guides and exhibition staff regarding this audience, allowing them to create learning resources that could stimulate curiosity and provide an enriching experience.
- (2) Permanent Exhibition Curatorial Team (CU): Curators focused on the narrative of the exhibited objects and the aesthetics of the exhibition design to effectively convey the stories of each object.
- (3) Visual Impairment Educational Expert (EDU): University professors specialized in education for those with visual impairments. With extensive knowledge and experience in educational theory, the EDU were able to present history in an easily understandable manner from the perspective of the ways of living and language used by visually impaired individuals.

## 3. Core Challenges: From Knowledge Providers to Learners

In the process of designing the exhibition and collaborating, we frequently encountered challenges in terms of the size and arrangement of tactile exhibits, the font size and color scheme of informational panels, and the appropriateness of the vocabulary used in object descriptions.

For instance, with regards to the “*Muuranker*”<sup>1</sup>, the CU and TLSP initially planned to only showcase the object in

isolation. However, the EDU realized that the *Muuranker* alone would make it difficult for visually impaired individuals to understand how the object connects to architecture. Therefore, the exhibit was expanded from one item to three to demonstrate the application of the *Muuranker* in architecture, and the description of the object was made more explicit. The EDU and TLSP also proposed adjustments to the height of the display table, the depth at which the tactile items were placed, the Braille content, and the design of any raised areas<sup>2</sup>. They suggested that the tactile objects be arranged so that audiences, following their natural line of movement or while being stationary in front of the exhibit, could use their right hand to touch the object from left to right. Moreover, the PJT also worked to ensure that the text design and background color of the informational panels were readable for those with low vision and opted for simple commonly used words instead of academic jargon. These discussions and joint efforts were aimed at not only enhancing the visiting experience of visually impaired individuals but also considering the needs of wheelchair users and children.

In this process, the PJT were required to transition from knowledge providers to learners, engaging in collective reflection and discussion of each member’s ideas to reach a collaborative consensus.

## 4. Conclusion and Expectations

Upon completion of the tactile exhibit area, we invited two individuals with total blindness to test the suitability of the design. Their feedback indicated that the overall exhibit design was easy to engage with through touch and facilitated understanding of the objects; thus, they expressed strong approval.

The PJT members, coming from different professional backgrounds, completed the design of the tactile exhibit area through continuous use of dialectical thinking and role reversal. Using NMTH as a learning platform to explore knowledge, we are committed to delivering high-quality educational experiences and forging a vibrant future that can transcend barriers.

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<sup>2</sup> [Explanation] This involved an evaluation of the height of protruding informational panels and the tactile effects of different materials.

<sup>1</sup> *Muuranker* are commonly known as “iron scissors” or “wall anchors.”



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*Chia-Yi Lin* is a research assistant at the National Museum of Taiwan History. Her research interests are mainly on museum accessibility and education, volunteer and internship management, and inclusion access financial support project. In recent years, she has contributed to the construction, implementation, and evaluation of personalized educational programs for museum visitors to promote well-being and social inclusion in museum education contexts.

# Multilayered Exhibition Strategy

Ming-ying Tsai

M.Y.T. Architects, Taipei  
Taiwan

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## Abstract

Using two examples for multi-level presentations:

### 1. School Architecture Journey by a Female Architect

Through mobile exhibition units, we embark on a quest to discover the fantastical school architecture of Taiwan from the 1960s to the 1980s. As we open this extraordinary suitcase of dreams, we traverse through the history of Taiwanese school architecture, walking and learning simultaneously. Through the process of collection and exchange, we gather these memories back into the suitcase, engaging in interactive exhibitions that accompany the journey of the mobile school, fostering mutual growth.

### 2. Free-flying Black Bats

Breaking away from the traditional confines of enclosed exhibition spaces, we aim to extend visitor pathways from indoor exhibition areas to the outdoors, enticing people to linger. By incorporating outdoor spaces, visitors can immerse themselves in the thematic journey of the exhibition, drawing them closer to explore the historical significance behind it, leaving a lasting impression. Meaningful integration with local settings and scenes allows the exhibition to seamlessly blend into everyday life.

**Keywords:** Architectural Proposal, Integration of Environment and Exhibition Space, Mobile Exhibition Spaces, Collection and Exchange

Using two examples for multi-level presentations:

### 1. Hsiu's moving school : School Architecture Journey by a Female Architect

As one of the most important post war female architects of Taiwan, not only was Hsiu famously known for designing the imperialistic Chungshan Hall, her active participation as an architect during the government's basic education roll out program meant that a large body of her work consist of schools.

To further the public's understanding of Hsiu's architecture and the historic significance of her educational works, this project is designed as a moving exhibition that can be adapted to any school it travels to. Resembling an architect's briefcase, travelling as Hsiu did to various sites across Taiwan to design, the enlarged briefcase opens up to display documents of Hsiu's schools, their distinct architectural characteristics and embellishments. The light box also allows the audience to visualize and experience how Hsiu used to work.

Partnering with the National Taiwan Museum, as Hsiu's moving school travels to each school, new information is collected and exchanged with the participating schools, enriching and continually updating the historic information collected, before moving to the next destination.

Hsiu's moving school has begun travelling around Taiwan in 2021, visiting numerous high schools and universities designed by Hsiu. At each location, the students and teachers are reintroduced to Hsiu 's work and intentions with WAT's walking tours and lectures, planting the seeds of design education at secondary school level. In addition, as the historical data verification is conducted simultaneously with the exhibition, the project indirectly facilitates the successful application for historical building status for the Zhongshan Girls' High School auditorium.

### 2. Free-Flying Black Bats : A Landscape Installation Extended from the Museum

*Hsinchu Black Bat Squadron Outdoor Plaza - Donda Flight Park Art Installation*

The history of the Black Bat Squadron is part of the military village culture. They utilized the cover of night to fly at low altitudes into mainland China for electronic reconnaissance and intelligence gathering, providing information to the U.S. During their 20 years of missions, over a hundred personnel sacrificed their lives in defense of national security today.

This base is located next to the Black Bat Squadron Museum Park, aiming to break the traditional boundaries of closed indoor exhibition spaces by extending the visitor flow outdoors to attract the public. Centered around the Black Bat Squadron Museum, the project expands into

the surrounding area and spreads to the Dongda Flying Park, using landscape and art installations to present the "mission scenes and imagery": allowing visitors to feel as if they are experiencing a mission, encouraging them to get closer and explore the historical context behind it, enabling a personal experience and understanding of the Black Bat Squadron, and continuing the legacy of their predecessors.

The installations include entrance imagery, "Flight Logs," "Starry Sky Path," "Wings of Dreams," "Flight square," "Hearing Dreams," and "New Moon Chair." The "Flight Logs" at the start of the path represents the era of mission execution and aircraft models; "Starry Sky Path" is based on the runway of the Hsinchu Air Force Base, marked with runway numbers; the lattice structure above utilizes weathering steel's rugged appearance and antique rust to create a design that integrates the structure with the sky. The scene is designed to evoke the starry sky and the falling rain of bullets, hoping to encourage visitors to pause and reflect on the hardships of the Black Bat Squadron, who operated by day and flew by night amidst gunfire. "Wings of Dreams" features a silhouette of the Black Bat Squadron taking off in a P2V low-altitude reconnaissance aircraft; "Flight Plaza" is designed with flight arcs, allowing viewers to imagine flying through the visuals; "Hearing Dreams" uses a speaking tube to let the public experience the secretive communication of the Black Bat Squadron; and "New Moon Chair" symbolizes the nights when the Black Bat Squadron operated without stars or moons, enhancing the park's design with the image of a new moon.

This base was once the camp of the Black Bat Squadron, adjacent to the Black Bat Squadron Museum, using flight routes as the design theme and inspired by the stories of reconnaissance in the night. The design integrates the structure with the sky, presenting seven major art installations, creating a park greenbelt that combines historical education with recreational functions. It is the first park in the city to integrate historical events into its landscape features and serves as the core location of the 4-kilometer Hsinchu Forest.

#### BIOGRAPHY

"Since 1999, I have been involved in projects ranging from interior design to the renovation of old buildings. I obtained my architect license in 2004. Subsequently, from 2005 to 2007, I pursued further studies at the Berlage Institute of Architecture in the Netherlands. After a year of working at an architectural firm in the Netherlands, I returned to Taiwan. With experience in various fields and scales of work, as an architect, I aim to explore urban spaces and address public issues of urban regeneration and sustainable development. Through architectural redesign, spatial reorganization, or curatorial art interventions, I seek to integrate resources in a maximized manner to strategize and design, allowing the general public to understand and experience living spaces from different perspectives, thus prompting a reevaluation of the spaces we inhabit."

# Designing Curiosity: Beyond Aesthetics in Exhibition Spaces

Sebastian Chun

National Gallery Singapore

Singapore

## Abstract

**Keywords:** Sensitivity, Curiosity, Innovation, Collaboration, Engagement

### FUSION OF DIVERSE AESTHETIC TRADITIONS

Exhibition design that transcends mere aesthetics requires a fusion of varied artistic elements. This creates a visually captivating experience that honours diverse traditions and perspectives.

### CULTURAL SENSITIVITY IN DESIGN

Designing with cultural sensitivity ensures respectful representation of artefacts and artworks, fostering deeper understanding among diverse audiences.

### AROUSING CURIOSITY THROUGH DESIGN

By emphasizing design research and historical knowledge, we create contextually rich designs that spark curiosity and imagination. This approach encourages visitors to engage deeply with the exhibition content.

### PROACTIVE CURATORIAL COLLABORATION

A proactive approach with curators is essential. Through in-depth dialogues, we analyse each exhibition's unique characteristics, target audience, and expectations, ensuring a thoughtful design.

### ENCOURAGING RISK-TAKING

Most curators prefer conventional approaches. Our role is to provide information and rationale to encourage embracing innovative, unconventional ideas.

### INNOVATIVE NARRATIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Utilizing innovative methodologies, we transform exhibition spaces into immersive narrative environments that engage visitors and connect emotionally.

### ENGAGING NARRATIVE AND DIALOGUE

Creating engaging narratives and fostering dialogue among architects, curators, and designers ensures cohesive designs that resonate in various cultural contexts.

### ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES FOR DIVERSE CONTEXTS

Developing strategies to adapt exhibitions to different cultural contexts ensures relevance and accessibility, offering meaningful experiences to a broad audience.



## **Fusion of Diverse Aesthetic Traditions**

Exhibition design that transcends mere aesthetics is deeply rooted in the integration of diverse artistic traditions. This approach aims to create a visually captivating experience by highlighting the beauty of various cultural elements. It is not just about combining different styles but also about fostering a deeper appreciation for the rich tapestry of global artistic practices.

By thoughtfully blending aesthetic elements, designers craft environments that respect a multitude of traditions and perspectives. This fusion goes beyond superficial ornamentation, striving to create spaces where different styles and cultural references come together to form a cohesive and immersive narrative.

Such an approach allows exhibitions to present a more nuanced and inclusive portrayal of art and heritage. It engages visitors in a dialogue that celebrates diversity, providing them with a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the artistic landscape.

## **Cultural Sensitivity in Design**

Cultural sensitivity is a cornerstone of effective exhibition design. It involves a deliberate effort to represent artifacts and artworks with the utmost respect and accuracy, considering their cultural significance and historical context.

Incorporating cultural sensitivity into the design process ensures that exhibitions avoid misinterpretation and misrepresentation. This thoughtful approach fosters a deeper and more respectful engagement among diverse audiences.

Every aspect of the exhibition—whether layout, text, or visual presentation—must be crafted to reflect the cultural heritage of the items on display. As a result, exhibitions transform from mere showcases into platforms for education and dialogue, enhancing visitors' understanding and appreciation of different cultures and artistic expressions.

## **Arousing Curiosity Through Design**

The role of design research and historical knowledge in exhibition creation is crucial. By leveraging a deep understanding of the content and its historical background, designers craft contextually rich environments that stimulate curiosity and imagination.

Effective design integrates information into the spatial narrative of the exhibition, encouraging visitors to explore the subject matter further. Engaging design elements, such as interactive displays and immersive environments, captivate the audience's interest and invite them to discover the nuances of the exhibition content.

This approach enhances the educational value of the exhibition and ensures that visitors leave with a lasting sense of wonder and a greater appreciation for the subject matter.

## **Proactive Curatorial Collaboration**

Successful exhibition design relies heavily on proactive collaboration with curators. This collaboration involves detailed discussions to analyse each exhibition's unique characteristics, such as its target audience, thematic focus, and specific expectations.

Such dialogues are crucial for understanding the curatorial vision and ensuring that the design complements and enhances the exhibition's objectives. Through these discussions, designers gain valuable insights into the curatorial narrative, leading to more informed and thoughtful design decisions.

This collaborative process ensures that the exhibition is visually appealing and aligned with the educational and interpretive goals set by the curatorial team. By fostering a strong partnership between designers and curators, exhibitions can achieve a higher level of coherence and impact.

## **Encouraging Risk-Taking**

While many curators prefer conventional approaches, designers should advocate for innovative and unconventional ideas. This involves presenting well-researched information and compelling rationales to support more adventurous design choices.

Embracing risk in exhibition design can lead to groundbreaking and memorable experiences that push the boundaries of traditional presentation methods. By demonstrating how innovative approaches can enhance visitor engagement and educational outcomes, designers can help curators appreciate the value of exploring new possibilities.

Encouraging risk-taking not only fosters creativity but also positions the exhibition as a dynamic and forward-thinking project. This approach helps the exhibition stand out in a crowded field of cultural presentations.

## **Innovative Narrative Environments**

Transforming exhibition spaces into immersive narrative environments is a key aspect of contemporary design practice. Designers use innovative methodologies to create environments that engage visitors on multiple sensory levels and foster emotional connections with the content.

