

annual conference 2020



## Annual Conference COMCOL 2020 and ICOM Russia

ABSTRACTS

Wednesday 9/9/2020

### Session 1: Collecting Diversity: Divergence as Dialogue

(Moderator: Prof. Alexandra Bounia)

**Keynote Speaker: Julia Kupina, PhD, Director of the Russian Museum of Ethnography**



#### **Re-Collecting: Modern Issues of Ethnographic Collecting in Russia**

The modern issues of collecting in the Russian largest ethnographic museums are in the focus of the presentation. Those museums are currently going through a period of uncertainty about their collections and are looking back to meet the future of collecting. The presentation will analyze the basic qualities of the scientific ethnographic collections such as diversity and number of artifacts, transition of artifacts semantic within the museum, the anti-ethic nature of collecting and some others. It is accordingly not surprising that talk of an ethnographic collections crisis is becoming more and more common and museums are looking for approaches and decisions to meet challenges through balancing science research and edutainment, developing collection mobility and different kinds of accessibility in revolution or evolution ways.

**Keynote Speaker: Armando Perla (Head of Human Rights Holocaust Museum Montreal)**



**A moment of reckoning on institutional racism is happening in museums**

Soon after the killing of George Floyd on 25 May 2020, and influenced by the Black Lives Matter movement current and former museum employees, artists, and communities have called out several institutions worldwide for creating an environment where racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, and other forms of oppression did harm. Museum workers belonging to historically marginalized communities had attempted time and again to create a dialogue with all levels of an overwhelmingly white, hetero, cisgender, able-bodied leadership. Those who dared to speak up were chastised, vilified, and pushed out of institutions. Frustrated by the small gains coming from the inside, many grew tired of waiting. Some chose open letters and social media campaigns to mobilize and expose these abuses. Airing museums' dirty laundry in public was not a first choice, but it has proven to be the most effective strategy in a long history of resistance and activism in the field. ICOM's refusal to cast a vote on a more progressive definition and the events surrounding its former president's resignation are disconcerting considering the abuses being recently exposed in the sector. ICOM could lead the way not only by updating the museum definition, but also by amending its own code of ethics. Museums would also benefit from implementing more participatory and accountable ways of working that would allow them to address the historically unequal distribution of power in the field.

**Session 2: Matters of Representation**

(Moderator: Danielle Kuijten)

**Bruno de Corte** (independent historian ([brunoxdecorte@gmail.com](mailto:brunoxdecorte@gmail.com)) and secondary school teacher (KAE, Pastoor de Vosstraat 19. 2180 Ekeren, Belgium)

**Colonialism, collections and controversy: the public debate on the colonial past of Belgium and its museum policy (1998 till now)**

The colonization of the Congo Area turned the small Belgian nation into a colonial power (1885-1960). Leopold II, King of the Belgians, privately owned the Congo Free State from 1885 to 1908. Afterwards this state was annexed by Belgium and became "Belgian Congo".

King Leopold claimed Congo as his personal colony and increased his wealth especially through its ivory and rubber. A violent regime with forced labor for the local people, the Congo Free State was based on slavery – marking Belgium’s problematic colonial past.

These facts were silently ignored till they were set out in a book called *King Leopold's Ghost* (1998) by Adam Hochschild. The book sparked outrage but failed to bring about a genuine period of reflection. The Hochschild controversy is still having its influence today.

The former colonial museum of Tervuren (near Brussels) became a central point in the debate. The museum was established by King Leopold himself in 1898 as Musée du Congo and was renamed several times - till becoming the Royal Museum for Central Africa in 1960. The post-war design was in fact a “frozen” colonial view, not changed over decades.

Hochschild’s book created pressure to reform the museum. In 2013 the museum was closed to allow a major renovation of its exhibitions and reopened in December 2018. The changes proved still not sufficient to stop criticism. Moreover, the movement of restitution of colonial acquisitions has gained momentum in Europe. Another aspect is the change of demographics: Brussels has a strong immigration of Central Africa and these groups also want to participate in the debate.

