

CONNECTION WORKSHOP
24-27 AUGUST 2025
FRAUENMUSEUM MERANO/MUSEO
DELLE DONNE MERANO

Cartographies of interruption and influence:

*Feminist educational strategies in
museums in response to gender-based
violence*

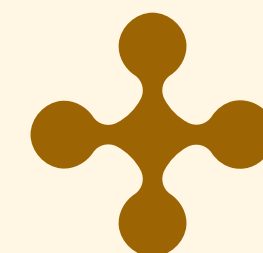


Front Row: Darlene Clover, Elaine, Urška Repar, Federica Liberti, Claudia Diaz-Diaz, Sissi Prader,
Claudia Aucello, Nancy Taber, Sinéad McCoole

Second Row: Tijana Jakovljević-Šević, Egenur Oztelli, Meral Akkent, Claudia Mandel-Katz, Maggie
McColl, Kyehyeong Ki, Tetiana Chernetska

Third Row: Aleksandra Berberih Slana, Marianne Wimmer, Nhung Le Cam, Walai Buppha, Nguyen Thi
Tuyet, Kim Engels

Fourth Row: Glenda Hecksher, Mansoureh Shojaee, Gaby Franger, Burcu Yilmaz Gündüz, Elke Krasny,
Lara Perry, Tihana Puc



A Visual Story Map

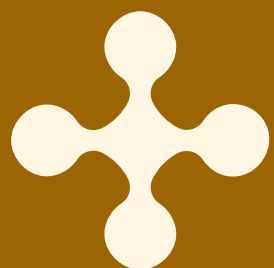
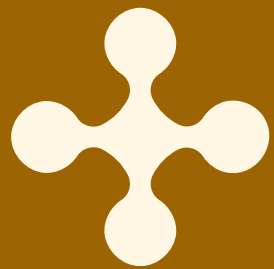
Where there are stories there are always counter stories.

Where there is power there is always resistance.

Where there is despair, there is always hope.

These statements capture the essence of this visual story map of the *Cartographies of interruption and influence: Feminist educational strategies in museums in response to gender-based violence Workshop* which was held in Merano, Italy from 24th to 28th August. We had chosen the topic of gender-based violence for this workshop because despite decades of organising, activism and international law-making, rates of violence against women remain staggeringly high across the globe. In 2023, UN Women estimated that approximately 736 million women - almost one in three - had been subjected to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both at least once in their lives. Ochuab (2024) found that approximately 48,000 women and girls are killed every hour. Beyond sexualised and domestic violence and femicide, women also endure the physical and psychological impacts of misogynistic threats on social media, ecological collapse and war. While gender-based violences impact all women, their greatest impact is on vulnerable populations including migrant, refugee, poor, racialised, Indigenous women as well as lesbian and trans women (e.g., [Sánchez-Sánchez et al., 2024](#)).





We also chose gender-based violence because as high as the statistics of violence are, Criado Perez (2019) reminds us they would be even higher if women had safe venues for reporting or could trust their justice systems to respond effectively or even, at all. To eradicate gender-based violence the United Nations calls upon all sectors, including those in which we all work – education and arts and culture. These sectors are at the heart of the politics of gender, maintaining and perpetuating inequities and violences on one hand yet offering opportunities for resistance and possibility on the other. Over those four days we came together -- women from Austria, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, England, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Iran/Netherlands, Serbia, Scotland, Slovenia, Thailand, Turkey, USA, Ukraine, Vietnam, and Zambia -- to share our studies, challenges, anger, resistances and practices of hope and possibility in the context of gender-based violence. We told and heard stories from studies, exhibitions and curatorial work and educational practices in universities, communities, mainstream and women's gender museums. We created stories from objects and our lived experiences; we saw the city of Merano through women's eyes; we pondered how violence and pain settle in our bodies. Through the work we shared, we walked the line between despair and pain and joy and connection.

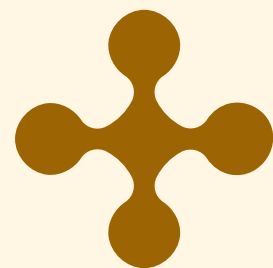
We capture the workshop through a story map to reflect what it was: a visual representation of interactive narratives. This story map takes us on a journey back to the stories we told, the images we shared, the things we learnt and felt, and the encounters we had. As Caquard and Cartwrite (2014) remind us maps are never finished but always in the process of becoming. They come to life through the mapmaking process, and they stay alive as we embark on the journey together.

Darlene E. Clover
Claudia Diaz-Diaz
Mary Ann Sing
Stephanie Puddister

Women's Resilience Through Collective Storytelling

Sharing narratives to inspire change and hope

Collective storytelling empowers women globally, transforming **personal struggles** into shared narratives. By highlighting experiences, we create a tapestry of resilience, showcasing how women confront and resist gender-based violence while fostering solidarity across diverse cultures.