This might involve advanced technology, creative spatial arrangements, or interactive elements that draw visitors into the narrative. The goal is to craft spaces that not only display artifacts but also tell compelling stories.

By creating an atmosphere where visitors feel actively involved in the exhibition experience, innovative narrative environments significantly enhance the impact of the exhibition. This approach makes the exhibition more memorable and meaningful for the audience.

### **Engaging Narrative and Dialogue**

Creating engaging narratives and fostering dialogue among architects, curators, artists and designers is essential for producing cohesive and resonant exhibition designs. Effective communication and collaboration among these stakeholders ensure that the design supports and amplifies the curatorial vision while addressing the needs and expectations of the audience.

By working together to develop a unified narrative and design approach, the team can create exhibitions that resonate across different cultural contexts. This collaborative effort results in a more integrated and impactful presentation that effectively communicates the intended message and enhances the overall visitor experience.

### **Adaptive Strategies for Diverse Contexts**

Developing adaptive strategies for different cultural contexts is crucial for creating relevant and accessible exhibitions. This involves tailoring the design approach to suit the specific cultural and contextual needs of each exhibition.

Adaptive strategies may include adjusting design elements to reflect local cultural norms, incorporating region-specific educational content, or providing multilingual information. By considering these factors, designers can create exhibitions that offer meaningful experiences to a wide range of visitors, regardless of their cultural background.

This approach broadens the reach of the exhibition and enhances its educational and cultural impact, ensuring that the exhibition resonates with a diverse audience.

### **BIOGRAPHY**

**Sebastian Chun** was trained at Central St Martins College of Art and Design in London, graduating in Theatre Design for Performance under the National Arts Council's scholarship.

His awards include the Young Designer Award, multiple Theatre Awards for Best Stage Design, and the President Design Award for Exhibition Design.

His professional experience spans interior design, stage design, and exhibition design.

Sebastian has worked at the Asian Civilisations Museum and the Singapore Art Museum and is currently employed at the National Gallery Singapore.

## Others' Past, Our Belief: Chinese Prehistoric Collections in The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm

Jiayi Chang

University of Leicester, Leicester

United Kingdom

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### Abstract

Museums, especially national museums, are socially and culturally shaped. The ideologies and values of the state not only influence the way museums tell the national past, but also shape how heterogeneous culture is presented. The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities (MFEA) in Stockholm housed a larger number of objects from Neolithic China than anyone else outside of China. These prehistoric objects are from Yangshao Culture, while the excavation in 1921 marked the birth of the Chinese modern archaeology and was led by a Swedish geologist Johan Gunnar Andersson, who later became MFEA's founding director. Taking the permanent exhibition "China before China" curated in 2004 as a case study, this article investigates how MFEA displays these Chinese prehistoric collections through a Swedish value of openness, inclusivity and equality. It first briefly contextualizes how the colonized past of Western museums downplay the historicity of objects and ethical controversy, and then reviews how these prehistoric objects became collections of MFEA after a joint excavation in Yangshao. Then it analyses the three curatorial ways the exhibition conveys Swedish values, including justifying the legitimacy of obtaining these objects under the Chinese government's permission, highlighting the shared humanity in object categories to make the narrative understandable for Western audiences, and openly discussing repatriation issues. On the one hand, the foreign culture can thus be understood in a socially inclusive society without losing its situatedness and characteristics, while on the other, such cross-cultural exhibitions convert other cultures' past into truths and beliefs which is appropriate to "our" society's contemporary and future.

**Keywords:** Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Archaeological curation; Cross-cultural; Socially inclusive

In Sweden, the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities (MFEA) in Stockholm housed a larger number of objects from Neolithic China than anyone else outside of China. Unlike many Chinese cultural relics displayed in Western museums, these prehistoric objects in the MFEA were not looted or purchased but originated from the joint archaeological excavation conducted by the Swedish and Chinese governments in Yangshao, Henan in 1921. In the fall of 2004, these objects were put on display in the museum's main display *China before China*, which opened to the public after the co-curation of the then-director of MFEA, Magnus Fiskesjö, and Professor Chen Xingcan from the Institute of Archaeology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. This non-plundered resource and collaborative curation means that Orientalist theory, which is often used to criticize the display of Chinese artefacts in Western museums, is not suitable for understanding the discourse of this museum. By placing this exhibition in the Swedish social context, this article investigates how MFEA displays these Chinese prehistoric collections through a Swedish value of openness, inclusivity, and equality.

This paper mainly conducts discourse analysis through on-site visits to the museum and books published by curators. It is based on one of the methodologies proposed by Simon Knell (2020, p.173) in contemporary museology, situatedness, which acknowledges that museums are in situations of time, space, culture, society, and psychology. In the case of this study, the principle of situatedness requires recognising that although the exhibition is about Chinese artefacts and is a product of collaboration with Chinese archaeologists, it is geographically located in Sweden, and Swedish culture and politics should be considered the cornerstone of the contextual analysis of this museum. As one of the Nordic countries with a stable democracy and rapid industrial development, Sweden has not participated in any war in nearly 200 years (Aronsson, 2012, p.173). Similarly to the Historiska Museet representing egalitarianism, human rights, and social justice (Knell, 2020, p.101), I discovered a similar ideological tendency in *China before China* in the MFEA.

Specifically, the exhibition reinforces Swedish egalitarianism and humanism in three ways. Firstly, the exhibition title views the objects as "part of the collective heritage of mankind and should thus be of interest to us all" (Franck, 2012, p.336), instead of constraining it within the Chinese identity. By linking these prehistoric artefacts to general customs, the exhibition hopes that Swedish audiences can understand these artefacts from the perspective of universal humanity. Secondly, to emphasise that Sweden's acquisition of these objects was based on equal cooperation, the exhibition displayed the agreement signed by representatives of the Chinese government and Sweden. Finally, the exhibition showed greater concern about the fact that Asian cultural heritage was looted to the West under unequal conditions and mentioned that

they are discussing with China how to deal with objects that should have been sent back to China but were not returned for some reasons. It thus calls for explaining world culture to its audience in collaboration with the cultural heritage authorities and researchers of the countries in question, not behind their backs (Fiskesjö, 2004, p.138).

In conclusion, cross-cultural exhibitions under the values of egalitarianism and cooperation consolidate local ideologies while also respecting other cultures from the standpoint of promoting international cooperation on heritage preservation and global public access.

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**Jiayi Chang** is currently a third-year PhD student at the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. Her research interest is museums and ideology, while her main research interest is the Communist Party of China and its extensive deployment of museums in fulfilling political objectives. The way she approaches her research is by observing and deconstructing the performances and narratives in museums. She respects the situatedness of the Chinese contemporary museum and heritage system and hopes to expand and diversify the understanding of the museum and counter homogenizing views that deny this diversity.



# Uncovering Indigenous Labour History—A Case Study of the Exhibition People of the Sea: Amis/Pangcah Indigenous High Seas Fishermen

Dr. Yi-Chun LU

Assistant Researcher, National Museum of Prehistory

Taiwan

## Abstract

The updated Taiwan Prehistory Hall and Austronesian Hall of the National Museum of Prehistory's permanent exhibition mention that Taiwanese indigenous people have travelled between Taiwan and the rest of the Austronesian world via the sea from prehistory to the contemporary era, allowing for mutual exchanges and the building of relationships. The study of the spread and migration of Austronesian people is a topic of focus in a number of fields. However, with the rapid changes in Taiwanese society since the end of World War II, the history of Taiwanese indigenous people involved in high seas fishing has remained relatively undocumented.

Taiwan excels at high seas fishing, its catches, the number of species fished, and fleet size all ranking among the best in the world. The Taiwanese fishing fleet operates across the Pacific, Indian, and Atlantic Oceans. Taiwan and other countries cooperate in a way that involves payments to access each other's exclusive economic zones for operations such as seining, tuna fishing, and squid fishing. Among these partners, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, and Tuvalu are Taiwan's diplomatic allies in the Pacific region and Austronesian-speaking countries. The long-term development of offshore fishing has strengthened Taiwan's political, economic, and socio-cultural relations with these countries.

The exhibition "People on the Sea: Amis/Pangcah Indigenous High Seas Fishermen" is aimed at informing people about the experiences and contributions of Taiwanese indigenous people to Taiwan's fishing industry since becoming part of the capitalist labour market, their experiences of connection with the world, and the related significance. Taiwan's economy began a quick ascent in the 1960s, and the capitalist labour market required a large amount of human resources. As a result, many Taiwanese indigenous people moved from their rural home communities to the cities, living on the periphery of mainstream society, to improve their financial states. In the 1980s, they became the main source of labour behind the fishing industry, accounting for one-third of the high seas fishing workforce. Of them, the majority were Amis/Pangcah from Hualien and Taitung, the east coast of Taiwan, a phenomenon closely related to the importance of the ocean in their traditional culture. Since the Japanese colonial period (beginning in 1895), the loss of their land

meant that many of them could no longer rely on farming to meet their economic needs, so most migrated to find jobs in construction, mining, or fishing.

How should we present the history of Taiwanese indigenous people's participation in the high seas fishing industry that has been largely ignored? This study looks at the planning process for the abovementioned exhibition. I collected historical documents and objects, conducted interviews, and contemplated the subjectivity of indigenous people and gender within the exhibition narrative. The informants I interviewed narrated their life stories of starting as low-level crew members and later becoming senior managers of an American seine fishing boat. This approach was intentionally taken to challenge the stereotype that indigenous people are confined to the low levels of the working class. To avoid a purely male perspective, the narratives of the crew's wives and children are also included. Additionally, I reflected on how the curator collaborated with the indigenous community, members of whom also work in the construction or fishing fields, and the design team. As the sense of space at sea is very different from that on land, the exhibition route guides visitors through a video experience that simulates taking a boat on the ocean, beginning at the entrance of the venue. It then leads them to follow a school of fish into the history of indigenous high seas fishermen. The wave-shaped exhibition board not only evokes the experience of being at sea but also highlights the traditional knowledge and wisdom of the Amis/Pangcah people in observing waves while fishing.

With the plight of survival of Taiwanese indigenous high seas fishermen as the focus, the study looks at the four sections of the exhibition ("Leaving Home for the High Seas", "Dawn and Darkness on the Sea," "Unrevealed Feelings", and "The High Seas in Music and Performance Art") to present the global status of Taiwan's high seas fishing industry, the lives of those who made their living off the sea, the influence on the fishermen's families, and how music and other works of performance art transmit the feelings and thoughts indigenous people have on the high seas fishing industry.

The indigenous music cassette tapes in this exhibition, part of the Museum of Prehistory's collection, are no longer being produced. These popular songs, written in both Chinese and indigenous languages, are related to

the high seas fishing industry and were circulated among indigenous people and crew members. At that time, to meet their families' needs, many indigenous people had to leave their homes and venture out to sea. These songs effectively capture the complex emotions they experienced and challenges they faced on the ocean. Having become deeply embedded in indigenous people's lives through cassette tapes and karaoke, they represent not only the collective memory of indigenous people over age 50 but also vividly reflect the experiences of indigenous people during their days on fishing boats. With only fragments of related material and a limited number of related texts and images, our understanding of the lives of indigenous people involved in offshore fishing remain vague. Yet through the narratives of the fishermen, the history of indigenous people in the high seas fishing industry—some of it hidden beneath the sea—will gradually emerge.

**Keywords:** Austronesian people, indigenous labour history, high seas fishing industry, exhibition design

#### BIOGRAPHY

*Dr. Yi-Chun LU* holds her PhD degree in Anthropology from National Taiwan University. She is an assistant researcher at the National Museum of Prehistory in Taiwan. Her research areas are Taiwan indigenous studies (especially the Amis/Pangcah), material culture, museum and contemporary social issues.

# From digital platforms to dialogic spaces - unfolding the hidden stories of the displaced objects

Mingshi Cui

University of Leicester, Leicester

United Kingdom

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## Abstract

Museums in countries with colonial pasts are enmeshed in long-standing and recently exacerbated debates about the future of cultural artefacts that were obtained from other cultures under contexts of disempowerments in history. As discussions about the repatriation of these artefacts unfold, digital technologies are being increasingly used as interim measures of display for virtual restoration. The rationale behind such practices, however, deserves meticulous re-examination, considering its effectiveness in highlighting the pluralities of the object's representational meanings imparted by different social actors throughout its journey, and in provoking more socially constructive dialogues on the difficult histories related to the displacements.

Hence, this presentation focuses on exploring the potential of digital technology to exhibit displaced objects dialogically, in ways that extend the debates on virtual repatriation and restoration. Using the story of a group of mural fragments originated in China but are now dispersed worldwide as a case study, I will unravel the polysemic nature of the displaced object and demonstrate how that could potentially enrich our understanding of intercultural encounters between individuals/groups in history. The presentation calls for the need to fully utilise digital collaborative platforms to facilitate deeper understanding and dialogue between cultures and cultural institutions, and suggests a conceptual framework for creating such knowledge sharing space for connecting museum professionals and originating communities based on equal, non-hierarchical power relationships.

**Keywords:** digital humanities, digital storytelling, displaced object, critical heritage studies, intercultural communication

This talk is mainly based on my PhD research that explores how the polysemic nature of the displaced object can be better presented through digital approach, and how that can provoke more socially constructive intercultural dialogues. The research is contextualized within a larger research context where calls for objects repatriation and reconsideration of how their stories should be narrated were amplified. That follows the incidents of missing objects in large national museums and a growing body of research that finds insufficient or false archival data of the displaced objects in the museum's catalogue. My research responds to this increasingly heated debate and growing concern over the justification of displaced objects' custodianship and how their stories should be told to the public. In my research, I examined how tracing the displaced objects' social lives could inform the construction and reevaluation of a more culturally inclusive online platform design that can facilitate intercultural dialogues between the originating community and the host museum.

