



Museums, Cities, Cultural Power

# Symposium

Free Online Event

24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



# **SYMPOSIUM Museums, Cities, Cultural Power**

**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> and Friday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021 online**

## **Overview**

*Museums, Cities, Cultural Power* is a two-day online symposium bringing together cultural and museum practitioners, academics, urbanists, architects and activists for an urgent discussion about the evolving power relationships between urban museums, their neighbourhoods, and the people who inhabit them.

Organised by Brunel University London, the Museum of London and UCL Urban Laboratory, this event examines the dynamics of selected museum development projects in London, the UK and other cities around the world such as Cape Town, Santiago de Chile, Barcelona, Brussels, Rio de Janeiro and Rotterdam, offering a critical space in which to explore the civic, cultural and economic agency of contemporary urban museums. It will provide insights into some of today's most significant cultural development projects and the power relations implicated in different approaches to their design and implementation in a range of urban contexts and emerging futures.

## **Programme Summary**

### **THURSDAY 24<sup>th</sup> June 2021 17:30 – 20:00 BST**

<b>17:30</b>	Welcome
<b>17:45</b>	In Conversation: A New Museum for London
<b>18:30</b>	Film: "Capital Culture: Museums, Cities, Cultural Power"
<b>18:45</b>	Global Perspectives: Museum Directors in the City
<b>19:30</b>	Q & A
<b>20:00</b>	END

### **FRIDAY 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021 10:00 – 17:45 BST**

<b>10:00 - 11:30</b>	Session 1 PLACE
<b>11:30 – 12:00</b>	Break
<b>12:00 – 14:00</b>	Lunchtime Activities
<b>14:00 – 15:30</b>	Session 2 PEOPLE
<b>15:30 – 16:00</b>	Break
<b>16:00 – 17:30</b>	Session 3 POWER
<b>17:30 – 17:45</b>	Concluding Thoughts

*Museums, Cities, Cultural Power* is supported with public funding by Arts Council England. Part of London Festival of Architecture 2021.

## THURSDAY 24<sup>th</sup> June 2021 17:30 – 20:00 BST

**17:30**

### **Welcome**

Monica Degen (Brunel University London),  
Clare Melhuish (UCL Urban Laboratory) and  
Lauren Parker (Museum of London)

**17:45**

### **In Conversation: A New Museum for London**

#### **In conversation**

Sharon Ament (Director, Museum of London), with architects  
Asif Khan (Asif Khan Studio) and  
Paul Williams (Stanton Williams)

#### **Chaired by**

Monica Degen (Brunel University London)

**18:30**

### **Film: "Capital Culture: Museums, Cities, Cultural Power"**

introduced by the filmmakers Tom Butler and Paul Moody.

**18:45**

### **Global Perspectives: Museum Directors in the City**

A panel discussion exploring the historical legacies, current responses and  
future possibilities for urban museums around the world.

#### **Panel members**

Sharon Ament (Director, Museum of London)  
Yves Goldstein (Chef de Mission, Kanal Pompidou, Brussels)  
Chrischené Julius (Acting Director, District 6 Museum, Cape Town)  
Claudia Zaldívar (Director, Museum of Solidarity Salvador Allende, Santiago)

#### **Chaired by**

Lauren Parker (Museum of London)

**19:30**

### **Q & A**

#### **Chaired by**

Lauren Parker (Museum of London)

**20:00**

### **END**

## FRIDAY 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021 10:00 – 17:45 BST

### 10:00      **Session 1    PLACE**

In this first session, we interrogate the relationship between museums and the places in which they are located. Museum buildings are not designed solely to store and exhibit collections but also as symbolic opportunities to support city branding, attract visitors, stimulate place-based regeneration, and build architectural reputations. As public and civic institutions, museums also have a duty to reflect critically on their capacity to generate social change. If the prospects for future global sustainability depend on cities taking responsibility for the socio-economic wellbeing of their citizens and visitors, from health, climate action and inclusive economies to effective governance and racial justice, what part should museums and cultural organisations play in this process?

Whether purpose-built or converted from existing landmarks, museums can be perceived both as drivers of regeneration or as expensive and contested flagship projects that generate little perceived benefit to ordinary city dwellers. We present a range of critical perspectives that explore the spatial, economic, cultural, and sensory relationships between museums and their urban settings, and alternative cultural agents and strategies.