The author would like to debate strategies with the public on how the museum could come closer to the needs and demands of modern society. An urgent review of the collection policy seems inevitable.

**Nara Calvão** (PhD student in Anthropology at the Federal University of Pernambuco - UFPE and General Coordinator of the Ricardo Brennand Institute (Recife-PE- Brazil)| **E-mails:** [nara.galvao@institutoricardobrennand.org.br](mailto:nara.galvao@institutoricardobrennand.org.br) | [naragalvao@gmail.com](mailto:naragalvao@gmail.com)

### **Ethnography of Difference: Gender, Morality and Censorship in the Museums**

Around the ethnography of two Brazilian exhibitions, from the Museum of Modern Art, in São Paulo and *Queermuseum*, in Porto Alegre, targets of censorship and criticism in Brazil, we perceive the confrontations and moral conflicts of a society that cannot perceive the different, and that still sees the "nude" and the "LGBT" themes, "gender issues" and "sexual diversity" as a moral affront, especially when museums incorporate curatorial concepts in their collections that go against people's beliefs from religious symbols. We can highlight the postures of contestations against social codes (in the middle of the 21st century) that these images, when composing an exhibition or being part of a collection inside museums, can provoke, bringing relevant aspects from the point of view of gender, politics and morality. Is the nude really the centrality of the questions that these exhibitions can raise? In the same period that censorship takes place in these exhibitions in Brazil, the D'Orsey Museum, in Paris, relaunches a campaign inviting parents to take their children to see the nude inside the museum. What changes in the French context? How is culture experienced in the field of the arts? And how is gender experienced and structured by culture? In this sense, museums have a crucial role in the formation of values for the diversity, contributing to a more inclusive society. Taking down the symbolic temple of the “Muses” that makes parts of the origin of the museums can be the beginning of a reconstruction of identity policies and the welcome

beginning of a long road of debates about other sexes, other behaviors that are able to celebrate our differences.

**Liliya I. Sattarova** (*Deputy Director General – Curator-in-Chief, National Museum of the Republic of Tatarstan, Kazan, Republic of Tatarstan, Russian Federation, [Liliya.sattarova@hotmail.com](mailto:Liliya.sattarova@hotmail.com)*)

### **Collecting Tatar cultural heritage: Past, Present, and Future**

Today, the museums in the Republic of Tatarstan possess extensive collections which preserve both the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the Tatar people. The foundations for the formation of those collections were laid down in the end of 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries with the efforts of the members of the Archaeology, history, and ethnography society of the Kazan University. The main motivation to acquire items of Tatar culture at that stage was the interest of the enlightened part of the Russian society in the life and culture of the Russian “foreigners” – in this case, the indigenous people of the Volga region.

The establishment of the Tatar Republic in 1920 changed the ideas and principles behind the collection of Tatar heritage. In the first museum of the newly founded republic – the Museum of the Orient (1920 – 1921) – the Tatar cultural heritage was collected and treated as inseparable from the processes that affected the peoples of Eurasia during various periods of history. The creation of the museum facilitated a diversification of the collections’ themes, which now included not only ethnographical objects, but also written sources and literary monuments that reflect the stages of Tatar writing – from Arabic scripts to Latin and Cyrillic.

The article examines the contribution of the museum collections and items acquired in the Soviet period. Special focus is put on the 1990s, when the collections of Tatar cultural heritage had to face the new challenges of the period. The modern collections are examined in the context of forming a national identity and memory in a multicultural environment.