The application of digital technologies in the organization and preservation of museum object information started in the mid-20th century when museum computing made it possible to transfer object information from paper to machine-readable systems (Arvanitis, 2010; Van Heur, 2010; Parry, 2007; Bearman, 1995). Yet, one major concern is that the data been collected and used for various research purposes is not neutral itself. Especially concerning the displaced objects obtained from their originating community, their data in the museum's collection management system are structured in ways that align with the local value system, reflecting biased perceptions toward the object's cultural representations which needs to be reexamined and interrogated (Turner, 2016; Turner, 2020).

My research thus focused on developing the conceptualization and model for a digital object biography as a more culturally inclusive form of museum documentation. I used a Buddhist mural fragment originated in China now collected in the V&A as a case study, and examined its history of breaking and displacements. I used mixed data collection methods that helped me form deeper understanding of how the shifting values adopted by different organisations that influenced the object's interpretations and display. The collected data is pivotal in grasping a fuller picture of the object's meanings, yet, is not fully captured and incorporated into the museum's database. Facing this problem, I employed the concept "object diaspora", a term frequently used by scholars like Basu (2011), to discern the complicate cultural representations of displaced objects in museum collections. I addressed that through the digital platform where source and host communities are connected, the object becomes a medium that connects individuals and organisations from different cultural groups. The major contribution of this research is that it enriches our

understandings of the social role of digital technology in addressing the multiplicities in object interpretations and the under/misrepresentation of the originating cultures. It explored the capacity of digital technology to construct ideal environments for the exchange of views between groups and cultural organisations.

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## BIOGRAPHY

**Mingshi Cui** has just completed her PhD at the School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester. Her current research project explores the potential of creating a digital object biography for the displaced object in a way that unveils its multi-layered interpretations and values. Mingshi's research interests include material culture studies, intercultural communication, and digital humanities. Drawing upon her previous educational and working experiences, she is particularly interested in examining how to facilitate cross-cultural understanding in museums, enabling audiences and the museum professionals alike to better engage with the museum collections and empathize with the cultural groups been represented.



# Representing the Sacred in Museum Spaces: through Digital Technology and Social Engagement

KAO, Yu-Chun

National Palace Museum, Taipei

Taiwan

## Abstract

Religious artifacts often encounter a dilemma in museums: their original sanctity can be compromised, leading to a demystification process in which these objects are interpreted as historical or aesthetic rather than spiritual. Paine (2013) argues that museums tend to secularize religious artifacts by contextualizing them through art historical or cultural heritage frameworks, and that aestheticization diminishes the sacred nature of religious objects. This article explores how museums balance secularization and sanctification, focusing on the role of atmosphere in shaping visitors' experiences of religious exhibitions. Building on Engleke's (2012, 2013) concept of "ambient religion," as introduced by Lin and Huang (2022), this study explores how exhibitions can enhance or weaken the sacred character of religious artifacts by evoking sensory experiences through the design and use of space, music, and digital technology.

Through a comparative analysis of three exhibitions: "Mountains, Ocean, and Sky—Nature in Me" at the Museum of World Religions, "Buddhist Maritime Silk Road - New Media Art Exhibition" at Fo Guang Shan Buddha Museum, and "Divine Vision, Ghostly Reflection - New Media Art Exhibition" organized by the National Palace Museum, examines the role of atmosphere in mediating the spiritual connection between visitors and religious artifacts. The exhibitions offer a range of strategies that respond to the museum's tone, from immersive experiences that evoke a sense of the sacred to more analytical, secular presentations.

The first case study, "Mountains, Ocean, and Sky—Nature in Me," is part of the life education series launched by the Museum of World Religions. The exhibition uses multimedia technology to craft a poetic and immersive space. This allows visitors to reflect on the natural world through the lens of Buddhist philosophy. The exhibition emphasizes a multi-sensory dialogue with nature through panoramic projections, swings and the tactile sensation of stepping on scattered leaves, guiding visitors into a meditative experience. The museum's strategic use of space and calming elements allows visitors to have spiritual contact with nature in a quasi-sacred setting without replicating a traditional religious setting. The exhibition is divided into independent and divided areas, allowing for personal reflection, helping to create a profound atmospheric

experience, promoting inner spiritual dialogue, aligning with the exhibition's purpose.

In comparison, the "Buddhist Maritime Silk Road - New Media Art Exhibition" at the Fo Guang Shan Buddha Museum is more academic in its presentation of religious artifacts. The exhibition traces the spread of Buddhism through maritime routes and uses digital media to explore the historical and cultural spread of Buddhist teachings. While immersive iDome hemispheric projections and 360-degree panoramic movies create a sensory experience, the exhibition maintains an academic tone, allowing visitors to interact with artifacts from a distance. The use of religious music and 7.1 channel surround sound enhances the sacred atmosphere, but the overall experience positions the visitor as an outsider, observing the religious space from an analytical perspective. Furthermore, this deliberate detachment is consistent with the museum's goal of providing scholarly interpretations of Buddhism that effectively demystify religious objects without completely sanctifying them.

The third case study "Divine Vision, Ghostly Reflection - New Media Art Exhibition" was curated by the National Palace Museum and exhibited at the National Library of Public Information. Moving from sacralization to postmodern analysis of religious artifacts. This exhibition uses digital installations to reinterpret religious art and folk rituals, emphasizing the imaginative functions of religion and art. The immersive theater used in this exhibition tells stories through the religions painting, providing an educational narrative rather than an immersive religious experience. The exhibition's board-less layout and singular sound design create an environment that feels both mystical and worldly. The space is designed to foster curiosity and exploration rather than spiritual reflection, placing religious artifacts within an art historical framework. By reducing the religious "atmosphere," the exhibition invites visitors to engage with the material intellectually rather than spiritually, while simultaneously attracting more people from different faith backgrounds into the exhibition space.

The three exhibitions illustrate different ways of displaying religious artifacts, each reflecting a different strategy for the balance between secularization and sacralization. "Mountains, Ocean, and Sky—Nature in Me" creates an atmosphere of tranquility and contemplation, promoting spiritual engagement, while "Buddhist Maritime Silk

Road - New Media Art Exhibition " emphasizes scholarly analysis with sacred overtones, and " Divine Vision, Ghostly Reflection - New Media Art Exhibition " takes a more legendary, intellectual approach. Together, these exhibitions highlight the importance of atmosphere in shaping the way religious objects are perceived in museums. However, the most important thing is that the museum must understand its own display purpose so that it can properly use different technologies to communicate with the audience.

**Keywords:** Religious display, Ambient religion, Immersive experience, Transdisciplinary curation

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## BIOGRAPHY

**Yu-Chun Kao** is an assistant researcher of National Palace Museum, Taiwan. Having background in history and museum studies. She has worked in the field of museums and digital interpretation as a curator and educator, and gained a wide variety of experience internationally: in Taiwan, UK and Hong Kong, since 2015. Her main research interest is to find out how and why digital intervention can increase Museum public relations through project practice and daily audience research.

# From Flat Images to Immersive Experiences in Virtual Space: The Online Exhibition Practices of 2D, 3D and 360-degree Narratives on Google Arts and Culture

Yi-Fan Tseng

National Palace Museum, Taipei

Taiwan

## Abstract

This article demonstrates the case studies of a multimedia narrative strategy in online exhibitions hosted on the National Palace Museum's Google Arts & Culture platform. By integrating images, 3D modeling, 360 VR videos, and text descriptions, the studies aim to explore various storytelling approaches across diverse media formats. This approach enhances viewer engagement and provides a more immersive and interactive exploration of art and cultural heritage.

**Keywords:** Online Exhibition, Google Arts and Culture, Digital Achieve, Digital Heritage

As cutting-edge three-dimensional modeling technology advances rapidly, cultural heritage artifacts gain significant added value from high-resolution 3D models. The National Palace Museums have published several models of artifacts in their official 3D gallery and the Sketchfab website, enabling audiences to rotate models and view details. While most museum websites make 3D models accessible to the public, many still adhere to the tradition of presenting artifact descriptions on single pages. However, platforms like Google Arts & Culture integrate various tools, including images, YouTube videos, Street View, and 3D assets, to facilitate the creation and publishing of online exhibitions "stories" with rich storytelling capabilities. It enables digital curators to experiment with numerous combinations of narrative approaches and explore various exhibit modes to craft compelling stories. This study leverages past stories hosted by the National Palace Museum, highlighting the platform's potential for multimedia storytelling narrative strategies.

This study offers a new perspective on online exhibitions within the GLAM sector, investigating diverse narrative approaches with multiple media formats. Additionally, it identifies opportunities for initiating dialogues across museum collections. Digital curators can easily quote assets and collections with different media formats from other museums through the GAC platform without copyright concerns, positioning themselves as interpreters of knowledge regarding cultural relics while also considering pedagogical content knowledge and aesthetic experiences.

## Introduction

As technology evolves rapidly, the digitization of cultural heritage and art collections transforms how audiences engage with and experience online exhibitions. The National Palace Museum (NPM) has committed to enhancing public digital access for international audiences through online exhibitions and published “Stories” on Google Arts and Culture (GAC) to showcase its collections of cultural relics. This article concerns the practices of NPM’s online exhibition, exploring diverse multimedia narratives approaches.

## The Experimental Approach of Digital Curation Practices

This paragraph examines the online exhibition “*One Hundred Horses and the Four Seasons: An Immersive Experience with VR Videos and Animations*.” It features Lang Shining’s renowned painting “One Hundred Horses” as the cover illustration at first. Secondly, it shows the ‘VR video “One Hundred Horses and the Four Seasons—A Concerto of Sino-Western Cultural Exchange.’ Viewers can interact with the 360-degree VR video by dragging and rotating the screen to explore the virtual environment. Following the rhythm of the music, Vivaldi’s ‘*Four Seasons*’ violin concerti, and the transition from day to night, the shining particles transform into horses of various physiques, sizes, and coat colors, demonstrating the infinite charm of blending Eastern and Western painting techniques from a new perspective. This integration surrounds the exhibition with music, elevating the overall experience.

The third section describes the painting, using text and images to introduce “One Hundred Horses.” It features a zoom-in from right to left, following the traditional viewing method for Chinese handscrolls. With high-resolution features, viewers could easily observe the tiny figures in the painting. Furthermore, this exhibition applies the trait of cross-museum collaboration through shared assets, compared to the collection of line drawings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York uploaded on the GAC platform. Viewers could understand the painting process and realize that the technique in the painting differs from that of traditional Chinese art, utilizing areas of light and dark colors for the forms to suggest their volumetric quality and express a sense of light and shadow. Lastly, the exhibition finishes with the Painting Animation. The production basis of this film is to remain loyal to the original painting and strive to recreate its scenes as faithfully as possible, bringing the horses in the artwork to life with vivid motion. Viewers end up viewing the elements of the painting and switching the sensory experience from 360 VR video, flat image to animation.

## Discussion: The Possibilities of Trial 3D Model Applications

This section explores an attempt to adapt the central theme of an offline artifacts exhibition into GAC stories, using the case ‘*Sacrifice and Warfare: A Guide to Ancient Weapons*’ as a hypothetical example to investigate the potential of 3D model media formats in online exhibitions. However, the exercise illustrates how digital curators might plan and transform an exhibition for the GAC platform, offering varied perspectives on integrating 3D models into online exhibition narratives.

In the test exhibition, 3D models are displayed with the added dimension of interacting with the artifact’s 3D structure. Curators can add text descriptions alongside the models to introduce cultural relics, edit the 3D models, creating specific digital narratives that guide the movement of the objects in a predefined way. Viewers could drag, swipe, zoom in, and rotate the objects to examine details closely. Ultimately, the object follows the path set by curators, gracefully rotating to present itself at a predetermined location.

## CONCLUSION

The Digital Curation Centre defines digital curation as maintaining, preserving, and adding value to digital research data throughout its lifecycle. Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums (GLAM) have collected vast digital assets to safeguard their collections. This preservation role has resulted in creating digital heritage through 3D scans and interactive applications for educational purposes. Digital curators enhance public access and add value by reusing and transforming these archives. At NPM, digital curators have expanded the use of 2D images, 3D models, and 360-degree VR videos to blend text and media, capturing audience attention and combating visual fatigue. In response to the nature of digital media, NPM creates interactive, engaging experiences reshaping the future of online exhibitions in the GLAM sector.

## BIOGRAPHY

**Yi-Fan Tseng** is a researcher focus on the visual culture, media archaeology. Her research interests include digital humanities, cultural heritage, and the intersection of art, technology, and experience. She holds an M.A. from National Chengchi University.



## An International Collaborative Curatorial Project: *Formosa Orchids Blossom, Taipei Edition*

Yian Chen

National Museum of History, Taipei

The University of Tokyo, Tokyo

Taiwan, Japan

“Formosa Orchids Blossom (臺灣蘭花百姿)” is an interdisciplinary, international curatorial project that explores the natural history and cultural significance of orchids in Taiwan. This collaboration between the University Museum of the University of Tokyo (UMUT), the National Museum of History (NMH) in Taiwan, and multiple Taiwanese institutions with botanical and historical orchid collections aims to depict a world of orchids with many aspects. As a sequel to UMUT’s 2021 exhibition “Orchids Blossom: Botanical Art Collections from the University of Tokyo,” this project features two exhibitions: the Tokyo edition at INTERMEDIATE and the Taipei edition at NMH. While the former focuses on Taiwan’s natural history and a variety of cultural representations of orchids across time and genre, the latter, which is the focus of this article, displays over 50 art works from the NMH along with botanical materials and documents.

The Taipei exhibition integrates a history of research in botany, art history, and exquisite artworks in the NMH collection. It offers a comprehensive narrative highlighting the orchid and its place in Taiwan’s diverse cultural landscape in a historical context. It brings together perspectives from botany, cultural history, and art to create a cohesive and inclusive exhibition experience that reflects the symbolic role of orchids in Taiwan and its unique cultural heritage.

