

## COMCOL Board update

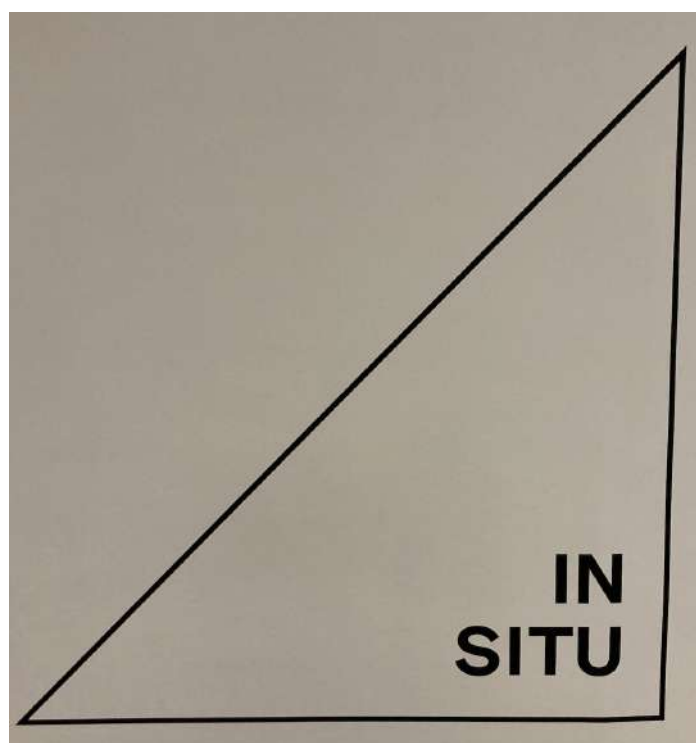
My dear COMCOL members, we hope you are well. We are writing you to report on what COMCOL has been about in 2024 and will focus on in 2025. At the same time we can not ignore the state our world is in at the moment. We are living in difficult times, highlighted by brutal conflicts on different continents, climate disasters and extreme political shifts that challenge core values on human rights, justice and equity. With this we acknowledge that for many of us this has been already for some time reality and others it maybe just started to get close to home.

In the midst of this it is sometimes hard to stay motivated in the work that we do. What can our role be in all of this, can we be meaningful while being in survival mode, how to maneuver between the violence, the loud voices and opinions, how to be a patient listener, stay grounded, do not shy away from taking a stand and offer space for dialogue to others or our own voice.

There is no single nor simple answer to this. All we can do it see each other, hear each other and be there for another.



Danielle Kuijten  
COMCOL Chair



## LOOKING BACK - 2024

2024 CAMOC COMCOL Conference jointly hosted by the Amsterdam Museum and Imagine IC in Amsterdam.

CAMOC (ICOM Committee for Collecting and Activities of Museums of Cities) and COMCOL (ICOM Committee for Collecting) partnered up for the joint 2024 annual conference in Amsterdam. With the theme “Collecting with(in) the City” we focussed on revisiting collecting and (re)presenting in and with the city, by investigating the fluidity of the borders between museums and cities. The conference was hosted by the Amsterdam Museum in partnership with Imagine IC.

225 participants joined the conference from 32 countries from Brazil to South Korea. Most of them onsite but also some digitally. The program offered tours in museums and neighbourhoods, 2 Keynotespeakers, 47 paper presentations, 2 workshopsessions, a joint host session, the annual members metings, an artistic intervention and 10 posters presentations. \



We collected some responses from our board members to share with you:

Our board member Leen answered to the questions *What was your highlight of the conference and why?* The keynote of Leontine Meijer – Van Mensch, director of the Rotterdam Museum in the Netherlands, on “implicated communities” (a term coined by Erica Lehrer). She addressed the long history of participation and the challenge we face to relate to complex networks surrounding heritage, which are not at all “homogeneous communities”. Experiencing this a lot in our day-to-day networking here in the museum, I was happy to hear how she talked about this challenge. A second highlight for me was the Emotion Networking session at Imagine IC on 12 October, which put this “implicated communities” idea in practice.” Furthermore she shared: “Next to the very inspiring Collecting With the City projects of the Amsterdam Museum and the collecting dialogues of Imagine IC, I was impressed by the contemporary collecting approach of the London Transport Museum. The presentation in Amsterdam was from Zeynep Kussan and Ellie Miles, how they are radically oriented towards collecting people’s experiences with public transport.”

