

ICOM UK

Conference

2026

16-17 April

Museum

Diplomacy

in

Action

ICOM international
council
of museums
UK

Art Fund_

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museum
directors'
council

 UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD
Gardens
Libraries &
Museums

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Glass Solutions

NOMAD
EXHIBITIONS

Pre-event

18:00-21:00

Informal meet-up and networking

The Royal Oak, Woodstock Road, OX2 6HT

Arriving in Oxford the night before?

Join us for an informal meet-up and networking with fellow ICOM UK Conference attendees. Attendees are responsible for paying for their own food and drinks.

Day 1

09:00-09:30

Arrivals & Registration

Oxford University Museum of Natural History - Upper Gallery

Doors Open for registration, networking and sponsor marketplace.

09:30-10:00

Welcome Addresses

Oxford University Museum of Natural History - Lecture theatre

Dr Christian Baars, Co-Chair, ICOM UK

Dr Gavin Svenson, Director, University of Oxford Museum of Natural History

Katie Columbus, Director of Audiences, Art Fund

10:00-10:30

Keynote from Dr Sascha Priewe

Oxford University Museum of Natural History - Lecture theatre

Dr Sascha Priewe presents ***'Liberation Day for Museum Diplomacy?'***

(Joining us online)

This keynote explores why museum diplomacy must evolve in response to a shifting world order. It critiques past “business as usual” approaches and argues for a more muscular, institution driven model for museum diplomacy—globally literate, locally grounded, and sufficiently agile to meet emerging global challenges and collaborations with renewed purpose.



Dr Sascha Priewe

Director of Collections &
Public Programs, Aga Khan
Museum
President, ICOM Canada

10:30-11:20

Session 1: Advancing Global Partnerships Through Museum Diplomacy

Oxford University Museum of Natural History - Lecture Theatre **Speakers:**

'Can Cultural and Scientific Partnership Bolster the UK's Special Relationship with the USA?' Laura Frampton, Associate Director of Global Engagement, Science Museum Group

'Filling the Gap: Museum Diplomacy Without a Ministry of Culture'
Gregory Houston, President and CEO, International Arts & Artists (USA)

'From Exchanged to Shared Futures; ACC's Cultural Diplomacy Model for Cross-Cultural Collaboration and Next-Generation Leadership in Asia'
Sunghee Cho, Curator of Culture and Education Division, National Asian Culture Center, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Korea

Panel moderated by: Dr. Sascha Priewe, Director of Collections & Public Programs, Aga Khan Museum, President, ICOM Canada

11:20-11:50

Break and Sponsor Marketplace

Oxford Museum of Natural History - Upper Gallery and Westwood Room

Session 2: Museums Connecting Communities Internationally Through Equitable Cross-Cultural Exchange

Oxford University Museum of Natural History - Lecture Theatre **Speakers:**

‘Nowruz at Leighton House: Belonging, and Cross-Cultural Dialogue through a Living Persian Tradition’

Shabnam Balouch, Preventative Conservation Officer, Leighton House Museum

‘Bridging Digital Heritage and Cultural Diplomacy: Community-Based Museum Partnerships in Postcolonial West Africa’

Gabriel Matesun, Curator, University of Ibadan, Nigeria - Department of Archaeology and Anthropology

‘Common Ground: An International Indigenous Cultural Exchange’

Mattie Reynolds, Chair and Associate Professor, Museum Studies, Institute of American Indians Arts

Panel moderated by: Maria Blyzinsky, Co-Chair, ICOM UK & Freelance Museum Consultant

12:45-13:45

Lunch and Sponsor Marketplace

Oxford Museum of Natural History - Upper Gallery and Westwood Room

13:45-14:15

Keynote from Dr Laura Van Broekhoven

Oxford University Museum of Natural History - Lecture Theatre

Dr Laura Van Broekhoven presents *'Do we need Museum Diplomacy or Museum Solidarity?'*



This keynote examines how concepts such as “cultural diplomacy,” “soft power,” and “Global Britain” have shaped the UK’s post-Brexit rebranding, and the complex role museums play within this agenda. Institutions with globally significant collections—many formed through colonial-era dispossession—are often positioned as instruments of national influence despite unresolved histories of violence and exploitation. Dr Laura Van Boekhoven argues that diplomacy requires mutuality, transparency, and accountability, yet the UK’s limited commitment to redress and repatriation risks rendering claims of partnership and reciprocity hollow.