### **Session 3: What tells the Collection**

(Moderator: Leen Beyers)

**Birger Helgestad** (Head of Collection logistics, Nordiska museet, Sweden)

Email: [Birger.Helgestad@nordiskamuseet.se](mailto:Birger.Helgestad@nordiskamuseet.se)

### **Nordiska museet's agents: collecting at the turn of the century**

The focus of this presentation is the organisation of a network of agents collecting for the Nordiska museet in the decades immediately following its foundation in 1873. The collecting was initially done by the museum's founder, Dr. Artur Hazelius. Soon, however, a larger network of primarily unpaid volunteer agents were engaged in the activities. It is this network that will be discussed in the context of "Democratic collecting: collecting from an inclusive

perspective". These agents were commonly referred to as "skaffarna". This term can perhaps best be translated as procurers. They were people from many parts of society. They were collecting throughout Scandinavia, and even beyond. Some were sent on collecting expeditions arranged and funded by the museum. Others were local farmers living in the very societies in which they were collecting. They primarily kept in contact with the museum through writing letters. The famously affable Dr. Hazelius was not only prolific in his correspondence, but also maintained close personal relationships with many in this network. He even wrote and distributed a detailed collecting policy before the museum opened in 1873. In addition to the objects and their related data, the "skaffarna" also provided other information. This could be local stories, various personal observations, as well as drawings. In the particular perspective of this conference, the varied nature and sources of this information is pertinent. So is the diverse backgrounds of the agents doing the collecting. This would have informed Dr. Hazelius' understanding of the objects and the relevant societies. I will explore all this, and also draw some parallels to our present day collecting activities.

**Gulnaz Zigangirova**, Researcher, Kazan Tatarstan, Russia (muzcult@mail.ru)

### **The collection of the national writer S.Kamal as a form of preserving the unique culture of people**

In 1944 the first literary museum dedicated to the Tatar writer was organized in Kazan. Sharif Kamal was born in 1884 in the village of Tatar Peshlya, which was located 450 km from the city of Kazan. He wrote his first literary work in 1906, living in St. Petersburg. Then he lived and worked more than fifteen years in the city of Orenburg, where he wrote his most famous works. In 1925 he was invited to Kazan to work in the system of public education. But the main field of activity of Sharif Kamal was literary work. He was the first writer in Tatar literature who wrote about a working class, using a peculiar, unique style and specificity of the Tatar language. Sharif Kamal died in 1942. After his death a memorial museum was created in his apartment, that completely preserved the living environment of the writer. Now the museum also keeps a personal archive of the writer. Among the documents, photos, manuscripts are many historical, literary, and artistic materials reflecting the national cultural features of the development of the Tatar people in the early twentieth century. In these materials there is the peculiarity of philosophical, public views of the advanced representatives of the Tatar people, who tried to develop the culture of the Tatar people in new conditions of the Russian state. The complex of museum items belonging to the writer reflects cultural, aesthetic, everyday changes at the beginning of the twentieth century and is the typical and only survival example of the household complex of the Tatar intellectuals of that time. The collection of the writer S.Kamal stored in the funds of the National Museum of the Republic of Tatarstan is a part of the national heritage, which represents the whole world a unique, inimitable originality of the culture of the Tatar people and is used for the preservation and formation of humanistic universal values in the consciousness of the future generation.

## Session 4: Ethics of collecting

(Moderator: Leen Beyers)

**Jung-Ok Ha** (Senior Curator, National Museum of Korean Contemporary History, E-mail: [weaver@korea.kr](mailto:weaver@korea.kr))

### **Ethical, Theoretical, and Realistic Issues Found in Collection-based Museum Research — Museum Curators' Priority**

Museum research ethics is a declarative term that is not yet specified in detail when compared to other moral principles such as the museum code of ethics and code of conduct. Museum research by curators has also gone through decades of great change on the international stage in terms of its priority and directions.

This study aims to explore the ethical issues and theoretical and realistic dilemma confronted by a department of the National Museum of Korean Contemporary History during the time collection-based research was conducted. Should museum curators focus on disclosing their museum's collections (as well as the follow-up studies by other experts) – a museum's most valuable assets – and sharing them with society or undertake the research of a collection of artifacts as priority? What values (e.g., social inclusion, shared expertise, and public concern) must a museum pursue in collection-based research? Should curators promote the process of research despite their daily business? As pointed out throughout many existing studies, this study too shall conclude with an argument that the museum code of ethics and the code of conduct applied in museum research will require establishment of its own principles that embody the context and condition of each museum.