### A Historical Journey through Orchid Research and Artistic Representations

Taiwan, a unique and diverse habitat for orchids, is home to a wide variety of these plants and a history adorned with their rich symbolism. The Taipei edition of “Formosa Orchids Blossom” showcases orchid-themed ink wash paintings and artifacts from the NMH alongside the UMUT’s collection of botanical research materials on orchids in Taiwan.

The Taipei exhibition offers multifaceted history, including periods of Qing governance, Japanese colonization, and Chinese nationalist rule, while touching on ethnobotany, botanic research, popular culture, and artistic expressions focusing on orchids. The exhibition aims to capture how orchids have played a significant role in Taiwan’s cultural landscape and how their representation has transformed across various disciplines in three sections:

1. Orchids in Taiwan: This section introduces visitors to orchids through the dual display of ethnobotany and Han literati painting culture. Since before the Han settlers arrived on the island of Taiwan, *Fiteu*, a species from the orchid family, has played an integral role in the indigenous knowledge system of the Tsou people, as displayed by the ethnographic images captured in the colonial period by Segawa Kokichi (瀨川孝吉). Meanwhile, ink wash paintings from the pre-Japanese colonial period demonstrate the abstract symbolism of orchids in Han Chinese culture, tracing back to the Qing governance period of Taiwan.
2. Indexing Nature - Botany and Botanical Art: The more comprehensive study of Taiwanese orchids began in 1895 under Japanese colonial rule, with the University of Tokyo, a center of colonial research and expedition, amassing a rich collection of specimens and botanical illustrations. This section delves into the botanical exploration of orchids during Taiwan’s Japanese period, highlighting notable figures and iconic native species. It includes botanical illustrations from the UMUT collection, works by Taiwanese botanists and artists, and the “orchid craze” that gripped Taiwan during the colonial period. Notable figures in Taiwanese botanical research, such as Tashiro Antei (田代安定) and Hayata Bunzo (早田文藏), are introduced alongside works of botanical artists, including Yamada Toshio (山田壽雄), Wang Jen-li (王仁禮) and Taiwanese botanist Lin Tsan-piao (林讚標). It was a time when orchids became symbols of luxury and refinement for colonizers and locals alike.
3. Orchids in the NMH: This section highlights artistic representations of orchids from the NMH collection, including traditional literati-style paintings, sketching inspired ink wash paintings, and contemporary artworks influenced by botanical understanding and the growing appreciation for orchids in Taiwan. The NMH, known for its collection accumulated in the context of post-war Chinese cultural practice, provides another layer of meaning for orchids. A symbolism referencing both the Han literati ideal and a sense of diaspora, along with artistic expressions influenced by Western life sketching techniques, are showcased in the NMH contemporary collection of orchid arts. Featured

artists include Chang Dai-chien (張大千), Pu Xinyu (溥心畬), and Chen Jin (陳進), whose works reflect how orchids have been celebrated as aesthetic symbols in the post-war Taiwanese society that encompasses people with diverse memories and identities.

A series of documentary-style short videos will supplement the exhibition, providing contextual background on the role of orchids in ethnobotany, botanic research, and art history. The videos, documenting the different perspectives and languages that shaped the world of orchids, will be available in multiple languages, highlighting orchids' diverse roles in Taiwanese culture.

## CONCLUSION

The collaboration between NMH and UMUT enables a unique display of botanical, historical, and artistic materials, creating a platform for dialogue and understanding *between the two institutions as well as Taiwan and Japan*. The two exhibitions will take place in sequence at the two critical places that nurtured our impression of orchids in Taiwan today. They both go beyond the mere display of botanical research materials or paintings and explore the significance of orchids in the two societies. The Taipei edition of "Formosa Orchids Blossom" benefits from its Tokyo counterpart's curatorial structure that combines science and art based on a rich collection of the history of Japanese botanical research. Furthermore, it utilizes the NMH collection that echoes the complex modern history in Taiwan and further explores the evolving image of Taiwanese orchids. Inspired by the UMUT's collection, the NMH maps out a history of orchids that involves the various influences from a variety of settlers that arrived in sequence on this island, and showcases how orchids are woven into the fabric of Taiwan's multi-layered historical and cultural background.

**Keywords:** Orchids, History, Taiwan, Culture, Interdisciplinary curating

## BIOGRAPHY

*Yian Chen* is a Ph.D. student in the ITASIA program at the University of Tokyo and a lecturer-level research assistant in the exhibition division at the National Museum of History, Taiwan. Born and raised in Taiwan, she obtained a master's degree in museum education from George Washington University in the United States. She is pursuing her doctoral degree with a thesis on cultural representation in museum collections and their historical contexts concerning the Taiwanese decolonization and democratization process.

Her other published articles and research papers include "Historical Thinking in Educative Exhibits," which discusses the possibility for public museums to incorporate historical thinking in curating. "A Virtual Idol Boom in the Edo Period." focused on the NMH's Ukiyo-e collection. "The Collecting Narrative in Traces of Brush and Ink" dives into the exhibited calligraphy and ink wash paintings as museum-collected objects and their meaning transformation under national museum politics.

# Religious Sites and the Sense of Place: A Study of Ba-Kou Worship in Tai'an Township, Miaoli

Chih-Wen Lan

Assistant Professor, China University of Technology, Department of Architecture

China

## Abstract

Religion is a crucial core for maintaining ethnic groups and society. Religious places not only represent architectural beauty and decorative significance but also serve as essential ritual locations for maintaining ethnic and social connections. In Miaoli's Tai'an Township, although the Hakka ethnic group is a minority, the significance of tangible religious places can be understood through their devout and continuous worship activities. Additionally, there are intangible cultural and ethnic connections.

Tai'an Township experienced an influx of Han Chinese during the Japanese colonial period, primarily due to camphor-related industries. Historical data indicates that the incoming Han Chinese were predominantly Hakka. The township's economy was once centered around camphor, lemongrass, and coal mining. Despite multiple economic transitions, the Hakka people in Tai'an Township have demonstrated resilience and creativity. Their spatial distribution still reflects economic, geographical, and historical significance, which can be interpreted from the locations of worship for the deity Ba-Kou.

The mountainous landscape and the Hakka ethnic group in Miaoli's Tai'an Township exhibit both tangible and intangible cultural spatial meanings. Based on field surveys and Hakka cultural resource investigations, this study marks the locations of Ba-Kou worship in Tai'an Township on maps. By comparing historical and contemporary Hakka settlements in Miaoli, it aims to understand the connection between ethnicity and the natural mountain environment. This research provides a basis for recognizing and preserving the value of Hakka cultural resources in the future.

**Keywords:** Mountainous landscape, Ethnic groups, Religious locations, Hakka culture

## BIOGRAPHY

*Chih-Wen Lan* is a seasoned professional with extensive experience in cultural studies and architectural education. Currently serving as an Assistant Professor at China University of Technology, Department of Architecture, Chih-Wen specializes in driving initiatives focused on cultural heritage preservation and AI trend for architectural education. With a strong academic background, including a PhD degree in Heritage Conservation from University of Bamberg, Germany, Chih-Wen has led numerous research projects, particularly exploring the religious spaces for urban conservation.

Chih-Wen's work includes coordinating international teams and liaising with government bodies and international organizations to promote sustainable cultural conservation and up-to-date skill training.

Passionate about community engagement, Chih-Wen actively participates in local cultural events and contributes to scholarly publications. Her commitment to preserving cultural identity continues to drive her professional endeavors.

# Curatorial Advocacy for the Historical Space of Kikumoto Department Store

**Deng-teng Shih**

China University of Technology, Taipei

**Jen-hao Chang**

Institute of Historical Resources Management, Taipei

Taiwan

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## Abstract

Kikumoto Department Store, established in 1932, was Taiwan's first modern department store and a symbol of Taipei's urban modernization. Over time, its historical and cultural significance has diminished amidst rapid development, putting its legacy at risk. To address this, a proactive curatorial advocacy was developed, focusing on preservation strategies prior to official heritage recognition. This approach integrates exhibition design, public engagement, and educational activities, grounded in extensive research and digital reconstruction to highlight the building's cultural, historical, and social importance.

The exhibition combines architectural space with multi-sensory elements, including a remastered store anthem, dynamic visuals of founder Eiji Shigetada, and multimedia displays that recreate the 1930s façade and urban consumer culture. Public participation, through the "Memory Collection Campaign," fosters collective memory, while educational programs enhance public awareness of heritage preservation. The exhibition also treats the space itself as an exhibit, employing techniques such as "intentional voids" and "illusory contours" to preserve historical layers and prompt reflection on the passage of time.

Looking forward, this curatorial advocacy will continue to leverage digital tools for both physical and virtual preservation, balancing modernization with heritage conservation to safeguard Kikumoto's legacy for future generations.

**Keywords:** Kikumoto Department Store, curatorial advocacy, digital interpretation, exhibition design, public engagement



## **Innovative Curatorial Design and Multi-sensory Experience**

The curatorial design integrates architectural space with historical narratives, utilizing multi-sensory interactive elements to enhance engagement. Features such as a remastered version of the “Song of Kikumoto” (the department store’s theme song), dynamic video and audio recordings of founder Eiji Shigetada, and multimedia content projected onto the second-floor staircase provide a rich sensory experience. Visitors can not only visualize history but also engage with it through touch and sound, gaining deeper insights into Kikumoto’s historical context.

Digital reconstruction technology recreates the original 1930s architecture of Kikumoto Department Store, allowing visitors to experience its construction techniques and historical backdrop. The exhibition incorporates historical reenactments and visual simulations to depict Kikumoto’s transformation over different eras, providing a comprehensive understanding of its evolution. Additionally, the use of semi-transparent films on the glass curtain wall restores the original façade, marking its presence in modern Taipei. This design applies the concepts of “historical subtraction” and “historical addition,” balancing the space’s current state while preserving its heritage.

One of the exhibition’s highlights is the recreation of Kikumoto’s 1930s window displays, allowing visitors to directly experience the store’s role in shaping urban consumer culture. By blending historical imagery with modern narrative techniques, the exhibition brings the past to life, enabling visitors to “see” Kikumoto’s historical presence.

## **Public Engagement and Collective Memory**

Public engagement plays a central role in the Kikumoto curatorial advocacy. Through the “Memory Collection Campaign,” community members contributed artifacts, photos, and personal stories related to Kikumoto. This initiative connects individual memories to the collective history of Kikumoto, fostering a public sense of responsibility in preserving this cultural heritage. These contributions were incorporated into the exhibition, enriching the narrative and allowing visitors to personalize their connection with the historical space.

The curatorial advocacy also includes educational activities such as workshops, seminars, and guided tours. These events facilitate discussions on urban modernization, heritage preservation, and Kikumoto’s cultural significance, broadening the exhibition’s impact. In turn, this raised public awareness of Kikumoto’s historical importance and garnered additional support for its long-term preservation.

## **Historical Space as an Exhibit**

One unique aspect of the exhibition is the concept of treating the space itself as an exhibit. The curatorial team applied the technique of “intentional voids” in the spatial design, preserving parts of the building that remain untouched. This approach allows the current condition of the building to engage with the exhibition content, creating a dialogue between the space’s history and the present moment. Visitors are invited to explore the layers of history embedded in the space and reflect on its significance.

The use of “illusory contours” and intentional gaps in the exhibition allows visitors to perceive the historical significance of Kikumoto, even in areas where physical artifacts are lacking. These techniques highlight the flow of time and evoke the presence of the past within the current structure. The contrast between restored and deteriorated areas emphasizes the importance of preserving Kikumoto’s architectural integrity while also providing modern interpretations that enhance the depth of the exhibition.

## **Future Development and Challenges**

Looking to the future, the curatorial advocacy for Kikumoto aims to continue developing innovative preservation strategies, particularly through the use of digital technologies. Space scanning and digital reconstruction offer opportunities for both physical and virtual preservation, ensuring that Kikumoto’s legacy is protected for future generations. However, as Taipei rapidly modernizes, the challenge of balancing historical preservation with urban development becomes more pressing. The curatorial team will continue exploring new methods, using advocacy as a central tool to ensure that Kikumoto’s historical significance is maintained.

In conclusion, the curatorial advocacy for Kikumoto Department Store serves as a model for preserving historical spaces through proactive strategies, public engagement, and innovative design. By integrating modern technologies, multi-sensory experiences, and community involvement, this initiative ensures that Kikumoto’s legacy is actively protected and celebrated for years to come.

## BIOGRAPHY

*Deng Teng Leon Shih:* "I am an Associate Professor at the Department of Visual Communication Design at China University of Technology and an adjunct Associate Professor at the Graduate Institute of Museum Studies at Taipei National University of the Arts. My research focuses on the art history of Chinese artifacts, digital archiving, museum exhibition design, and cultural heritage preservation. I have extensive research and practical experience in digital interpretation technology and curatorial advocacy. I have served as a technical advisor for numerous government projects and as a professional reviewer and consultant for various museums, academic institutions, and exhibition technology companies."

*Jen-hao Chang:* "I graduated from the Department of Cultural Heritage at the Graduate Institute of Architecture, Chung Yuan Christian University. I have worked for over a decade at the Institute of Historical Resources Management Association, participating in cultural heritage preservation and educational promotion. I have been involved in managing cultural spaces in Dadaocheng and Taipei City, advocating for public awareness through exhibitions and educational activities."