Istanbul Gender Museum: Intervening in public space with women's words

Meral Akkent

How can we use feminist exhibitions to challenge gendered binary-structured identities and turn our experiences of systemic gender-based violence into stories and visualizations that can be read and known? How can an exhibition make gender diversity seeable and tangible? How can a gender museum foster public participation and debate around contentious issues such as sex and gender?

These are the key questions that informed the recent curation of the Time to Talk first exhibition by the (newly formed) Istanbul Gender Museum in both virtual and physical formats. Based on data collected through surveys and interviews, I shared people's responses to our exhibition intervention in a deeply patriarchal and trans and homophobic culture.





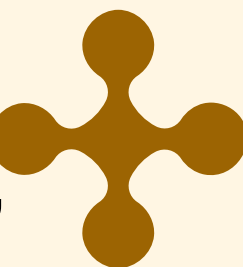
Objects of Memory, Spaces of Safety: Women's Remembrance in Times of Insurgency

Walai Buppha

“Quiet resistance of material things. Objects
become agents of justice.”

If the Air Has Memories is a documentary-driven presentation that explores Thailand's Deep South in the aftermath of the 2004 Tak Bai tragedy, where silence and trauma often eclipse speech. Ordinary items, from bird traps to the very first rice, bear signs of absence and resilience, preserving memory and defying disappearance. Viewed through a posthumanist lens, these material things are not passive belongings but active participants in memory, identity, and survival. This presentation foregrounds women's perspectives, emphasizing how women uniquely mobilize objects as tools of remembrance and resistance. In contexts of conflict, women often preserve familial/communal memory through personal artifacts (e.g., clothing, tools, heirlooms), creating counter-archives against patriarchal or state erasure.

“Women as keepers of memory through family objects.”



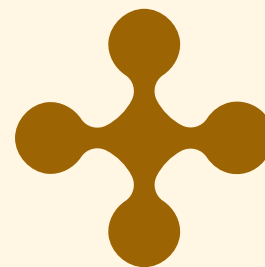
Feminist museum work in the context of the Russian Ukrainian war

Tetiana Chernetska

“Silence helps the aggressor.”

My focus was the struggle of Ukrainian women for a sustainable peace in times of war and violence. In general, I presented the feminist approach Gendermuseum to: (a) preserving the stories of ordinary Ukrainian women who took on various functions – military servicewomen, rescuers, volunteers, frontline workers, community leaders as curated in our exhibition titled HerStory and War; (b) exposing the compounded problems women including a rise in domestic sexual and gender-based in relation to the conflict; c) the triple burden of women (single mothers, violence and frontline support); (d) and how we continue to work with the Ukrainian women's movement and engage in international advocacy work.

“The temporary (war) becomes the ordinary”