**Dolla Merrillees** (Cultural historian, writer and museologist, Master of Philosophy candidate at the University of Sydney Email: [dollasm@icloud.com](mailto:dollasm@icloud.com))

### **Un(Located)\***

Museums play a key role in the preservation and protection of cultural material and while we think of museum collections as time capsules for posterity, few beyond those on the inside realise that thousands of objects worth hundreds of millions of dollars have been lost, stolen, misplaced, damaged, accidentally discarded or transferred, or were officially classified as "unlocated". The real scale of these missing items is unknown yet Museums nervous about reputational damage and reluctant to publicise their own failures rarely speak about the loss of priceless objects and artworks integral to their collections.

Museums have a responsibility to consider the ethical dimensions of their collecting methods, but they also have a responsibility to acknowledge and account for loss particularly when it pertains to objects that are sensitive in nature, including human remains and sacred and non-sacred objects from across the world. Steven Lubar describes the study of this phenomenon as *museum taphonomy*: the process by which collections disappear. With many cultural

institutions burdened with hundreds, even thousands of artefacts many of which will never be displayed, are these collections relevant and sustainable for future generations?

Using two case studies, I will explore the life of two ‘missing’ objects and asks what it means when objects are separated from the information about them, their stories, their metadata. Do they lose much of their value, connection and legacy? Museums hold both objects and stories, and stories are even more easily displaced than artefacts. Objects are witnesses to both the past and present and my research approaches these questions through the concepts of time and memory raising greater questions about the role of collecting institutions in preserving and storing the tens of millions of items held in their trust and rarely seen by the public, and helping us to understand that loss is intrinsic in the formation and processing of collections and reminds us not only of the fragility and ephemeral nature of things but challenges assumptions and notions about permanence.

At a time when the possibility for the wanton destruction of our collective cultural heritage is announced via twitter by a leader of the western world and given current controversies over museum collections and colonial injustice it’s more important than ever to consider - what are the legacies of lost objects? Why are they relevant to museum audiences?

*\*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander viewers and listeners are advised that this talk contains words and descriptions that may be culturally sensitive and cause sadness or distress”.*

**Thursday 10/9/2020**

**Session 5: Using Collections to make New Connections**

(Moderator Dr. Alina Gromova)

**Ya-Hsuan Wang (Chelsea)** (Researcher, National Museum of History, Taiwan Email address: [musechelsea@gmail.com](mailto:musechelsea@gmail.com) ; [chelsea@nmh.gov.tw](mailto:chelsea@nmh.gov.tw))

**Interdisciplinary Innovation for Contemporary Collections: the Practice of Constructing Diversified Dialogues in Taiwan Museums**

In recent years, the museum community has constantly reflected on the definition of museums, the relationship between museums and the general public, the social influence of museums, and the functions of museum collections. In order to build a closer and diverse dialogue with the public, the Museum Association (MA) launched the “Collection 2030”, advocating that museum collections must not be silent and forgotten. They must be: 1. empowering; 2. relevant; and 3. dynamic. This study attempts to analyze one Taiwanese case study. We try to analyze the interdisciplinary and cross-generational innovation collection plans, which turn collection on its ear, by reconstructing the mode of communication and opening new dialogues with the public.