# Recycled Places: The Journey of the Museum of Reclaimed Urban Space from Squat to Museum

Sooah Kwak

Museum of Reclaimed Urban Space, New York

USA

## Abstract

The Museum of Reclaimed Urban Space (MoRUS) is a small community museum on the first floor of a former squat building in Lower East Side (LES) Manhattan. MoRUS chronicles a meaningful history of housing, public and private space, community gardens, and recycling systems in New York. With the economic crisis in the 1970s, New York City was in massive debt, thus making budget cuts by reducing social services and urban maintenance, mostly in lower-income neighborhoods. Community members and squatters of the LES reclaimed abandoned buildings that were decaying and repaired the neighborhood by creating community gardens where they grew food and medicinal herbs. Not only does MoRUS chronicle the history of community resilience of the LES, but it also remains as an important hub for the community and a place for empowerment towards sustainable change. Film festivals and events coordinated through the museum are held in community gardens that the museum volunteers maintain. Workshops on composting, repairing bikes, and beekeeping are organized to educate community members and the broader public on how the LES community maintains sustainable lifestyles in one of the most populated and busy cities in the world. As the museum building itself is a former squat, MoRUS is both a museum and a historical site at the same time. While refurbishing the squat into a museum, certain parts were preserved—such as walls with murals—and some parts were recycled and repurposed. The process of changing a residential building to a museum had somewhat sparked conflict between community members; some residents were ironically, ‘displaced’ during this process. By broadly contouring this history of the making of MoRUS, my talk will aim to introduce the efforts MoRUS made for sustainability while reforming the squat into a museum, the pitfalls in between, and how MoRUS navigated through those conflicts.

**Keywords:** Sustainability, Community Museums, Public and Private Space, Recycling

Following the economic crisis in the 1970s, New York City was in massive debt, which led to drastic budget cuts through reducing social services and urban maintenance in lower-income neighborhoods. One of these neighborhoods affected was the Lower East Side (LES) Manhattan. Tenements seized by the city for nonpayment of taxes stood vacant, and disinvestment towards the neighborhood left these buildings burnt from fire and decaying from water damage. These abandoned shells of buildings were reclaimed by squatters, who repaired the buildings and created a community. After repeated attempts of forced eviction, the city offered to legalize the squatters' occupation—the squats would become a co-op, given that the tenants bring the buildings up to city standards. The tenants of C-Squat collectively decided to rent out the storefront space to reduce their rent, which environmental organization Time's Up took up and established the Museum of Reclaimed Urban Space (MoRUS). Opened in 2012, MoRUS chronicles a valuable history of squatting, public and private space, community gardens, and recycling systems of the LES and the broader New York City area (Di Paola & Stern, 2020). Walking tours around the LES and events hosted by the museum ensure that MoRUS does not freeze squatter history in time and educates the public on how the LES community maintains sustainable lifestyles in one of the most densely populated cities in the world.

The museum building itself being a former squat and current co-op, MoRUS serves as a museum, historical site, and contemporary community space all in one. During the refurbishment of the storefront, MoRUS preserved much of what was originally C-Squat. Murals and stencils by the squatters were saved on its original walls and floors. The essence of the space as a hub for community activity also remains, and community members gather for meetings, workshops, and parties as they did in C-Squat. Other elements of the building were recycled and repurposed, which in part was Time's Up's effort to align its architectural character with the museum's commitment to environmental sustainability. However, this process of recycling a residential space into a museum inadvertently led to the loss of stories, photos, and spaces of archival value. For instance, the museum for squatter history ironically displaced the squatters living in that very space in its making; one of them being early and allegedly the first occupant of the C-Squat building, Mike Scott. Scott, who embodied the lived experience as a squatter and a photographer who documented the early history of the building, left C-Squat and took his photos with him (Starecheski, 2016, pp. 229-232). Above all, museum-making entailed the transformation of what was originally home to the squatters to something that was not (Ibid., 141), and the sense of place was altered evermore. Despite C-Squat's determination to keep the space connected with the local network, it engendered tensions that involved evicting people in the community and dismantling their own homes.

This recycling of place touches upon broader debates on conservation and sustainable reuse of urban heritage, particularly the question of what to preserve and how. Ideally "[t]he relationships between the site in its totality, its constituent parts, the context of the site, and the parts that make up this context" ("The Valletta Principles," 2011) should all be conserved. Still, cities must also accommodate growing demands for housing and public space, making this an inherently selective process. The two ends of the spectrum become renovation—where heritage sites are transformed into cultural spaces, housing complexes, or commercial storefronts through adaptive reuse—and preservation—where all further deterioration or change is halted to secure unaltered retention of its original form. Both approaches hold value regarding urban life, the former in its practicality, and the latter by creating an urban environment where inhabitants can facilitate attachment, familiarity, and a sense of continuity from heritage sites (Lam-Knott, 2022). However, urban heritage sites are frequently rendered into private commercial spaces, much like how the tenants of C-Squat considered renting the storefront to a Starbucks which would have dramatically eased rent burdens. The impacts of historical preservation on urban life are also dubious; whether more cultural sites will vitalize the local community or mark up property value leading to displacement is unknown. Thus, urban heritage conservation practices are etched with anxieties of neoliberal urbanism and, as demonstrated by the case of MoRUS, the challenge of survival in urban spaces with escalating real estate demands.

Hence, when it comes to the sustainable reuse of urban heritage, sustainability should not only account for environmental aspects but also urban life. The two occasionally collide, and negotiating contemporary needs with historical preservation necessitates difficult decision-making. Although the results of sustainable efforts made by MoRUS remain equivocal, its transformational journey from squat to museum suggests that museum-making is in essence a practice of spatializing culture (Low, 2011), with the potential for both uncovering and crafting conflicts, injustices, connections, and imaginings. By articulating the changes in the social fabric of the LES squatter community in building MoRUS, this study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of sustainability in contexts of urban heritage conservation, and better yet, guide museum professionals towards integrating urban life as an object of study in museum anthropology.

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## BIOGRAPHY

**Sooah Kwak** is a researcher whose work examines the making of meaningful and socially purposeful archives. Currently, Sooah is assisting with research at the American Museum of Natural History and the Museum of Reclaimed Urban Space. She holds an MA in Museum Anthropology from Columbia University (NY) and a BAS in Art and Technology from Sogang University (KR).

# An Exploration of Mobile Museums in China: Innovations in Exhibition Practices

Yang, Chih-Ju

Department of Cultural Heritage and Museology, Fudan University

China

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## Abstract

Based on China's expansive geographical conditions, coupled with the current advancements in technology and the well-developed transportation system, the development of mobile museums possesses extremely advantageous conditions. As of today, it is conservatively estimated that several tens of museums in mainland China are either currently implementing or have previously implemented "mobile museum" initiatives. The coverage of mobile museum services is extensive, and it holds significant potential for future development.

This study first conducts a preliminary summary of the operational modes of mobile museums in China based on relevant data, categorizing them into linear, networked, and scattered forms of mobility. Building upon mobile museum exhibition practical case studies, it further delves into the respective mobile exhibition systems associated with different forms of mobile museums. Finally, by comprehensively analyzing the merits and demerits of mobile exhibition systems in Chinese mobile museums, and referencing actual exhibition scenarios, prospects and recommendations for the future operation and mobile exhibition of mobile museums are proposed search.

**Keywords:** mobile museum, mobile exhibition, movable display system, museum display

Mobile museums are a composite form of mobile public service in which physical museums primarily provide museum resource services through exhibitions and social education programs, actively reaching out to the public through various carriers (Yang Chih Ju, 2023)<sup>1</sup>. In recent years, numerous museums in China have launched mobile museum projects. Based on the different operational methods of these mobile museums, they can be broadly categorized into linear, network, and dispersed mobile museums. According to these different mobility patterns, new breakthroughs in exhibition practices are sought.

### 1. Linear Mobile Museums

Linear mobile museums primarily operate through linear itinerant mobility, often using modified vehicles such as trucks, buses, and cars as carriers. For instance, the Inner Mongolia Museum, under the government's policy of implementing "Cultural Programs for Public Benefits<sup>2</sup>", launched "Mobile Digital Exhibition of Inner Mongolia Museum". Through a modified large truck equipped with digital display devices, it conducts linear itinerant exhibitions across the vast territory of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, aiming to extend cultural benefits to the public.

### 2. Network Mobile Museums

Network mobile museums construct a systematic mobile museum organization, integrating and connecting museums and cultural education venues within a region (Yang Chih Ju, 2023)<sup>3</sup>. Taking the Guangdong Mobile Museum as an example, its mobile exhibition model resembles a spider web. The Guangdong Museum acts as the spider at the center of the web, linking museums in various cities, counties, and towns across the province, forming a dynamic service network with central radiation and multi-level nodes (Liu Chun, 2019)<sup>4</sup>. In terms of exhibition practice, it integrates and utilizes existing museum spaces and display equipment, maximizing their potential benefits.

### 3. Spot Mobile Museums

Compared to the previous two mobile museum mobility models, Spot mobile museums are more flexible, leading to some blurred boundaries in the existence of dispersed mobile museums. Small and medium-sized museums with

relatively limited resources often choose to provide Spot mobile museum services. These mobile museum services frequently utilize collapsible, lightweight display boards and exhibition supports.

Exhibitions are the most common form of presentation for mobile museums. Based on the current summary of Chinese mobile museum exhibition practices, mobile museum exhibitions are designed through in-depth exploration of museum resources. Considering the portability of mobile museums, portable artifacts or transformations of cultural relics into portable images or replicas are selected for display at multiple locations. Through innovation and optimization of mobile museum displays, the efficiency of museum education, dissemination, and service benefits can be more effectively enhanced.

#### BIOGRAPHY

**Yang, Chih-Ju** graduated with a master's degree from the Department of Cultural Heritage and Museology at Fudan University. My main study field base on museum education and public services. Past research has focused on exploring the current status of mobile museum operations in China.

<sup>1</sup> Yang Chih Ju.(2023).Research on the Operation Strategy of China Mobile Museum. Fudan University, Shanghai. P.4.

<sup>2</sup> Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Several Major Issues Concerning Rural Reform and Development.(2008, October 19) The State Council of the People's Republic of China from [https://www.gov.cn/jrzq/2008-10/19/content\\_1125094.htm](https://www.gov.cn/jrzq/2008-10/19/content_1125094.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Yang Chih Ju.(2023).Research on the Operation Strategy of China Mobile Museum. Fudan University, Shanghai. P.18.

<sup>4</sup> Liu Chun. (2019). The Diversified Development of Mobile Exhibitions: Taking Guangdong Mobile Museum and Inner Mongolia Museum Digital Mobile Museum as Examples. Cultural Relics Identification and Appreciation, 6, P.114-115.

## Mobile Bamboo Panels, On-site Objects and Local Stories: the Taiwan Multi-ethnic Cultural Route's Collaborative Exhibition Strategies and Techniques

Po-Sheng Kuo

Peninsula Labs! Consultancy

Hsiao-Ping Chuang

Collaborative. Consultancy

Taiwan

Drawing from the principles established by organizations such as "The Council of Europe" and the "ICOMOS Charter," the Taiwan Ministry of Culture has developed its own interpretation of "Cultural Routes." These routes are defined as "communities and their facilities and activities that integrate tangible and intangible cultural assets under narrative themes." The goal of this initiative is to guide the public to significant cultural sites through cultural tourism, encouraging broader cultural exchange and engagement. Among the various cultural routes, the "Taiwan Multi-Ethnic Cultural Route" stands out as one of the six main pathways. It is based on the explorations conducted by missionary James L. Maxwell and photographer John Thomson, who journeyed through Taiwan's southwestern foothills from Tainan to Kaohsiung. Covering over 40 kilometers and crossing several administrative districts, their journey left a lasting historical and cultural impact on the region.

Since 2022, as part of the work team, we have closely collaborated with a variety of stakeholders along the route. Our objective has been to emphasize the cultural, historical, and environmental significance of these sites. Through a "participatory heritage workshop," we developed six distinct narrative themes, each crafted to engage the public and raise awareness of Taiwan's multi-ethnic cultural identities. In 2023, the project refocused on several key "anchor points" along the route. At these anchor points, we organized on-site exhibitions, performances, and cultural activities to bring attention to the rich cultural narratives rooted in these locations.

Furthermore, the unique material properties of bamboo captured the attention of local community partners. This led to the collection of agricultural products, bamboo crafts, and folkloric items derived from bamboo, contributing to the creation of a diverse ambience at each exhibition site. The active involvement of local communities not only enriched the exhibition content but also nurtured a deeper connection between the presented cultural heritage and the local communities. This collaborative approach underscores the value of community participation in preserving and representing cultural heritage.

The author observed that the bamboo display panels offered remarkable flexibility in addressing the spatial limitations

of each exhibition site. Not only were the panels easy to transport and set up, but they also facilitated the creation of a dynamic exhibition circulation, providing a more immersive visitor experience. The design incorporated various display scripts to effectively communicate each site's unique narrative. The panels transcended their role as exhibition tools; they served as a bridge between the past and the present, the tangible and the intangible, as well as the local community and the broader public.

Through close collaboration with local guides, the exhibition team seemed to establish a "contact zone" where visitors could directly engage with the local cultural and natural environments. This dynamic interaction transformed the exhibition into a vibrant ecomuseum corridor, promoting active participation and cultural exchange. This approach emphasizes not only the preservation of cultural artifacts but also the transformation of cultural routes into living, evolving spaces that engage both the local population and visiting audiences.

The utilization of bamboo as both a practical and symbolic medium has been an effective strategy in connecting diverse cultural narratives, encouraging community participation, and creating an engaging visitor experience in the realm of tourism. Through the incorporation of local knowledge and resources, the initiative has successfully transformed the "Taiwan Multi-Ethnic Cultural Route" into a vibrant cultural corridor that continues to evolve and captivate both local and international audiences.

**Keywords:** Mobile bamboo exhibit panel, participatory heritage, Taiwan Multi-ethnic Cultural Route



## BIOGRAPHY

*Po-Sheng Kuo* (first author), Master of Engineering (Graduate Institute of Building and planning), National Taiwan University.