14:15-15:05

Session 3: Sustaining Museum Diplomacy and International Relationships in a Rapidly Changing World

Oxford University Museum of Natural History - Lecture Theatre **Speakers:**

'Shared Island Stories: Youth, Museums and Climate Action Across Island Communities'

Jamie Allan Brown, Research Fellow, University of St Andrews

'AI and Virtual Heritage: Reimagining Museum Diplomacy at the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir'

Dr. Shreen Amin, Curator and Head of the Scientific Office and the Children's Museum, Egyptian Museum (Joining us online)

'Cultural Protection Fund – 10 Years of Cross-Cultural Cooperation in Heritage'

Stephanie Grant, Director of the Cultural Protection Fund, British Council

Panel moderated by: Dr Laura Van Broekhoven, Director, Pitt Rivers Museum

15:05-15:35

Break and Sponsor Marketplace

Oxford Museum of Natural History - Upper Gallery and Westwood Room

15:40-16:30

Session 4: From Conflict to Recovery - The role of Museums in Conflict, Reconciliation and Peace Building

Oxford University Museum of Natural History - Lecture Theatre

Speakers:

'Shared Sacred Sites: A case study of Diplomatic Space for Intercultural Dialogue'

Mikaël Mohamed, Director of International relations, Mucem (France)

'Museum Diplomacy: The Evolving Role of Museums in Nepal's Conflict Recovery' Roshan

Mishra, Director and Curator, Taragaon Next (Nepal)

'Ecosystem Museum Diplomacy from Civil Society: MOCA NGO's Networked Response to War in Ukraine'

Yuliia Hnat, Ecosystem Projects and Development Director, Co-founder, NGO Museum of Contemporary Art (Ukraine)

Panel moderated by: Hannah Crowdy, Head of Curatorial, National Museums NI

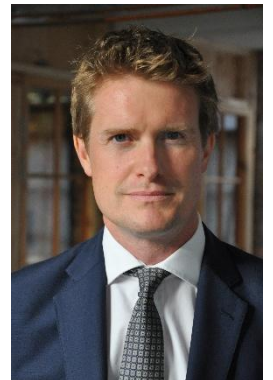
16:30-17:00

Keynote from Sir Tristram Hunt

Oxford University Museum of Natural History - Lecture Theatre

Sir Tristram Hunt Presents **'Museums and Soft Power in an Era of Hard Realities'**

In this keynote, Sir Tristram Hunt explores how museums like the V&A can champion internationalism, counter chauvinism, and shape a more equitable cultural economy through scholarship, collaboration and the exchange of global collections.



17:00-17:15

Closing Remarks

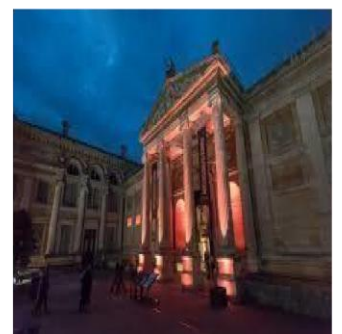
Oxford University Museum of Natural History - Lecture Theatre

18:00-20:00

Evening Reception

The Ashmolean - Atrium

After our full day conference, unwind at our Evening Reception with drinks, canapés and a special after-hours opening of The Ashmolean.



Day 2

A Help Desk will be stationed outside the Headley Lecture Theatre between 9am - 4:30pm to assist delegates. Delegates are responsible for their own catering on Day 2. Water will be available in workshop sessions.