The case study is the creative development of the National History Museum (NMH). The NMH is a pioneer in image licensing in Taiwan. Since the establishment of the creativity and marketing division in 2012, it has been responsible for licensing, with many important results have been achieved within a few years. In 2018, the museum has been closed for renovation, and it becomes hard for the NMH to exhibit its collection. The museum then proposed a "Pattern Licensing Plan" in 2019, which involves transforming collection into new pattern designs interpreted by the museum, guided the core concept of exploring the "fascinating unexpected details" in collection. Under the principle of scientific logic and design approach, the museum and the creative team recruited invented 60 patterns in a year, and provided a style guide for public use. Moreover, the museum creates an imaginative exhibition of these patterns in the Creative Expo Taiwan 2020. In addition to in-depth research in the original meanings of collection, new interpretation has become the seed to start the imagination, further extending the existing interpretation and generating new content.

Accessing to collections and creation of issues is no longer limited to a single approach, and it is no longer limited to the framework of museum fields. Just like the new channel of information created by today's indispensable influential voices of the internet- the key opinion leaders (KOL), museums must be more proactive in presenting facts, and develop various accessible collection innovation and interdisciplinary collaborations, so as for to promote more diverse communication with the general public.

**Hsuwen Yuan (Emily)** (National Taiwan Museum, E-mail address: [hsuweny@gmail.com](mailto:hsuweny@gmail.com), [hwyuan@ntm.gov.tw](mailto:hwyuan@ntm.gov.tw))

### **Museum Collections for Mutual Understanding and Intercultural Dialogue in Contemporary and Multicultural Society**

National Taiwan Museum (NTM) is the oldest museum in Taiwan. Located in the heart of Taipei City, NTM was built during Japanese colonial time (1908) and served as the great success and showcase of colonial governance in Taiwan (1895-1945). Within the museum, there are over One hundred ten thousand collections covering zoology, botany, anthropology, and geology fields, and over two-thirds of them were collected, analyzed, named, and categorized by Japanese naturalists. Among all these clear and classified interpretations, there is an amount of over two thousands of them are remain the lacking of clear narrative and description. These collections were from Southeast Asian during 1911 and collected by the first director of the museum, a Japanese botanist, Mr. Kawakami Takiya. These collections are majorly showing the essential cultural and art objects of Southeast Asian and Javanese cultures, such as different types of Indonesian shadow puppets and musical instruments. The reason for lacking interpretation, according to recent understanding, might be the language barriers, as well as Mr. Takiya was a botanist instead of an anthropologist, a linguist, or an artist. Nowadays, to understand these collections and to enhance mutual understanding of the fast-growing population from Indonesia and other Southeast Asian migrations in Taiwan, this paper would show how the museum takes the initial steps to apply these collections as a bridge to understand Southeast Asian migrations and have them



contribute us the interpretations and most precious, the migrations' personal stories related to these collections. This will not only provide understandings but also reward more profound and meaningful interpretations and understanding connecting the collections and society.

**Chen-hsiao CHAI** (Associate Researcher and Chief, Collection Division, National Museum of History, TAIWAN, E-mail address: [chchai@nmh.gov.tw](mailto:chchai@nmh.gov.tw))

### **Transforming Folk Tradition into Museum's Collection: A Night of a Divine Procession (Anfang) in Lukang from the National Museum of History (Taiwan)**

The representation of different cultures and re-contextualization of material cultures in museum has long been central to museum studies. In this paper, the author will present a new project to translate and reinterpret an artwork to enhance the research and utility of museum collection.

The main storyline of the project is the artisan Huang Kuo-su and his woodcarving artwork, A Night of a Divine Procession (Anfang) in Lukang. From the belief showing by the artwork, viewers will be able to see the local development of woodcarving industry and the traditional religious activities, a night of a divine procession, which has been existed in Lukang for more than 150 years and played an important role of connecting temples and local people.

We believe the goal of museum collection is to preserve not only artifacts but also the intangible cultural heritage behind them. The project applied 3D modelling technology and multi-media production, which enable the museum to successfully preserve the cultural context of the artwork and to provide a holistic record of human development.

As we reflect on the collecting of artifacts from our cultures, we should understand better the meaning of the context of the cultures, and on the process of decontextualization and recontextualization, obtain a closer look of the real facets of cultures.