Our Young Board Member Chelsea Wang responded “ Every year, the connections I make with different people at conferences always stand out as a highlight for me. This year, I was especially pleased to meet many friends from Asia, including Thailand, Singapore, South Korea, and Japan.

I'm delighted that our Asian colleagues share a common topic of interest in the museum field—contemporary collecting—and how we can do it better. This year, my paper was selected for a special session, where I presented my research on scents. After the session, many attendees came up to greet me and expressed their appreciation for the scents from Taiwan. In our session, each presenter offered a hands-on experience for the audience. It was truly rewarding to see the audience resonate with our work, which means a great deal to me.”

## **Revision of the Code of Ethics**

During our conference we used a big part of our annual meeting to dive into the revision of the Code of Ethics. This because a call had gone out to the committees to discuss the principles drafted with the membership and fill out a form with feedback to help the working group in furthering the task at hand. We invited Steph Scholten – former ETHCOM member and now part of the EB and Leontine Meijer van Mensch new ETHCOM chair to present the procedure and the main discussions so far. From the session we created a small working group. With members from Thailand, Finland, Belgium, Austria, Taiwan and the Netherlands we discussed the principles from which we drafted feedback to the Paris Working group.

Some of the main takes from the discussions:

When talking about heritage in all its forms tangible and intangible it should also explicitly mention the digital. Whether talking about the storage of digital born or digitalized all aspects puts us for a huge variety of ethical questions from privacy, storage capacity, environmental to accessibility.

In the online meeting organized by COMCOL, we discovered that ethical standards have not kept pace with the times—perhaps because the times are evolving too quickly. During the meeting, I realized that even though we come from different countries, the shared principles of international ethics remain deeply rooted in our hearts. However, beyond the feedback we have already consolidated and submitted, I hope the wording of the ethical guidelines can be more practical, avoiding overly vague language.

„Listening“ could become a core aspect in our practices, as much for the act of collecting as for the storage of tangible and intangible collections. What do communities want and need? How are we handling our collections? What impact does it have on our daily work ethics and practice?

A topic that particularly interests me because I am doing a research about it for my master is the reach of open access in public museum's collections, which rarely exists in Argentina / LATAM except for some cases in Brazil. What the museum community has to say about it? Is there a consensus, different opinions?

I really hope ICOM will be inspired by what we brought together. We asked for more emphasis on: Contemporary collecting, digital objects and ethical digital use of heritage, foster dialogue between plural interpretations (instead of foster plural interpretations), attention to the sensitivity of heritage related to armed conflicts, attention to safeguarding for intangible heritage. For me today, being very concerned about war and conflicts, I feel that the ethical ambition of “fostering the dialogue between plural interpretations” is very important.





Thursday 10 and Friday 11 October – conference days at Pakhuis de Zwijger

Sandra Vacca wrote. “Although I did not attend the whole conference, I was delighted to be part of the day at Imagine IC! The conversation we had with Jules Rijssen (Imagine IC), Leen Beyers (MAS Antwerpen) and Chrischene Julius (District Six Capetown) was extremely enriching, as it focused on different, individual challenges faced by our institutions while finding aspects uniting us. The focus on care - for the communities and us as individuals, was both very down to earth and comforting. A further highlight was the workshop with Sara Huang: it felt good to experience unity and a sense of community with people I had never met before. It certainly gave me strength and a sense of hope!”



Saturday October 12 – Special program at Imagine IC

## Contemporary Collecting

To the question *Thinking of contemporary collecting practices what was in your eyes the most exciting project, article or activity you read/participated in/visited in 2024 and why* Florencia answered. “The National History Museum of Argentina, whose narrative and collections only embrace 19th century, is developing a project to include the 20th century. To do it, they open a call for object- donations. They know exactly the piece they need. They communicate it and they are finding those objects. People are having a good response. Previous years, they developed another project, which had the goal to collect oral stories about people who lived in the earliest years of the 20 century <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/cultura/reabrio-el-museo-historico-nacional-con-una-campana-para-recibir-donaciones-que-permitan-contar-la-nid16092024/> “

Chelsea wrote: “This was my first time visiting the Netherlands to attend a conference, and I was deeply impressed by the outstanding efforts of Netherlands cultural institutions in contemporary collecting. This includes Imagine IC and the Amsterdam Museum. The context of contemporary collecting practices in the Netherlands made me feel that the presence of people is the most important aspect within the overall practice. The projects and exhibitions I encountered were remarkable and have inspired me to consider whether the contexts I observed could be applied in my own country.”