8:45 - 9:15

Arrivals for ICOM UK Annual General Meeting

The Ashmolean – Headley Lecture Theatre

9:15- 10:15

ICOM UK Annual General Meeting

The Ashmolean - Headley Lecture Theatre

10:45-12:15

Session 1: Workshops, Walking Tours & Museum Tours

Delegates select 1 of the following options:

- **Workshop A: Collective Intelligence in Action: Lessons from the Bizot Green Protocol**

The Ashmolean - Headley Lecture Theatre

Anaïs Aguerre, Founder & Director, Culture Connect Ltd.

Karin Li, Consultant & Programme Coordinator, Culture Connect Ltd.

This interactive workshop by Culture Connect explores how museums can harness collective intelligence and international networks—drawing on initiatives such as the Bizot Green Protocol—to drive sector-wide change, equipping participants with practical tools, collaborative strategies, and the mindset needed to work effectively across borders.

- **Workshop B: Museum Bridge: Connecting Museums Internationally**

Pitt Rivers Museum - Old Library

Kate Arthurs, Cultural Strategist

Stephen Hilton, Director, City Global Futures

In this energising and hands-on workshop, you'll test what it really takes to build effective partnerships between UK museums and their global peers. Working in small groups, you'll use practical "bridge-building tools" to navigate real-world barriers, from trust and power dynamics to risk and shared value. Will your bridge hold?

- **Workshop C: The Art of Long-Lasting Cross-Cultural Collaboration**

Pitt Rivers Museum - Lecture Theatre

Anna Sanders, Programme Director of *Oxford Cultural Leaders*, Oxford University Gardens, Libraries and Museums (GLAM)

Jahnvi Singh, Assistant Programme Director of *Oxford Cultural Leaders*, Oxford University Gardens, Libraries and Museums (GLAM)

In this interactive workshop, Oxford Cultural Leaders shares practical design principles and adaptable tools for building long-lasting, trust-based cross-cultural collaboration, enabling museum professionals to move beyond networking and create sustainable Communities of Practice that endure beyond individual projects or events.

- **Museum Tour: An Introduction to Oxford's Past**

Museum of Oxford

- **Museum Tour: Multaka Tour – With these Hands: Crafting a shared Humanity**

Pitt Rivers Museum

- **Museum Tour: Multaka Tour - Captured in Light: A Journey Through Photography**

History of Science Museum

- **Walking Tour: Oxford's Radicals & Rebels**

13:00-14:30

Session 2: Workshops, Walking Tours & Museum Tours

Delegates select 1 of the following options:

- **Workshop D: Museum Diplomacy as Organisational Development: From International Exchange to Institutional Change**

Pitt Rivers Museum - Old Library

Silke Krummel, Director of the Agency for International Museum Cooperation (Germany)

This interactive workshop, led by the German Agency for International Museum Cooperation, explores how museums can align international partnerships with strong internal governance, leadership, and organisational development practices to turn museum diplomacy and global exchange into sustainable institutional change.

- **Workshop E: Community-Led Engagement: Building a Programme for People Seeking Refuge**

The Ashmolean - Headley Lecture Theatre

Meliha Hussain-Marchbank, Community Engagement Manager, The Roman Baths & Pump Room

This discussion explores how The Roman Baths has developed a sustainable, community led programme with people seeking refuge—through consultation, coproduction, and strong partnerships—offering practical insights into building meaningful, long-term engagement that amplifies underrepresented voices and moves beyond tokenism in challenging social contexts.

- **Workshop F: Developing New Environmental Tools for the Sector**

Pitt Rivers Museum - Lecture Theatre

Elise Foster Vander Elst, Head of Exhibitions & Environmental Impact Lead, The Design Museum

This interactive workshop, led by the Design Museum with Metal and UP Projects, explores the development of new environmental tools for the museum sector, inviting professionals to share needs and ideas while shaping more sustainable exhibition and organisational practices in response to the planetary emergency.