In short, the project portrays the technique and values of the museum collection, and explores the cultural context of social and economic development as well as religious traditions. It conveys the richness of various cultural phases, and enables viewers to form a dialogue with the context it interpreted.

## **Session 6: Contemporary Ways of Collecting** (Moderator: Olga Sinitsyna)

**Joanna Kroll** (POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, [jkroll@polin.pl](mailto:jkroll@polin.pl)) and **Aldona Modrzewska** (POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, President of the Polish Museum Inventory Association, [amodrzewska@polin.pl](mailto:amodrzewska@polin.pl))

### **A few words about the challenges of dialogue with donors in the context of building a museum**

For years now, we have been building our collections through campaigns of collecting keepsakes from people eager to document the traces of existence of the pre-War Jewish community in Poland. We talk to our donors, asking them for interviews – so that the objects which they have donated can retain their individual, emotional load.

For over fifteen years, since its establishment in 2005, the POLIN Museum has revised its collection criteria and is evaluating its existing collections. Presently, we are applying a set of priorities, whilst developing the Museum collection. Some of our decisions lead to the repatriation or deaccessioning some of the objects from the collection. A symbolic example of this can be the fragment of a Torah, which a donor gave the POLIN Museum in the hope that it would become part of our exhibition. However, after taking into consideration rabbinical consultation and the spiritual needs of the Jewish community in Poland, the POLIN Museum decided to transfer that Torah fragment to the Jewish community for ritual burial. Our decision was not in accordance with the donor's wishes and convincing him, that this was the right thing to do, proved to be quite a challenge. Other similar examples can be provided.

Over the course of the workshop, participants will learn how we, at POLIN Museum, have revised our collection strategy and how we have adopted criteria for the acceptance and verification of objects for our collections. This will also form part of the discussion regarding the ethical aspects of collecting. Using selected examples from our collections, together, we will consider upon which principles museums develop and verify their collections. We will also discuss which communication methods should be used in dialogue with donors of objects to museum collections.

Leen Beyers (Curator MAS) ([leen.beyers@antwerpen.be](mailto:leen.beyers@antwerpen.be))  
and Vera De Boeck (curator connection MAS) ([vera.deboeck@antwerpen.be](mailto:vera.deboeck@antwerpen.be))

### **Collecting in a minefield. Participative collecting on the Second World War and conflicts**

The [MAS](#), a museum connecting local and global culture and history, in Antwerp, Belgium, prepares a new exhibition on war, in which the history of Antwerp and the Second World War is confronted with wider perspectives on conflicts. Collecting is central to the preparation of this exhibition. Actually, from May 2020 onwards we launch a heritage tour in Antwerp and ask people to share their personal heritage in relation to WW II and conflicts since 1945.

This collecting strategy has two main goals. First, we made the observation that the MAS collection of about 700 items about WW II lacks biographical context. Those who used the objects (amongst others: weapons, ration coupons, flags, a nazi Star of David) and the reasons why these objects were given to the museum are largely absent in our archives. People who experienced WW II and who are still alive are now in their 80s and 90s. If we want to add their perspectives to the collection, it is time to approach them. Also, children of deceased people who experienced WW II, can possibly add biographical heritage and perspectives to our collections.

Second, the mission of the MAS is to connect people and heritage and to act as a hub in society. In particular with regard to the contested history of WWII in Antwerp we consider it

of utmost importance to connect with people from different networks and to take into account their multiple perspectives. In other words, we think that the social relevance of our WW II project starts with the way we collect. But the challenge is big, since WW II is a ‘minefield’ in Antwerp, amongst others because Jews were severely persecuted here; ideological divisions were extreme during and after the war; politicians continue to frame the history of WW II; part of the city population is not connected to the WW II past since they migrated to Antwerp after 1945.