Kuo is a researcher and strategic planner in Collaborative O. Consultancy, engaging in participatory planning and design work and likes to create various forms of encounterings with diverse culture and knowledge. In recent years he endeavors to assist the NMTH (National Museum of Taiwan History) in curating the project of "Taiwan Multi-ethnic Cultural Route".

*Hsiao-Ping Chuang*, Master of Engineering (Graduate Institute of Building and planning), National Taiwan University.

Chung has a bachelor degree in journalism and has worked in the magazine publishing industry. She enjoys moving between urban and rural areas, listening to stories and also writing stories. In recent years she also assists the NMTH (National Museum of Taiwan History) in curating the project of "Taiwan Multi-ethnic Cultural Route".

## Carlo Scarpa: the life of a display case

Alba Di Lieto

Polytechnic of Milan, Mantua Campus, Milan  
Italy

### Abstract

The contribution aims to narrate my direct experience as the exhibit design manager of a museum set up by Carlo Scarpa, a Master of Modern Architecture, the methods of conservation and recovery of the heritage he left to the Museum of Castelvecchio, one of the Museums of Verona, Italy.

Castelvecchio is a medieval castle transformed into a museum in 1926 and reformed by Carlo Scarpa in the 1960s. A "heroic" period of the rearrangement of Italian museums who saw a lively debate on the criteria for the restoration of monuments and the educational function of museum exhibit design.

My testimony begins in 1986 with the setup of the exhibition: Veronese Miniature of the Renaissance, which presented ancient manuscript. For this occasion, I thought of reusing the vitrines designed by Carlo Scarpa in 1960, and which I restored and adapted for the occasion. Through various exhibition setups of art, architecture, and design, the narrative concludes in 2022 where, in the same display cases and in the same space, the architectural drawings of Ferruccio Franzoia, a student of Carlo Scarpa, were exhibited.

The initial and intuitive "good practice" of preserving and reusing the exhibit devices subsequently became a systematic practice; these objects were stored in a warehouse of exhibition structures, and a database with a schedule for each individual element was created. Over the years, the heritage has also been enriched with structures designed by other architects.

The direct contact with the heritage and legacy left by Carlo Scarpa and the appreciation of his work has given new life to the "display case" and "easel" designed by the Master. From devices dedicated to the presentation of artworks, they have become exhibit "objects" in the Carol Bove/Carlo Scarpa exhibition curated by Pavel S. Pyš, which had three important international stages in Europe.

**Keywords:** Carlo Scarpa, display case, conservation, heritage

### BIOGRAPHY

*Alba Di Lieto*, served as curator of the Carlo Scarpa drawings collection, responsible for exhibit-design as executive architect of city Museums of Verona, Italy, until August 2022. Currently, she teaches "Interior Architecture and Exhibition Design" at the Polo territoriale of Mantua, Politecnico of Milan. During her service she completed the restoration of two towers of Castelvecchio left unfinished by Carlo Scarpa and contributed to the conservation of the Museum's Master's set up. She collaborated on restoration, conservation, lay out of arrangements of the Archaeological Museum at the Roman Theater, and the Frescoes Museum "G.B. Cavalcaselle" at Juliet's Tomb, in Verona.

She designed the set - up of 60 exhibitions and collaborated on Carlo Scarpa's exhibitions in Paris, London, Edinburgh, Geneva, Verona and Montréal. She is the author of books on exhibit design: *Allestire nel museo: trenta mostre a Castelvecchio*, 2010 and *La continuità dell'esporre 34 mostre nei musei di Verona*, 2023. She is also author and editor of several books on Carlo Scarpa and the website: [www.archiviocarloscarpa.it](http://www.archiviocarloscarpa.it), and the Carlo Scarpa's drawings catalogue for the Museo di Castelvecchio (2006). She contributed to "Technical specifications of materials" and "The Museum after Carlo Scarpa" in Carlo Scarpa and Castelvecchio Revisited by Richard Murphy (2017), "A Well-Sited Archive at the Castelvecchio Museum" in *The Routledge Companion to Architectural Drawings and Models*, edited by Federica Goffi, (2022).

Carlo Scarpa was an unconventional master in the Italian and European architectural landscape. His professional journey began in 1926 when he became the art-director of Murano glassworks. Here, at the age of twenty, he learned to know and love an extraordinary material: glass. Scarpa's career continued as official exhibit designer for the Venice Biennale, as a professor and director of the School of Architecture. He preferred to set up museums rather than build skyscrapers. He was responsible for restoring and setting up some prestigious Italian museums in Venice, Florence, Palermo, and Verona, where he masterfully designed the renovation of the Castelvecchio Museum. During this work, the architect in 1960 was commissioned by the museum director, Licisco Magagnato to arrange a temporary exhibition on the art of glass.

The exhibition focused on one hundred years of Murano glass history, from 1860 to 1960. It presented a visionary perspective on the potential of this Venetian artistic tradition, a section was dedicated to the 1950s, highlighting the glasses designed by Carlo Scarpa.

To display these fragile, beautiful transparent objects, the architect designed a specific showcase. Crafted from fir wood by the museum's carpenter, the interior exhibition surface was carefully thought to present the precious and delicate artifacts at an ideal viewing height.

After its closure, the showcases were stored away. Twenty-six years later, in 1986, as a young architect working in the city Museums, I had the opportunity to design the exhibition regarding ancient, illuminated manuscripts.<sup>1</sup> Upon discovering these remarkable objects, I was advised to reuse Scarpa's showcases, converting them to display the ancient choral books.

I designed an inclined support, at the same angle as ancient church lecterns, covered with orange textile to evoke the color of minium. For the occasion, the showcases were restored: the wood was cleaned, the upper lights were adjusted.

From this experience, with my collaborator<sup>1</sup> started the good practice of cataloging the single display devices designed by architects collaborated with city museums. The schedule for each single object (showcase, panel or pedestal) included the dimensions, the photographs, the quantity, the designer, the title and year of the exhibition.

This method was applied over time. Between 1986 and 2022, one hundred seven different types of exhibitions were organized in the Museum and the new furniture built for various exhibitions was included in the database.

In 2007 the Scarpa's vitrines were reused again to display glasses. For the works of Vinicio Vianello, multifaced artist of the Spazialist movement, and in 2019 for Carlo Scarpa's<sup>2</sup>. In both cases, changes have been made to update the presentation methods. The interior surface of the exhibition space was treated with sand to remind the glass composition. Each time it was necessary to do a careful manutentions: clean the wood, give beeswax, revisit the lighting by placing small LED spotlights giving a myriad of sparkling reflections, place Anti reflective glasses specific for museum for closing the vitrines.

This last set-up was made by Scarpa's collaborator, Ferruccio Franzoia, who later donated to the Museum one thousand and five hundred beautiful architectural drawings. This precious donation was valorized displaying the sheets inside the vitrines of the Master in 2022.

This last set-up was made by Scarpa's collaborator, Ferruccio Franzoia, who later donated to the Museum one thousand and five hundred beautiful architectural drawings. This precious donation was valorized displaying the sheets inside the vitrines of the Master in 2022.

Furthermore, three showcases are in a permanent wing at the Museo degli Affreschi at Juliet's Tomb, a place of Shakespeare memories, displaying small bronze Renaissance sculpture. Finally, the display cases have changed their function to become an exhibition element. In the Carol Bove<sup>3</sup> show, contemporary American artist, the vitrine was displayed empty, it passing from an exhibition furniture to finally becoming a museological display. A new life for an object kept in its function, but preserved, restored and reused with the awareness of the value of a Master's legacy.

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<sup>3</sup> Pavel, S. P. (2015), *Carol Bove/Carlo Scarpa*, Leeds, Henry Moore Institute.

<sup>1</sup> Di Lieto, A., Bricolo F. (2010), *Allestire nel Museo. Trenta mostre a Castelvecchio*, Venezia, Marsilio.

# Digital Posters



**TING-HAN CHEN**

**ELENA MONTANARI**

**LETÍCIA R. L. FERNANDES, WILLI DE BARROS GONÇALVES, GERUSA DE ALKMIM RADICCHI**

# Design Strategies for Text-to-Experience Transformation in Museum Exhibits: Insights from Case Studies

Ting-Han Chen

Play Design Lab Co., Taipei

Taiwan

**Keywords:** Design Strategies, Text-to-Experience Museum Exhibits, Interactive Installations, User-Centric Design

## BIOGRAPHY

Ting-Han Chen is the CEO of Play Design Lab, a multi-disciplinary design firm focusing on creating experiential destinations and check-in attractions, such as museum exhibitions, commercial spaces, virtual environments, and design hotels.

With nearly 17 years of industry expertise, his design direction has garnered over 47 prestigious global awards, including recognition from iF, Muse , Core 77, Director's Club, Australian Good Design, A' Design, AIGA 365: Year in Design, and the London Design Awards.

As a co-founder of IxDA Taiwan and multiple design-focused companies, his ventures, such as Play Design Hotel, have won the Fast Company Innovation Design, Radical Innovation, and iF Design Awards, and been featured in renowned media outlets such as Louis Vuitton® City Guide, CNN Style, The Telegraph Travel, National Geographic, and Lonely Planet.

Ting-Han also holds the position of adjunct associate professor rank specialist at department of Art and Design, Yuan Ze University. serves as a judge, mentor, consultant, or critic in major competitions, delivering public speeches and university lectures. Digital Posters

# Design Strategies for Text-to-Experience Transformation in Museum Exhibits: Insights from Case Studies

Ting-Han Chen, CEO, Play Design Lab

## Abstract

Museums often grapple with the challenge of making text-heavy content engaging for visitors, especially in an era where attention spans are shrinking, and the preference for interactive experiences is rising. This poster explores design strategies for transforming textual content into sensory experiences using design thinking. The focus is on three case studies: the *Children's Rights Exhibition*, the *AIoT Image Wall*, and the *Climate Change DPSIR Concept Wall*. These examples illustrate how interactive installations can effectively convey complex information and enhance visitor engagement.

## Introduction

Museums frequently serve as custodians of vast amounts of text-based materials, including documents, images, videos, artifacts, and other tangible or intangible assets. These "raw materials" require a thoughtful design process to organize, edit, visually optimize, and translate into experiences that visitors can perceive, read, and absorb with their senses. However, conveying essential knowledge that is inherently text-based, such as scientific models, historical timelines, or legal texts, poses significant challenges. These texts are often perceived as dry and inaccessible, limiting their ability to engage audiences.

## Methods

The approach we took centers on audience-oriented design, focusing on adapting text-based content into dynamic interactive experiences. This involved the considerations on the following aspects:

### 1. User-Centered Design Approach

Understanding audience demographics and preferences through user research to tailor interactive experiences for targeting groups.

### 2. Content Analysis and Adaptation

Extracting key themes from textual materials and transforming them into visually engaging narratives.

### 3. Incorporation of Interactive Design Principles

Incorporating elements like gamification and storytelling to enhance user engagement and create immersive experiences.

### 4. Technological Integration

Seamlessly integrating interactive features to ensure optimal user experiences.

### 5. Iterative Prototyping and Testing

Continuously refining installations based on user feedback through iterative prototyping and testing.

### 6. Evaluation of Educational and Social Impact

Assessing learning outcomes and audience engagement, and measuring the effectiveness of the interactive experience for further improvement.

## Case 1: Children's Rights Exhibition

<b>Text</b>	<i>Articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)</i>
<b>Experience</b>	<i>An interactive rolling ball game installation that conveys the essence of children's four basic rights.</i>

The installation features a 3D book-like structure with small scenes from different environments (factory, school, remote area, and city). Using projection mapping technology, visitors see children in these scenes facing issues like domestic violence, bullying, pollution, and unfair treatment. By rolling corresponding "rights balls" towards the scenes, visitors help restore children's rights.

## Case 2: Towards AIoT Image Wall

<b>Text</b>	<i>Chronological development of Taiwan's industrial history</i>
<b>Experience</b>	<i>A dynamic image wall at the entrance of an industrial history exhibition, linking Taiwan's industrial past and future.</i>

The wall features models of industrial products from different eras (e.g., umbrellas from the 1940s, bicycles from the 1960s, electronic products from the 1980s). Upon activation, the wall transitions into an AIoT-themed display, where projections animate the static objects, symbolizing the interconnectivity of AIoT technology.

## Case 3: Climate Change DPSIR Concept Wall

<b>Text</b>	<i>DPSIR model (Driving forces, Pressures, State, Impact, Response) explaining global warming</i>
<b>Experience</b>	<i>An interactive installation using the Rube Goldberg machine concept to visualize the DPSIR model.</i>

The installation consists of 21 screens representing seven pathways related to global warming causes, scientific facts, environmental impacts, adaptation methods, strategies, and mitigation measures. Visitors activate pathways by pressing buttons, triggering virtual balls that navigate through the screens, each representing a different node of the DPSIR model.

## Conclusion

Transforming text-based information into interactive experiences requires a systematic translation process. The case studies demonstrate the potential of such transformations to make complex information more accessible and engaging. While current AI technologies offer text-to-image and text-to-video capabilities, achieving text-to-experience still relies on the expertise of design thinking and interaction design professionalism. Ultimately, the success of these transformations depends on the curatorial intent and exhibition strategy, elements that technology cannot replace.

## Acknowledgement

The author extends thanks to 23 Design, the National Human Rights Museum, Fang-Yi Su, and the National Science and Technology Museum for their support in realizing the interactive installations.



Scan the QR Code to see the case 1 video.



Scan the QR Code to see the case 2 video.



Scan the QR Code to see the case 3 video.

The scientific model of DPSIR. (Courtesy of National Science and Technology Museum.)