## Young Members Meetings by the COMCOL Young Board

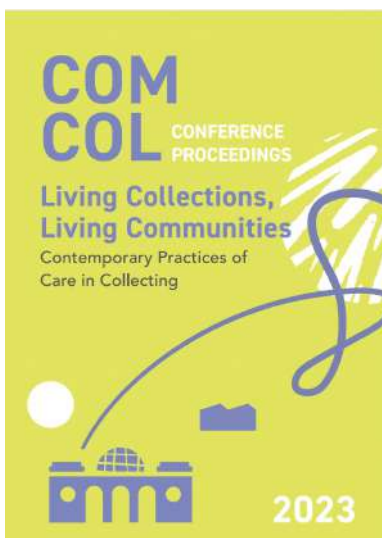
This year, we organized fewer sessions because we were all busy, and the world has been experiencing many uncertainties. Organizing large-scale meetings has not been easy, but we have continued to do our best. One of our sessions this year featured Sara Huang, who led us in a well-being experience. Participants reflected on their own life experiences, and even through the screen, we could sense some personal moments shared among us. Our participants appreciated this kind of activity. However, as we have been discussing certain topics over an extended period, some issues tend to repeat, leading some friends to feel there is no need to attend again. Perhaps we could further refine and diversify the topics we set for our sessions.

*Are you interested in joining forces with the Young Board Members to develop the program further? Do email us.*



## Publications

We were very excited to be able to finalize two publications. Both the publication with proceedings of our conference in Recife from 2021 and the publication with proceedings from our conference in Taiwan in 2023 are now available on our website.



## Acronyms



In 2024 we approached you all to fill out a survey in relation to a bigger exploration taken on by ICOM Paris, where the feasibility and benefits of replacing International Council acronyms with names reflecting core activities. The goal is to enhance communication (both internal and external) and facilitate visibility and inclusivity. For this the ICOM Executive Board has recommended all International Committees to survey their members on this matter and work with the communications department at the Secretariat to launch any name change.

The result of the survey was a majority vote for the replacement of **COMCOL** for **Committee for Collecting**. In order to make the next steps to put the request of change with the executive board we as committee will try to organize an online General Assembly. You, as members shall get the possibility here to vote on the new acronym/name. We will inform you in the next weeks about this.

### LOOKING AHEAD - 2025

**Next conference: The 27th ICOM General Conference will be held in Dubai in November 2025.** The theme of this conference is 'The future of museums in rapidly changing communities'. Sub themes are Intangible heritage, Youth Power and New Technologies.



The General conference will have keynote speakers and panel sessions. That week also the international committees have the opportunity to program for their members. On November 12 & 13 COMCOL will organize sessions with partners like ICOFOM, ICTOP and others. On November 15 there will be a special program during the offsite day. Keep an eye open as Call for Papers and further information will follow soon.

*Please note that the ICOM-Getty Participation Grants program will support approximately 20 grantees. The grants are intended for emerging and developing professionals who wish to benefit from the opportunity to participate in ICOM's most important global event. Deadline **14 March 2025 at 23:59 CET**. Find more information here:*

*<https://icom.museum/en/news/icom-and-the-getty-foundation-announce-participation-grants-for-the-27th-general-conference-in-dubai/>*

## **2025 Elections for the new board of COMCOL**

This year we will have the elections again for the board of COMCOL. We hope that many will consider putting themselves forward as candidate.

Before summer we will prepare the call and email you about this. If you have beforehand questions please do not hesitate to contact us at [chair.comcol@icom.museum](mailto:chair.comcol@icom.museum) and [secretary.comcol@icom.museum](mailto:secretary.comcol@icom.museum)



## **Final thoughts**

“Belonging to a community that wants to learn from each other, while reflecting and improve practices has been invaluable for me. I am grateful for every encounter and looking forward to more !” - Sandra Vacca

Warm wishes from the COMCOL Board & Young Board,

Leen, Njabulo, Nara, Sandra, Ying Ying, Brandie, Chelsea, Florencia & Danielle