We hope to develop a participative collection strategy and exhibition concept which stimulates reciprocal understanding. One of the sources of inspiration is the [Emotion Networks Strategy of the Reinwardt Academy of Museology Amsterdam](#). At the COMCOL conference we share our plans and first experiences with this collecting project and we expect to receive relevant feedback.

**Els Veraverbeke** (Conservator het Huis van Alijn, [els.veraverbeke@stad.gent](mailto:els.veraverbeke@stad.gent))

### **The House of Alijn Focus on changing rituals, traditions and habits**

The House of Alijn is the museum of daily life in Flanders. Changing rituals, traditions and customs in personal daily life from the 20th century are the main focus. These rituals, traditions and habits are approached from a dynamic perspective; change is central. The focus is connecting the museum operation and collection policy in particular with the changing society. The main exhibition is conceived in accordance with this vision, in which the audience is a visitor and participant. The narrative is the annual calendar. The rituals and traditions linked to the annual calendar indicate how we organize daily life in the society. Although they are constantly changing, they still belong to the collective memory and new rituals and habits become part of the calendar. This narrative offers many opportunities to integrate new and changing rituals and traditions in an inclusive way and to make them visible to the public.

The collection policy is committed to collecting traditions, rituals and habits from the life cycle and annual calendar. Strange or familiar, it is clearly about universal themes that affect everyone. The rituals and traditions of the annual calendar are also the basis for organizing public activities, each time in collaboration with various heritage communities. The activity itself and the collaboration result in collection acquisition, whereby material and intangible heritage are interconnected. 'Collection' is widely understood in the House of Alijn. It is about objects, stories, images, sounds. The story, the meaning and the use - where the ‘immaterial’ is more important than tactile objects. In this way the House of Alijn investigates various methods for collecting contemporary daily life, with ICH as the central theme. This process allows us to integrate diversity in the House of Alijn in collaboration with diverse heritage communities.

**Minna Sarantola Weiss** (Helsinki City Museum [minna.sarantola-weiss@hel.fi](mailto:minna.sarantola-weiss@hel.fi))

### **Significance Analysis as a tool of communication**

Significance Analysis is a method for determining the significance of museum collections, originally launched in Australia for value classification of collections. It was thus intended for professional use within museums. However, it has great potential in audience work, because of the attitude change of museums towards their collections. The value of a collection is now interpreted in relation to how the museum's own community perceives its significance. This applies to new acquisitions as well as to old collections. In this new situation, a curator does not look at collections exclusively through traditional academic eyeglasses. Instead, the value of an object is related to the stories it carries and the complex ways in which it intertwines with the stories of community or individual identity. The curator cannot create this context alone, but needs the help of the community. The curator then acts as a midwife and facilitator rather than an academic researcher.

Significance Analysis has proven to be an excellent tool for interaction with different audiences and in so doing also enhancing the research potential of collections. However, it is very important that the interaction is multidirectional. One of the challenges is how to return the results of Significance Analysis to the community and make the results more widely available.

In my presentation, I will look at some examples of how meaning analysis has been used in audience work at the Helsinki City Museum.

## **Session 7: Digital Collection Mobility**

(Moderator: Gloriana Amador)

**Antonio Rodríguez** (Chairman, ICOM ICEE; Senior Advisor for International Programs and Strategic Partnerships, Washington DC, USA)

### **Legacy of the Silk Roads: Creating New Opportunities for Digital Engagement**

The presentation introduces the joint exhibition on common heritage along the Silk Roads organized as a part of the 3 years' European Union/UNESCO project "Silk Roads Heritage Corridors in Afghanistan, Central Asia and Iran – International Dimension of the European Year of Cultural Heritage". The exhibition on the Common Cultural Heritage highlights the rich heritage of the participating countries, promoting the exchanges of good practices along the Silk Roads and promoting common understanding about the Silk Roads heritage as a bridge between the East and the West. The speaker will discuss the challenges of adapting the original exhibition concept and development to a digital platform, the difficulties of

bringing together objects from six participating museums in Central Asia, Iran, and Afghanistan, as well as strategies to reinforce digital engagement.