**Speakers**      Judit Carrera (Director, Centro de Cultura Contemporanea, Barcelona)  
Gus Casely-Hayford (Director, V&A East)  
Stephen Pritchard (independent researcher)  
Amahra Spence (MAIA)

**Chaired by**    Clare Melhuish (UCL Urban Laboratory)

### 11:30 – 12:00      **Break**

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### 12:00 – 14:00      **Lunchtime Activities**

Grab a sandwich, get comfortable, and join us, and some very special partners, for a series of informal lunchtime activities that explore some of the key issues emerging from our discussions. Sessions include:

#### 12:00 – 12:50

##### **Julie's Bicycle**

Julie's Bicycle's Creative Climate Chats are live conversations with leading thinkers in culture and climate on just transition, new economics for a regenerative economy, the

net zero carbon challenge, and climate justice. Join us for a Creative Climate Chat with Sadie Young, Director of Timespan. Timespan is a cultural organisation in Helmsdale, a village in the very north east of the Scottish Highlands, with local, global and planetary ambitions to utilise culture for social change. We'll be discussing how museums and galleries can uncover and contextualise local histories and how they can connect to wider movements to help enact radical social change. We'll also be joined by Hilary Jennings, who will tell us more about Happy Museum and their new partnership with Julie's Bicycle. Sign up to participate, ask questions and be part of the conversation.

### **Museum Detox: From Finding Safe Spaces in Hostile Environments, to Re-imagining Liberated Spaces**

Join Museum Detox to consider different experiences within our hostile built environments and how we might reimagine these spaces as liberated places in the future.

### **Cultural Capital: Museums, Cities, Cultural Power Film Screening and Q&A**

In this session Tom Butler, Paul Moody and Monica Degen will discuss the process and thinking behind producing a short experimental film that sums up some of the key themes that inform the symposium.

**13:00 – 13:50**

### **Museum of Homelessness: Making a Museum in the 21st Century – Three Provocations**

This session will run twice over the lunch hour, with 3 provocations for the profession from Museum of Homelessness crew and plenty of space for a lively discussion.

### **Virtual Tour of the New Museum of London**

Join the Museum of London's new museum project team for a special 'behind the scenes' tour of the new Museum of London in West Smithfield, one of the largest cultural capital projects in Europe, currently under construction.

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**14:00**      **Session 2**      **PEOPLE**

In the second session, we examine what city dwellers and visitors want from a contemporary museum engaged with its local neighbourhood and the wider city. Historically museums have made a concerted effort to attract a wider range of audiences to their buildings, motivated often by paternalistic concerns. While some museums have been successful in engaging with diverse audiences, challenges around equitable cultural participation persist. Not everyone is attracted to the notion of a 'museum', its buildings or institutional symbolism. This session re-

flects critically on how museums can be relevant to and representative of the diverse, unequal and often transient populations of cities. These discussions will provide space to conceptualise what a museum created by, with and for its city entails.

**Speakers** Hannah Ishmael (Archivist, Black Cultural Archives, London)  
Sophia Labadi (Professor, University of Kent)  
Cláudia Rose Ribeiro da Silva (Coordinator, Museu da Maré, Rio De Janeiro)  
Sara Wajid (Joint CEO, Birmingham Museums Trust)

**Chaired by** Sarita Malik (Brunel University London)

**15:30 – 16:00**      **Break**

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**16:00**      **Session 3**      **POWER**

The final session interrogates the institutional power embodied by museums – past, present and future. Museums have historically played a key role in nation building and colonial enterprise, shaping and representing particular cultural ideologies, social value systems, and hierarchies of power. Their influence in public debate continues today in relation to evolving concerns: around sustainability and the environment, economic inequalities and social justice, globalisation and marketisation, decolonisation and migration. Simultaneously, they act as powerful spatial players in the redevelopment of urban environments, participating in the branding and marketing of areas identified for regeneration, the maximisation of urban property values, and the production of new cultural landscapes of consumption. This session considers how museums and other cultural organisations should respond to these pressures, and what roles they may play within our global urban emerging futures.

**Speakers** Pedro Fiore Arantes (Professor, Federal University of Sao Paolo)  
Wayne Modest (Director of Content, National Museum of World Cultures, Wereldmuseum, Rotterdam)  
Beatrice Pembroke (Director of Culture, King’s College London)  
Andrea Phillips (Professor, Northumbria University)

**Chaired by** Monica Degen (Brunel University London)

**17:30**      **Concluding Thoughts**

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The *Museums, Cities, Cultural Power* programme is correct at time of printing and subject to change.