Art in Transit 2 Symposium, Oslo 13 September 2026
and
ICOM-CC Triennial Meeting, Oslo 14-18 September 2026

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I attended both the above events as a participant. The Art in Transit 2 Symposium was held immediately before the ICOM-CC Triennial meeting and is part of a series of meetings on the international transport of cultural heritage, focussing on understanding and managing the risks and impact of transporting collections and finding a more sustainable approach.

The ICOM-CC conference was the triennial meeting of the ICOM Conservation Committee, with the theme of Cultural Connections in Conservation. It was a five day conference, with parallel sessions from many of the conservation working groups, and a Plenary Session with keynote speakers and a panel discussion around the main theme.

The week was a wonderful opportunity to hear from and connect with conservation colleagues from around the world, with a fantastic range of speakers, an excellent social programme and technical visits to many of Oslo's cultural attractions. At the ICOM-CC conference, there were over 1000 delegates, representing 72 different countries. I enjoyed listening to speakers from various countries and hearing about different experiences but also the common themes in the work of conservators. The last ICOM-CC meeting that I attended was the 2002 triennial meeting in Rio de Janeiro, and I was struck by how much has changed in the intervening years, with a focus on people at the centre of conservation, rather than primarily on materials and objects. I was interested to learn in the general assembly that ICOM-CC has been rebranded to become ICOM Conservation – a much clearer name for such a large and influential committee.

The highlights were the plenary session, with an inspiring panel of speakers drawing on Indigenous perspectives, who talked about balancing risk with relationships and asked who we are conserving for. This theme was continued in many working group sessions, such as the Indigenous and World Cultures sessions, where for example, speakers from Denver Museum gave examples of a shared power model for working with communities to make collaborative decisions on conservation treatments.

In the Preventive Conservation Sessions, there was a focus on participation, with a case study from disaster recovery in fire damaged collections at the Chinese Australian See Yup Temple, and practices of shared custodianship for a community industrial archaeology project in Catalonia. The importance of looking after the emotional wellbeing of people alongside the work to care for the collections following a salvage operation was

demonstrated through an excellent talk by Ogechukwu Elizabeth Okpalanozie, who outlined the psychological assessment tools for supporting teams after a fire.

Sustainability was another recurring theme within the Preventive Conservation sessions, and several talks focussed on how to ensure that the building materials for collections stores are as CO_2 neutral as possible. The approach developed in Denmark for low energy collections stores, where a stable environment for collections is created through air-tight buildings with no heating, well insulated walls and roofs and minimal dehumidification, is now being reviewed to take account of the carbon footprint of the building materials. Alternative building materials to concrete are being evaluated to ensure that sustainability is considered not just in the operation of the buildings but across the whole lifecycle. In Liverpool, we are at the very early stage of developing a new collections facility, and this research will be highly relevant to inform our approach.

There was a fantastic range of technical visits on offer for the afternoon of Wednesday 16th September, and I joined a visit at Nasjonalmuseet on "Curating with Cases" to look at how curators, designers and conservators worked together to create new galleries that met conservation needs of the collections as well as the aesthetic qualities for an outstanding visitor experience. This was a very timely visit, as we are developing new galleries in Liverpool for the redevelopment of the Maritime Museum and International Slavery Museum, so I am sharing details with colleagues working on this project.

Another very relevant takeaway came from presentations and posters on managing light in museums and art galleries. These highlighted new approaches using microfade testing and policies informed by assessments of risk and significance. As I am updating National Museums Liverpool's lighting guidance, I was particularly interested in Anna Bulow and Farideh Fekrsanati's account of their experience at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. It was useful to learn that translating policy into practice can take considerable time as teams develop a shared understanding of the new approach. I also learned that several of us are working to develop a documentation method for similar collections management systems, creating opportunities to stay connected and learn from one another as these systems evolve.

On returning to Liverpool, I am sharing many aspects of the ICOM-CC conference through discussions with the conservation team here, including a focussed presentation at our department meeting to highlight some of the key papers. We will also be building many aspects into our practice, for examples the models for sharing decision making with communities, ensuring that screening, counselling and therapy for people are built into emergency response alongside collections salvage, and encouraging an approach that balances risk with value and relationships. I will put members of the conservation team in touch with some of the contacts I made in Oslo to develop our approach and encourage collaboration.

The Art in Transit 2 Symposium has also highlighted opportunities to update our practice, and particularly to look at improving our approach to sustainable packing and transport. The talks covered three themes: packing, transportation and trust / tracking. There was an excellent overview of the findings from the UK Museums and Heritage Sustainable Packing Group, and some innovative solutions such as the use of corrugated cardboard transport frames for a collection move. Two of the presentations covered the transport of collections

by ship and gave a very useful insight into sea freight and how to decide whether this is appropriate. Following on from my attendance at this symposium, I am recommending that we set up our own internal sustainable packing group, so that we work across departments to share the latest research and keep track of how we can implement more sustainable solutions.

Images

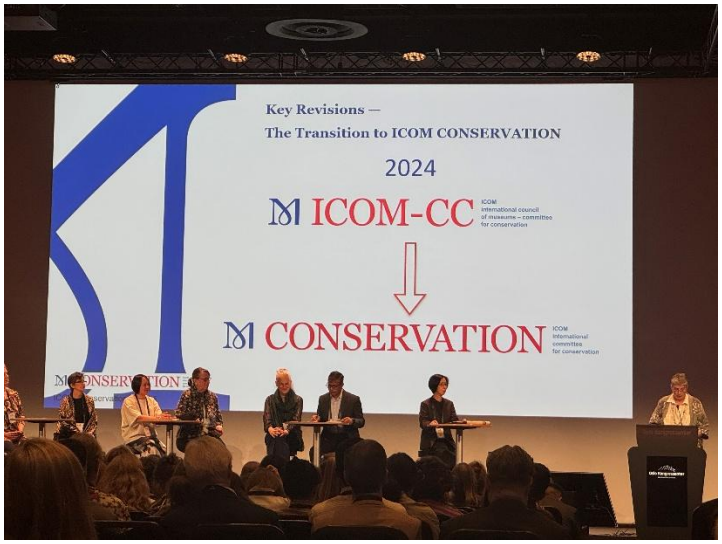


Image 1 ICOM-CC change to ICOM Conservation Credit Line: Siobhan Watts



Image 2 Siobhan Watts attending ICOM-CC conference Credit Line: Tanja Røskar



Image 3 Welcome reception at Oslo City Hall Credit Line: Siobhan Watts