Photo by author, taken at National Human Rights Museum (2019)



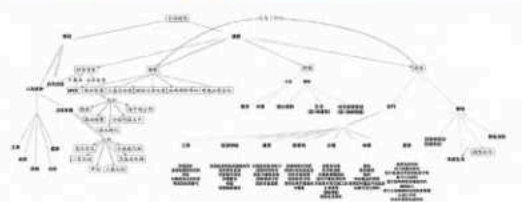
Photo by author, taken at National Human Rights Museum (2019)



Photo by author, taken at National Science and Technology Museum (2020)



Photo by author, taken at National Science and Technology Museum (2022)



# Museums and Health: Advancing Spatial and Museographic Strategies at the Service of Contemporary Societies

Elena Montanari

Department of Architecture and Urban Studies, Politecnico di Milano

Italy

**Keywords:** museums and health; museums and wellbeing; therapeutic spaces; innovative museum spaces; innovative museographic strategies

## BIOGRAPHY

Elena Montanari, architect and Ph.D. in Interior Architecture and Exhibition Design, is Assistant Professor at the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies at Politecnico di Milano, where since 2011 she carries out didactic and research activities and participates in international research projects – e.g. European Museums in an Age of Migrations (funded within European Commission's FP7, 2011-15), Transmitting Contentious Cultural Heritages with the Arts (funded within European Commission's Horizon2020, 2016-19), Open Atelier (funded within European Commission's Horizon Europe, 2022-25).

Since 2016, she is responsible for numerous dissemination and research activities included in the programme of the UNESCO Chair in Architectural Preservation and Planning in World Heritage Cities, managed at the Mantova Campus. Her research work revolves around the evolution of cultural and spatial practices related to the enhancement of museums and heritage sites within the contemporary scenario.



# MUSEUMS AND HEALTH

Elena Montanari  
Politecnico di Milano, Department of Architecture and Urban Studies

## ADVANCING SPATIAL AND MUSEOGRAPHIC STRATEGIES AT THE SERVICE OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES



The interest of museums to perform an active role in enhancing their communities' health is resulting also in the development of innovative spaces activated through special museographic strategies. A primary example is "House of Memory", an installation included in the open-air museum Den Gamle By in Aarhus, intended for people affected by dementia as well as their professional care staff and relatives. It is based on the set up of an exact replica of a 1950s middle class apartment, which provides elderly patients suffering from dementia with an immersive experience that helps them reminisce their former life and identity, thereby supporting the improvement of their cognitive health. This historically authentic environment exposes visitors to sounds, smells and tastes that open the door to memories which are otherwise blocked by the disease. The reminiscence program is based on a three-room flat which has been furnished through the cooperation among an interdisciplinary group of experts in museology, neurology, psychology and domestic culture.



A different type of promising experimentation can be observed in the "Room to Breathe", a gallery included in the Manchester Art Gallery, where a special arrangement of the exhibition space was defined to immerse visitors in an experience stimulating different perspectives on the collections but also improving users' psycho-physical health. It draws on the rethinking of some of the most widespread and established museographic canons, for example through the modulation of all the elements that can overstimulate and disperse the visitors' concentration - hence limiting the number of paintings on display, strategically using color schemes and lighting, avoiding adding captions and descriptions to leave users' minds free to wander in interpretation; moreover, paintings are hung at a lower height, bringing them closer to people's eyes, offering special audio guides aimed at orienting innovative insights into the works by incorporating mindfulness principles, and providing comfortable armchairs and sofas, which urge people to spend a certain amount of time in exploring the collection, turning the experience of this room into an opportunity to "take a breath," slow down and relax.

In a world where health (especially mental) has become a pivotal matter, also in virtue of its implications and links with many different realms, in the last decade museums have strengthened their commitment in developing strategies and tools capable to impact on the health and wellbeing of their communities. This phenomenon is highlighted by a growing body of research and experimental practices. For several years, the integration of health-related tasks into these institutions' programs primarily focused on the development of innovative ways of using collections to offer therapeutic experiences to specific types of audience (e.g. those with special needs related to disabilities, cognitive difficulties or degenerative diseases). Nevertheless, in recent years the interest for the "caring", "healing", "mindful" or "brain-friendly" role of museums has expanded to include a wider range of targets and programs - some of which are based on the development of pioneering spatial and museographic projects. These experimentations range from special displays purposely designed to modify the interaction with the collection and enable a therapeutic impact, to the arrangement of new spaces accommodating various functions related to the enhancement of visitors' psycho-physical conditions. The contribution gives a glimpse into an ongoing research about the design themes and strategies around which these experimentations revolve, hence exploring one of the areas in which museums are challenging their traditional spatial and museographic programs and reshaping their tasks in response to the evolution of their communities' needs.



The ongoing experimentations with the integration of new facilities through which museums' spaces can contribute to health and wellbeing include the addition of a new type of environment in the functional and spatial program of contemporary institutions. These rooms are generally characterised by a protected, quiet and comfortable dimension, to accommodate such practices as relax, recovery, meditation or prayer, with the aim to improve visitors' wellbeing. The most advanced example include the Quiet Room at the National Gallery of Singapore (above, 1), the Breathing Room at the New Children's Museum in San Diego (above, 2), the Calm Room at MUSE in Trento (above, 3), the Sensory Rooms at Milwaukee Public Museum. Although initially resulting from the simple refurbishment of pre-existing spaces, these facilities have now become the object of complex projects based on the collaboration among curators, doctors and designers, that have refined their features and qualities, and turned them into a complementary resource enhancing museums' capability to play an active part in supporting the health and wellbeing of their communities.



In particular, the Quiet Room designed by Lekker Architects at the National Museum of Singapore exemplifies the most sophisticated and interesting strategies for creating a "safe sensory space." This project works through the revision of all the features of the room - starting with the margins, which are shaped to sculpt a soft, lap-shaped envelope. The walls are padded and fully sound-proofed, providing isolation from vibration and ambient noise; all the surfaces change in color, adapting to an almost infinite range of saturations that the user can choose and modify. The furniture explore non-traditional solutions that imply the experimentation with different types of appropriation; in fact, no chairs or armchairs are provided, and rather the volumetric articulation of walls and floors offer users many possible ways to sit and lie down. These integrated elements collaborate with a range of soft objects, which can be used as pillows to be hugged, or aggregated to modify the physical environment around the body and the mind's needs; these devices have specific chromatic and tactile qualities and are characterized by uncoded forms, designed to invite personal exploration and to help shift the sensory experience from discomfort to calm.

# Preventive conservation guidelines for exhibitions of archaeological textile fragments: a case study at the Laboratory of Antarctic Studies in Human Sciences of the Federal University of Minas Gerais

**Letícia R. L. Fernandes**

Conservator-Restorer of Cultural Heritage, Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), Belo Horizonte

**Willi de Barros Gonçalves**

Associate Professor PPG Arts and PPG in Built Environment and Sustainable Heritage, Preventive Conservation Laboratory (LACONPRE), School of Fine Arts, Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), Belo Horizonte

**Gerusa de Alkmim Radicchi**

Dr., Conservator-Restorer, Laboratory of Antarctic Studies in Human Sciences (LEACH), Faculty of Philosophy and Human Sciences, Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), Belo Horizonte.

**Brazil**

**Keywords:** Preventive conservation of collections; archaeological textiles; exhibition design and conservation of cultural heritage

## BIOGRAPHY

*Letícia R. L. Fernandes* is Conservator-Restorer of Cultural Heritage (graphic documents, easel painting, polychrome wood sculpture, and preventive conservation / exhibition design) at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG / 2017-2023). Researcher funded by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development of Brazil (CNPq) at the Laboratory of Antarctic Sciences (LEACH), with work focused on the conservation of archaeological objects, identification, and exhibition of archaeological textile fibers (2021-2023).

*Willi de Barros Gonçalves* has Ph.D. in arts (emphasis on preventive conservation – Federal University of Minas Gerais - UFMG, 2013), MSc. in mechanical engineering (UFMG, 2000), Architect and urban planner (UFMG, 1994). Associate professor teaching in the undergraduate Course in Conservation and Restoration of Movable Cultural Assets, and in two graduate Programs: Arts, and Built Environment and Sustainable Heritage, at UFMG. Coordinator of the Preventive Conservation Laboratory (LACONPRE), affiliated with Center for Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage (CECOR) in the Fine Arts School of UFMG. Vice President of the Brazilian National Association for Research in Technology and Heritage Science (ANTECIPA).

*Gerusa de Alkmim Radicchi* has PhD from the Polytechnic University of Valencia (Spain). Member of the Laboratory of Antarctic Studies in Human Sciences at UFMG (Brazil). Specialist in the field of Conservation and Restoration in Archaeology.





# Preventive Conservation Guidelines for Exhibitions of Archaeological Textile Fragments: A Case Study at the Laboratory of Antarctic Studies in Human Sciences (LEACH) of the Federal University of Minas Gerais

Leticia Ribeiro Lourenço FERNANDES<sup>1\*</sup>, Will de Barros GONÇALVES<sup>2</sup>, Gerusa de Alkmim RADICCHI<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Conservator-Restorer of Cultural Heritage at the Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil. Email: leticiarestauro@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Graduate Program in Arts and Graduate Program in Built Environment and Sustainable Heritage, Laboratory of Preventive Conservation (Lacopre), School of Fine Arts, Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil.

<sup>3</sup> PhD, Conservator-Restorer, Laboratory of Antarctic Studies in Human Sciences (LEACH), Faculty of Philosophy and Human Sciences, Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil.



## INTRODUCTION

This study aims to answer the following research question: what are the main preventive conservation parameters that should be considered in the development of a temporary exhibition proposal, using a collection of archaeological textiles as a case study? Considering heritage science as an interdisciplinary field, the work explores the intersection of conservation-restoration and archaeology, addressing preventive conservation topics applied to museography.

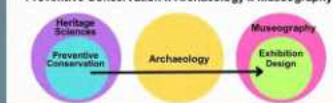
## OBJECTIVES

- To highlight the principles of preventive conservation with a focus on infrastructure and security issues that should be considered in the development of a temporary exhibition proposal, using a collection of archaeological textiles from the scientific collection of the Laboratory of Antarctic Studies in Human Sciences at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (LEACH/UFMG) as a case study. Additionally;
- To contribute to the closer integration of archaeology and conservation, as well as the dissemination of restricted-access archaeological collections.

## METHODOLOGY

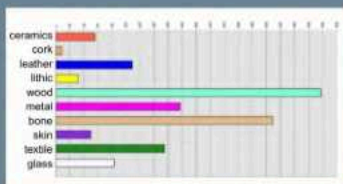
The methodology used included a literature review on the role of preventive conservation in museographic processes, particularly in the context of exhibiting archaeological textile collections. This involved considering the vulnerability aspects of this typology, analyzing the conservation status of the pieces, and their physical, biological, and chemical characteristics. Additionally, the research emphasized the importance of environmental management parameters (lighting, temperature, relative humidity), appropriate furniture and materials, transportation, and security for the preservation of textile collections during temporary exhibitions.

### Preventive Conservation x Archaeology x Museography



Assignment of new values proposed by Salvador Munhoz Viñas in Contemporary Theory of Restoration (2003), considering that archaeological collections are primarily related to research potential and knowledge production, involving anthropological and scientific issues in a context of social and cultural values, rather than primarily aesthetic value.

## CASE STUDY



The case study involves a collection belonging to the scientific archive of the Laboratory of Antarctic Studies in Human Sciences at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (LEACH/UFMG), composed of fabric fragments found on Livingston Island, Antarctica. This collection was formed under the project "White Landscapes: Antarctic Archaeology and Anthropology," coordinated by Prof. Dr. Andrés Zarankin, which aims to understand the initial human occupation strategies of the Antarctic continent.

## ANALYSIS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TEXTILE FIBERS

Study of textile fragments through the examination of construction techniques, damage mapping, conservation status diagnosis, analysis of archaeological evidence (usage), and identification of structural vulnerabilities:

Map of damages



## RESULTS - GUIDELINES FOR PREVENTIVE STORAGE

- Exhibition location: assessment of the environmental conditions of the UFMG School of Fine Arts exhibition gallery, utilizing simulation tools to study the environment (architecture, light incidence, door placement, etc.);
- Environmental Management and Lighting: study of appropriate environmental parameters for the exhibition of textile fragments, such as recommended standards for environmental management, lighting, suitable furniture, fixing mechanisms, expected audience, protection against vandalism, among others;
- Climate control system;
- Placement of lamps and furniture location;
- Furniture: horizontal system with passive climate control; minimal handling of the collection; use of computer simulations to verify the hygrothermal behavior of the proposed box in the storage and display environment;
- Packaging, conditioning, transportation, and security.



### Summary table systematizing the requirements and guidelines for preventive conservation in temporary exhibitions of archaeological textiles:



Digital simulation of the furniture in the exhibition space

Requirements	Preventive Conservation Guidelines
Exhibition location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Assess the environmental conditions of the exhibition space, utilizing simulation tools to study the environment (architecture, light incidence, door placement, etc.).</li></ul>
Environmental Management and Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Study of appropriate environmental parameters for the exhibition of textile fragments, such as recommended standards for environmental management, lighting, suitable furniture, fixing mechanisms, expected audience, protection against vandalism, among others.</li></ul>
Climate control system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Study of appropriate environmental parameters for the exhibition of textile fragments, such as recommended standards for environmental management, lighting, suitable furniture, fixing mechanisms, expected audience, protection against vandalism, among others.</li></ul>
Placement of lamps and furniture location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Study of appropriate environmental parameters for the exhibition of textile fragments, such as recommended standards for environmental management, lighting, suitable furniture, fixing mechanisms, expected audience, protection against vandalism, among others.</li></ul>
Furniture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Study of appropriate environmental parameters for the exhibition of textile fragments, such as recommended standards for environmental management, lighting, suitable furniture, fixing mechanisms, expected audience, protection against vandalism, among others.</li></ul>

## CONSIDERATIONS

The case study at LEACH served to demonstrate the importance of applying preventive conservation guidelines in the exhibition design of archaeological textile collections. The challenges encountered during the work underscore the need for a professional responsible for thorough analysis, capable of evaluating options and making the best decisions to prevent potential deterioration of the collections from compromising the attributed value of the pieces, to the point of leading to destruction or loss of this value.

