

MUSEUMS 19–21 September

UNDER *PRESSURE*

FIHRM 2022 Conference Oslo Norway



www.fihrm2022.org

Dear participants and speakers

The organizers of FIHRM Oslo 2022 wish to thank you all for making this truly inspirational conference happen.



Key takeaways

The theme for this year's FIHRM conference was "*Museums under pressure. Government, Community, Autonomy*". Throughout our three days together, keynotes, case presentations, and panel discussions contributed to shed light on this complex topic from a variety of angles. On our first day at *Eidsvoll 1814*, pressures in different forms were discussed by museum veterans, who reminded us that obstacles to museums' autonomy and margins of action may be internal as well as external. Speakers stressed the need for mutual collegial support and generosity.

The second day at the *Nobel Peace Center* explored the issue of government interference, from museums fighting for their physical survival, as caused by the brutal war in Ukraine, to more subtle authoritarian attempts to restrain museums and bring them in line. Also, the museum as an advocate of peace-building was highlighted. On the final day of the conference, at the *Norwegian Holocaust Center*, discussions centered on the presence and absence of minority perspectives in museums, providing critical and self-critical views as well as examples of pioneering work for real diversity. We heard uplifting talks about the prospect of achieving more inclusive museums through the practice of co-creation and co-production.

An essential part of all FIHRM conferences is to inspire and be inspired by sharing good practices. We are happy to say that this was offered in an abundance of case presentations here in Oslo, both in the plenary and in parallel sessions. And as FIHRM president Guillermo Whpei concluded at the end of the conference: Our museums may suffer all kinds of pressures but may still serve as agents of change and voice the hope of a more just and inclusive world. "Museums are resistance, the ethical resistance."



Keynote abstracts

"Museums under pressure: An overview of complex interrelations"

As guardians and interpreters of joint history, museums are constantly addressed by their surroundings and all those who somehow want to influence which parts of history are highlighted and how this should be done. Here, the pressure museums face can stretch from subtle expectations to clearly stated demands and even threats of closure and destruction, depending on who the acting parts are and which actual power they have.

Museum colleagues, the governance in and of the institution, surrounding communities, and the political situation in a country are among the central actors and factors here that can protect or challenge a museum's autonomy. In most cases, the museum professionals working at the institutions are directly affected. Thereby the pressure becomes also personal and especially demanding to handle. In this first lecture, an overview of different types of pressure on museums and museum professionals will be given, as well as the complex relations between the professionals, institutions, local societies, stakeholders and politics.

Kathrin Pabst, senior curator Vest-Agder Museum / Chair IC Ethics

Keynote abstracts

“Refusing to look away”

I used to talk a lot about hope - hope as a driver of personal agency and of radical democracy. A few years ago, I began to add the terms fear and anger, when trying to interpret the social and emotional topographies in which museums are embedded. Recently, as societies polarize and the centre moves right, I have let courage slip into my vocabulary as a vital quality to ward off one's fears, to stop mis-directing one's angers, and to actually implement one's hopes.

The framework of human rights is challenged and struggling, at this point in time, to adequately address and deal with major contemporary issues as the profound, local, national and international inequalities in wealth and opportunities and the destruction of nature to the point of its inability to regenerate. We need to refuse to look away from these issues. And we need to refuse to back away from uncovering the epistemological and psychological blind spots that allow persistent, geopolitical double standards in what dignity means and in the valuing of human life, needs and wants, and that allow the perilous exploitation of the basis of our continued existence. Will our framework be able to stretch, will our empathy and solidarity extend, and our professional courage and institutional integrity expand to a fuller context of an equitable, de-colonial system of values, and a multi-species, planetary ethics?

Jette Sandahl, Chair European Museum Forum, Board of Trustees