- **Museum Tour: *The Oxford Story***

Museum of Oxford

- **Museum Tour: *In Bloom***

The Ashmolean

- **Walking Tour: *Oxford's Queer History***

15:00-16:30

Session 3: Workshops, Walking Tours & Museum Tours

Delegates select 1 of the following options:

- **Workshop G: The Role of Museums in Cultural Resilience and Identity: International Collaboration with Ramallah Refugee Camp and Multaka Oxford**

Pitt Rivers Museum - Old Library

Nicola Bird, Manager, Multaka Oxford, History of Science and Pitt Rivers Museum
Jumana Hakan, Community Outreach and Learning Facilitator, Multaka Oxford, Pitt Rivers Museum

This reflective session explores Multaka Oxford's seven-year international collaboration with the Oxford Ramallah Friendship Association and expert Palestinian tatreez embroiderers from Al Amari Refugee Camp, highlighting how museums and tangible heritage foster cultural resilience and identity before, during, and after conflict, with contributions from the Al Amari Refugee Camp Women's Centre on the history and significance of tatreez, the Centre's current situation, and an opportunity for participants to learn the beginner steps of Palestinian tatreez embroidery.

- **Workshop H: The Right to Disagree- Radical Listening and Intercultural Dialogue' with ICOM UK**

The Ashmolean - Headley Lecture Theatre

ICOM UK's Student & Emerging Professionals Group

This reflective session invites Students and Emerging Professionals to explore how museums can practice diplomacy through radical listening and intercultural dialogue, reframing conflict and disagreement as essential conditions for ethical negotiation, transformation, and value co-creation within contested institutional and global contexts.

- **Workshop I: Strategic Planning for Disaster; Blue Shield UK Perspectives**

Pitt Rivers Museum - Lecture Theatre

Dr Tom Pinfold, Trustee, BlueShield UK

Prof. Lisa Mol, Co-Director, Centre for Environment, Society and Resilience, University of the West of England

In this workshop we will explore some of the approaches Blue Shield UK supports in the preparation of museums for disaster and conflict, simulating a disaster scenario and using wargaming approaches to test museum readiness for disaster. We will discuss compound threats such as cyber, terrorism, civil unrest and conflict.

- **Museum Tour: *An Oxford Night Out***

The Museum of Oxford

- **Museum Tour: *In Bloom***

The Ashmolean

- **Walking Tour: *Shakespeare and Oxford***

16:30 Close

Day 2: Descriptions of Tours

Walking Tours

Departing from and returning to the Museum of Oxford

10:45–12:15 Oxford's Radicals & Rebels

Oxford University is well known as a bastion of tradition, but how much do you know about the city's radical past and present? Uncover our city's secret radical and rebellious history - including 'town vs gown' riots, fiercely independent medieval women, and the locals who kicked fascists out of the city - on this alternative city walking tour led by local guide Jess Worth.

13:00–14:00 Oxford's Queer History

Discover fascinating stories from Oxford's LGBTQIA+ community, from iconic pubs and clubs, local characters, University societies, Oxford Pride and much more. Led by local guide Hannah Field.

15:00–16:30 Shakespeare and Oxford

What was Oxford like during Shakespeare's lifetime? Journey through Elizabethan and Jacobean Oxford on this 90minute Shakespeare-themed city walking tour. Includes access to an incredible Tudor painted bedroom!

Museum Tours

Museum tours will take place at venues across the city. Please note the museum where your selected tour is taking place

10:45-12:15 The Oxford Story

Museum of Oxford

This tour will explore the stories of the city, and the city of stories. This includes Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Oxford's cinemas, and Oxford as a film location and place of inspiration for stories.