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## Recent Renovations of Museum Architecture in Taiwan and Their Interpretation of Modern Significance: A Case Study of the National Museum of Prehistory and the National Museum of History

Chang-hua Wang

Board Member of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) - International Committee of Architecture and Museum Techniques (2019–2025)

Taiwan

After years of development, Taiwan's museums have evolved into diverse institutions, functioning as centers for lifelong learning in science, culture, and the arts, as well as partners in preserving cultural heritage. In recent years, museums in Taiwan have faced increasing societal expectations and challenges, such as keeping up with evolving academic knowledge and improving the quality of visitor services. These challenges have prompted both the Ministry of Culture and individual museums to consider architectural and permanent exhibition updates as key strategies for addressing these issues.

This paper explores the renovation cases of the National Museum of History, located in the Nanhai Academy in Taipei, and the National Museum of Prehistory in Taitung City. These two museums differ significantly in terms of their founding backgrounds, locations, intrinsic content, and social contexts. However, when it comes to rethinking their roles and communicating with urban or local communities, both institutions share similar approaches in two key aspects: architectural landscape renovation and permanent exhibition renewal. These common strategies reflect contemporary issues of public engagement and modern significance that all museums must address.

### BIOGRAPHY

*Chang-hua Wang's* early research focused on Taiwan's Indigenous social and cultural studies. For over 20 years, her professional field has concentrated on museum operation and management, as well as museums and multiculturalism. During Wang's tenure as director, she led various teams to complete significant projects, including the renovation and reopening of the National Museum of History (2024), the architecture/landscape renovation and permanent exhibition renewal of the National Museum of Prehistory (2023), and the opening of the Museum of Archaeology, Tainan Branch of National Museum of Prehistory (2019).

## Basic ideas of the architecture of the National Ainu Museum

Shiro SASAKI

Executive Director of National Ainu Museum

Japan

UPOPOY (the National Ainu Museum and Park, uaynukor kotan in Ainu language) was opened in July 2020. This is the first national facility in the Japanese history that is dedicated to the revitalization and new creation of the Ainu culture, the indigenous people in the northern areas of the Japanese archipelago, especially in Hokkaido. In this presentation, I would like to show basic policies and design of architecture of the National Ainu Museum, which is one of the main facilities of UPOPOY. The policies and design indicate how the Ainu people, who had never been able to concern the construction of “national” facilities for a long time, participated in the construction plan of the museum and how they collaborated with museum specialists to design the building. This museum should embody the new museum definition determined at the general conference of ICOM (International Council of Museums) in Prague in 2022, especially the phrase, “they operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing.”

### BIOGRAPHY

**Shiro SASAKI** was born in Tokyo in 1957. He specializes in cultural anthropology on the study of history and culture of the indigenous peoples in northern Eurasia. Since 1984 he has conducted field research in Finland, Inner Mongolia of China, Siberia, and Far East Russia to research hunting-fishing and reindeer breeding culture of the indigenous peoples in these regions. He is also interested in the commercial and trading relations of the peoples of Northeast Asia during the premodern and modern ages.

# The challenge of renovating historic buildings for exhibition purposes Case Study: National Gallery and National Museum Bangkok, Thailand

Sirin Yuanyaidee

Director of the Golden Jubilee National Museum (Kanjaphisek National Museum)

Thailand

## Adaptive Reuse as a Conservation Method

Adaptive reuse is one of the conservation methods involving the renovation and repurposing of historically significant buildings that have been abandoned or are no longer able to serve their original functions. The extent of physical changes to the building during renovation can vary depending on the objectives and the chosen level of modification. The most important aspect of this method is ensuring that any renovation maintains the building's value as much as possible or enhances its significance.

original value, history, and authenticity, while adapting the functionality to suit contemporary needs and efficiency. Spatial planning must also consider the number of users, safety, and accessibility for the elderly and disabled. The renovations of the National Museum Bangkok and the National Museum of Art focus primarily on adapting the interior spaces, while the exterior appearance is preserved in its original form.

## The National Gallery and the National Museum Bangkok cases

The National Gallery and the National Museum Bangkok are originally located in an area once known as the Front Palace, established during the early Rattanakosin period (1782). Later, during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, the Front Palace position was abolished and replaced by the role of the Crown Prince. This led to a reorganization of the Boworn Sathan Mongkol (Wang Na) area for various other uses.

The National Gallery is Western-style architecture inspired by a machine factory in Birmingham, England. In contrast, the buildings within the National Museum Bangkok include traditional Thai architecture and structures influenced by Western and Chinese styles, constructed at different times according to the preferences and interests of their owners. Steps in the Renovation Process

Renovations of both buildings for exhibition purposes follow these steps:

1. Understanding and defining the project scope, including drafting exhibition content and beginning the design process for renovations.
2. Inspecting and diagnosing the building's deterioration.
3. Developing concepts for use and renovation.
4. Designing the building usage program.
5. Planning the interior and exterior spaces.
6. Determining conservation and renovation methods.
7. Installing systems and exhibition elements.

## Current Trends in Building Renovation for Museum Use in Thailand

Currently, trends in the renovation of historic buildings for museum purposes emphasize preserving the building's

## BIOGRAPHY

*Sirin Yuanyaidee is the Director of the Golden Jubilee National Museum (Kanjaphisek National Museum).*

*"My name is Sirin Yuanyaidee, I currently serve as the Director of the Golden Jubilee National Museum. My passion lies in museum management, and I thrive on the challenges that come with overseeing the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of museum work. Recently, I've developed a strong interest in the integration of technology within exhibitions, exploring how it can enhance visitor experiences.*

*Earlier in my career, I worked at the National Museum Bangkok, the oldest national museum in Thailand. The museum's historical buildings provided me with valuable insights into the preservation and management of significant architectural heritage. I find museums housed in old buildings particularly fascinating, as they blend history and culture, but they also require careful attention to maintain their structural and historical integrity.*

## Social Events and Cultural Excursions



## Social Events and Cultural Excursions

## National Museum of Prehistory Tour

Architectural guide: Chen Ja-sheng

Taiwan Prehistory Hall guides: Wang Chung-chun

and Yao Shu-yuh Austronesian Hall guides: Lekal, F.C. Lin and

HUANG Yulun

## Tour of Catholic Churches in Taitung Built by the Societas Missionaria de Bethlehem

Guide: Huang Kuan-chi

### National Prehistory Museum

The architecture of the National Prehistory Museum's Main Museum was designed by post-modernist Michael Graves based on Native American weaving and archaeological findings. Chen Ja-sheng, at the helm of the 2018 architectural update to the building, wished to open up the space and enhance its flow. The Taiwan Prehistory Hall relates the story of people on the island of Taiwan since 30,000 years ago, and the Austronesian Hall, whose theme is "Austronesian Worlds, Worldly Austronesias," presents through the medium of various issues how Austronesian people have connected and interacted with the world.

Currently, trends in the renovation of historic buildings for museum purposes emphasize preserving the building's original value, history, and authenticity, while adapting the functionality to suit contemporary needs and efficiency. Spatial planning must also consider the number of users, safety, and accessibility for the elderly and disabled. The renovations of the National Museum Bangkok and the National Museum of Art focus primarily on adapting the interior spaces, while the exterior appearance is preserved in its original form.

### Catholic Churches in Taitung

After World War II, the Catholic Societas Missionaria de Bethlehem not only served eastern Taiwan as a place of shelter for the soul but also opened many schools and hospitals. We will begin at St. Joseph's Chapel at Kung-Tung Technical High School in Taitung City, designed by architect Justus Dahinden in 1960, which carries on Le Corbusier's exploration of the emotional power of modern church architecture while satisfying post-Liturgical Movement functional needs. On the eastern coast, we will visit the Hsiaoma St. Nicolaus Church, built by Brother Felder Juilius, who excelled at bringing in light and playing with shadows to produce the sense of a holy space that incorporates the sea and the sky.



## Cultural Experience in the Paiwan Sapulju Community in Southern Taitung

Guide: Ding, Ciou-Cih

## Tour of Historical Streets on the Taitung Plain

Guide: Lu Chun-Yuan

### Paiwan Sapulju Community

Sapul ju is a simple, strongly knit Paiwan community in southern Taitung wedged between the protection of the mountains and the sea. The Paiwan word “sapulju” means “solitary” and “desolate,” but in the 1950s, the community moved to this new site, where it became livelier over time despite retaining the original name. It now boasts the greatest number of legally registered B&Bs in Jinfeng Township, which are Tjiljuvekang Art & Leisure House, Machawu, and Djausunuq, and Sheng’en Café and Murekai are major drivers of local industry. While passing through here, where lush green mountains kiss the Kuroshio Current, we will enjoy some locally grown coffee and Paiwan culture

### Historical Streets in Taitung

Eastern Taiwan is the remotest corner of the nation, so it has preserved well its unique and diverse character. The modernization of its streets began with the city improvement and urban planning programs during the Japanese occupation, which first brought the concept of city planning to Taitung. For the first part of the tour, we will talk about how these programs were highly valued and share about what Taitung looked like before and after. For the second part, we’ll explore the 20th-century marks of development on the streets of Taitung by looking at three or four major streets and sites to serve.



## Fo Guang Shan Buddha Museum - Buddhist Architecture Tour

## Off-site Tour - Japanese Colonial Period Architecture

Guide: Tsai Yu-hua

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### Fo Guang Shan Buddha Museum

What Comes from All Directions Supports Undertakings in All Directions. The Buddha Museum - A Museum for Everyone. The Buddha Museum's architecture fuses ancient tradition with modern taste: the stupas of the Buddha's homeland and the architectural aesthetic from ancient and medieval India and China's Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. A trip to the museum allows visitors to enjoy a radiance that spans centuries and connects China and India. Each building is seamlessly woven into the surrounding natural environment, expressing itself differently based on the time of day and season.

### Tainan, the old capital of Taiwan

Tainan, the old capital of Taiwan, is rich in history. From the time of the Dutch colonizers and the Kingdom of Tungning to the Qing dynasty, it was the center of the island's development. Even though the administrative center was moved to Taipei during the time of the Japanese occupation, Tainan still held strong as the island's second-largest city. The marks of development by the Japanese can still be seen today, including the Tainan District Courthouse, which was one of Taiwan's first buildings to be named a historic site, and what is now the National Museum of Taiwan Literature, a Western-style edifice with a heavy-looking mansard roof (a feature of government buildings of the time) designed by famous architect Moriama Matsunosuke.





## Post-conference Tour - Post-war Palace-style Architecture

Guide: Chiang Ya-chun

## National Palace Museum Tour

### Post-war Palace-style Architecture

The palace-style architecture built in Taiwan from 1949 to 1975 is quite unique and tells about the path taken by a non-Western country and its architects toward modernism as they were caught between traditional and progressive thinking while entangled in their national identity. Against this backdrop, the presentation and tour explore edifices that exist among the scrolls of a national landscape, their diverse and profound traditional processes of creation, and the state of their times. On the tour, we will present many aspects of modern architecture of the time by looking at the shaping of symbols at the Nanhai Academy's National Museum of History, the integration of organic and air-raid defense architecture at the Taipei Branch of the National Taiwan Craft Research and Development Institute, and the ceremonial and authoritarian aura of the National Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall.

### National Palace Museum

The National Palace Museum, situated in Waishuangxi, Taipei, was completed in 1965. Its extensive collection originated from the imperial holdings of the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, comprising nearly 700,000 items. These treasures encapsulate the essence of Asian cultural heritage, safeguarding a major part of humanity's historical and artistic legacies. The museum's main building was designed using the traditional concept of the Hall of Distinction, which has a layout in roughly the same shape as the Chinese character “器”, a domed roof, a symmetrical extension of the buildings on both sides, and the flow of foot traffic directed along the central axis, conveying the steady and solemn nature of the National Palace Museum.





## CONCLUSION

## Conclusion

# "The Past is Our Future"

Taiwan Organising Team

The mission of museums is to preserve, display, and promote cultural heritage and memory. Museum architecture and techniques help preserve and present human knowledge, while facilitating communication with the public. Architecture reflects the cultural interpretations of people from a particular time and place. But how should we interpret culture? How should we understand people's past lives? These questions significantly influence the imagination when designing and building museums. This year's conference invited participants to focus on the dramatic changes currently taking place in the world and locally, such as environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, national conflicts, and cultural recognition, considering how we can design museum architecture and exhibitions toward a more sustainable future.

In the conference, presenters from 18 countries offered various perspectives, such as: When interpreting culture, which voices or communities are represented? How can different viewpoints communicate, engage in dialogue, and even resolve conflicts? At the same time, museums and their buildings have evolved, been modified, and updated over time, much like the recent updates and renovations of public museums in Taiwan over the past decade.

In addition, new museum technologies have a profound impact on museums, including innovations in building techniques, the integration of new and old methods, new practices in exhibition design, and the recent rapid development of digital technologies, particularly in Taiwan. The 50th Annual Conference of ICAMT provides a rare and valuable opportunity to gather in Taiwan, where participants engaged in intellectual exchange and collectively create the collective discourse for this conference. As we close this chapter, we hope the insights shared during the conference inspire ongoing dialogue and innovation within the museum community. Let this proceeding serve as a

foundation for continued conversations that bridge divides and strengthen connections—just as museums themselves do in their evolving role as cultural heritage preservers.

**Taiwan Organising Team**

**ICAMT**  
50th Annual Conference  
**2024**