**Alina Stulikova** (The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, Department of Cinema and Media Art, [alina.stulikova@arts-museum.ru](mailto:alina.stulikova@arts-museum.ru), [alinastulikova31@gmail.com](mailto:alinastulikova31@gmail.com))

### **Digital Unity in Physical Reality (mediaart)**

Nowadays, we see the world without any limitations, where physical and geographical boundaries fade away, and humanity becomes a globalized community. At the same time, we explore new types of differences and diversities that sometimes take us apart. So, it is a task for art and art institutions to overcome the barriers and create unity, understanding and cooperation. The art that is crucial in this process is media art that should become one of the focuses for museum collections. Besides being a significant part of the heritage of tomorrow, media art allows different forms of cooperation and communication between individuals, institutions and communities. Due to its ephemeral and intangible nature, media art can create connections and penetrate even closed borders. Besides democratizing art through speaking on the language of the digital era that is shared by communities all over the world, media art offers different opportunities for cooperation and accessibility. Media art, in its form, postulates the concept of sharing — between individuals, communities, institutions. Through applying technologies like blockchain (e.g. community-based artwork by Eve Sussman "89 seconds Atomized"), media art allows everyone not only to become the owner of an art piece in an easy and democratic way but to share this piece with the collection of a favourite museum. Moreover, media art allows museums to build cooperation between one another in the field of collecting — creating shared collections when institutions jointly acquire art pieces. In a world, where the resources are limited, sharing is a key to sustainability. Shared collections are a source for finding understanding and balance of interests, as shared owing implies shared choice. Sharing even in such conservative fields like collecting is an inevitable feature of tomorrow. So, co-creating, co-experiencing, co-sharing, co-everything can create digital unity in physical reality.

## **Mingling sessions and kick-of workshop by the COMCOL Young Board Members**

**Wednesday Mingling session:** Finish out the first day of conferencing with some fun. Join us at the first ever COMCOL professional speed-dating.

Bring a drink and get to know colleagues from all over the world while talking collections.

**Thursday Mingling session:** Start your conference day by getting to know your fellow attendees.

Join us in discussions around some of the hot topics of current collection practice and share experiences and opinions.

**Friday: Kick-off Workshop Young Professionals Network organized by the COMCOL Young Board Member.**

Join us the first ever meeting of COMCOL. Help us shape an international network that fits your needs and expectations to take your professional development to the next level.

The aim of this workshop is to introduce an initiative undertaken by COMCOL to encourage more young professionals to engage with the work of ICOM and COMCOL. The International Young Museum Professionals Network will be presented and an interactive participation will be encourage in order to explore future directions and interests to be taken onboard. All young members (but also non-members) of COMCOL are invited to attend!

We are looking forward to meeting you!!

**Saturday 12/09/2020**

***Workshop – co-organized with the Jewish Museum Berlin.***

**Heritage of Religion in Migration Societies**

**Object Interpretations: After the Destruction and Transformation of Religion**

The European society is a migration society. While Europe is claiming to be on the way to secularization, the traces of religion are ubiquitous in museum collections and their buildings. Immigrants, who arrived from places where their communities suffered religious discrimination, were confronted with destruction of their religious heritage. However, religion didn't disappear from their lives and their family traditions. Often, they found new objects to fill the void, created new religious traditions or used family *religiosa* in different contexts.

In the online workshop with **Alina Gromova, Darja Klingenberg and Tsypylma Darieva** we are going to look for new points of view of “religious objects” or “objects of religion”. Working with objects, which Jewish migrants to Germany provided for the Jewish Museum Berlin during the project “Object Days”, we are critically dealing with established narratives of religious material culture in Western societies.

*The workshop is a cooperation between the Jewish Museum Berlin and COMCOL, ICOM International Committee for Collecting, as part of the COMCOL annual conference “Collecting Diversity: Divergence as Dialogue”.*