10:45-12:15 Multaka Tour – With these Hands: Crafting a shared Humanity

Pitt Rivers Museum

Join the Multaka team for an exclusive guided tour of Multaka's new display of crafted objects in the Pitt Rivers Museum. The tour will take you on a journey discovering the deeper meanings that crafting can hold for communities around the world, sharing engaging insights into the museum's collection of hand crafted objects and learning more about the collaborative practices and co-curative processes of developing and creating new displays with Multaka in museums.

10:45-12:15 Multaka Tour - Captured in Light: A Journey Through Photography

History of Science Museum

Join the Multaka team for an interactive experience exploring how light, experimentation, and imagination have shaped the development of photography over centuries. Visitors will be introduced to influential figures such as Ibn alHaytham, the 10th-century scholar often described as a foundational thinker in optics whose work on light and vision helped shape ideas later associated with the camera obscura; Anna Atkins, whose cyanotypes are widely recognised as an early milestone in photographic publishing; and George Eastman, founder of Kodak, whose innovations helped make photography more accessible to wider publics.

The session will centre on a guided gallery tour followed by object handling, giving participants the chance to engage directly with historic photographic instruments and related materials, and to learn how these objects were used, what they reveal about scientific practice, and how they changed the way people recorded images, knowledge, and everyday life. The experience invites visitors to encounter photography as both art and science - an evolving way of capturing light, memory, and human connection.

Museum Tours (continued)

Museum tours will take place at venues across the city. Please note the museum where your selected tour is taking place.

13:00-14:30 An Introduction to Oxford's Past

Museum of Oxford

What is it that is unique about Oxford? The city is well-known around the world. This tour identifies some of the features that have made the city so special. From the Saxon period when the city was already an important settlement, through the development of the university, the important role played by the city in the English Civil Wars, to more recent features such as the growth of the car industry under the leadership of William Morris, the Covered Market and the important literary figures linked to the city, the tour will give you an insight which should stimulate interest in finding out more. The Museum is an ideal starting point for you to discover Oxford's amazing past.

13:00-14:30 In Bloom

The Ashmolean

What do we really know about the plants and flowers in our gardens and window boxes? Beyond their beauty, many have hidden histories – tales of exploration, obsession, and knowledge. This tour will guide you through the new exhibition, journeying from Oxford to the farthest corners of the world and back, revealing the global stories behind some of Britain's most cherished blooms – from roses and tulips to camellias and peonies. Featuring over 100 artworks and objects, including drawings, paintings, rare prints, and ceramics, In Bloom explores our changing relationship with the natural world. From the fascinating stories of curiosity and ingenuity of early plant explorers to the networks that shaped global trade, this exhibition reveals how the pursuit of exotic plants transformed landscapes, economies, and cultures, leaving a legacy that still shapes our world today.

15:00-16:30 An Oxford Night Out

Museum of Oxford

Since medieval times Oxford has been famous for its vibrant social and cultural scene, making it one of the best places for a night out in the UK. In this tour, we will explore four aspects of a night out in Oxford through the ages: pubs, music venues, cinema and theatre, and St. Giles Fair, highlighting topics of celebrity, disorder, and hygiene. I hope you can join me on what promises to be an exciting and, at times, surprising, tour.

15:00-16:30 In Bloom

The Ashmolean

What do we really know about the plants and flowers in our gardens and window boxes? Beyond their beauty, many have hidden histories – tales of exploration, obsession, and knowledge. This tour will guide you through the new exhibition, journeying from Oxford to the farthest corners of the world and back, revealing the global stories behind some of Britain's most cherished blooms – from roses and tulips to camellias and peonies. Featuring over 100 artworks and objects, including drawings, paintings, rare prints, and ceramics, In Bloom explores our changing relationship with the natural world. From the fascinating stories of curiosity and ingenuity of early plant explorers to the networks that shaped global trade, this exhibition reveals how the pursuit of exotic plants transformed landscapes, economies, and cultures, leaving a legacy that still shapes our world today.

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