Stitched resistance against war and oppression: Narrative textiles that cry out

Gaby Franger

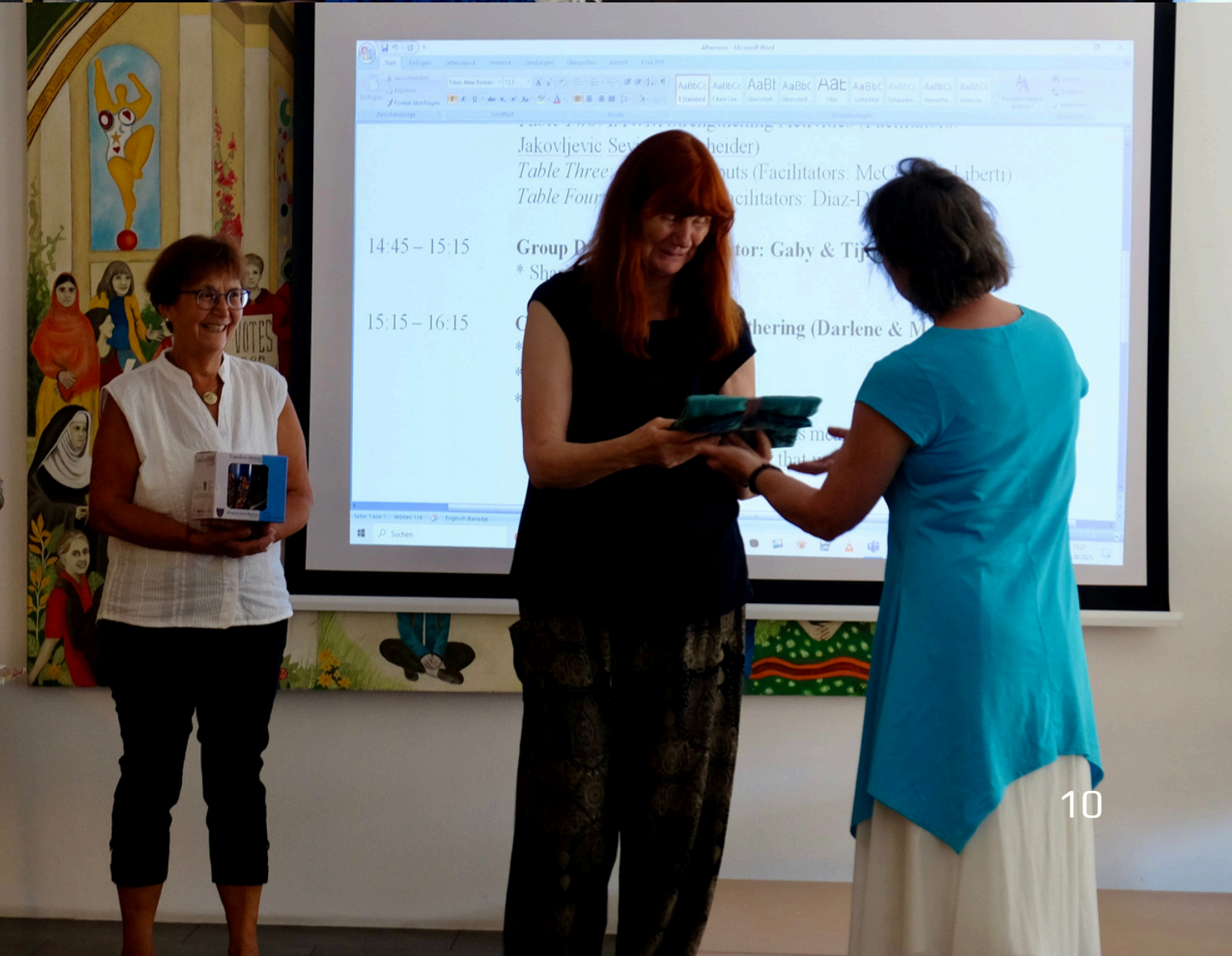
“Cultures are written with needles through women’s textiles.”

Art—particularly textile art—can break down barriers in encounters of women of different languages, regions, and social backgrounds. Whether born from collective social movements or from deeply personal testimonies, it can serve as a potent medium of connection and resistance. Across borders women have used fabric, thread, and needle to defy borders and tell their truths. When shared, these works become more than objects; they are carriers of stories, memories, and perspectives that can foster dialogue, illuminate conflict, and encourage its resolution. In reflecting on the treatment of women refugees in Germany today, I asked: what role can a women’s museum play in cultivating intercultural understanding through art? How might we support and amplify women’s demands for justice against violence, oppression, and war, while also creating space for healing and transformation? And how might art and activism open new possibilities for resisting expulsion policies and defending human rights?

“Art dismissed as ‘woke’

Many chapters of history have been written with the needle.”





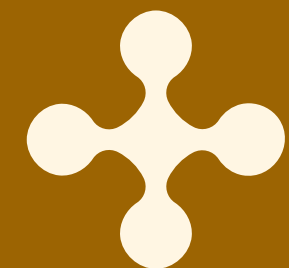
The case of Istanbul Women's Museum in the context of structural violence in Turkey

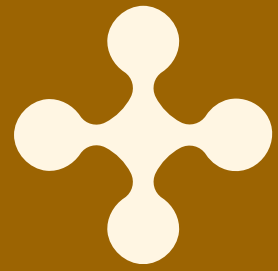
Burcu Yılmaz Gündüz

“Things taken as truth that are in fact, legend.”

Museums have been called upon to act as platforms to address social justice and inequalities. I shared the findings of a study undertaken by our museum of the Time to Speak exhibition. We will ground this exhibition-research work in a larger campaign around International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and discuss the fallout as well as the institutional transformation that resulted. The campaign aimed to highlight the importance of ensuring a non-violent and safe world for women and the stories collected for the exhibition came from diverse ethnic groups including Greeks, Jews, Armenians, Turks, Laz, Kurds, Arabs, Yezidis, Circassians, Adyghes, Alawites, Afro-Turks, immigrants but also, lesbians, non-binary and trans individuals. Board members of the governing foundation of the Istanbul Women's Museum actively opposed the inclusion of Armenian and Kurdish languages, as well as lesbian, trans, and non-binary artists. In response, the founder, the curator collective, and all volunteers of the Istanbul Women's Museum resigned and went on to establish the Istanbul Gender Museum.

“Tend to focus on the differences rather than the similarities .”

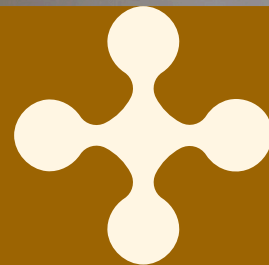




Women's museum, casa turquesa, cancún: "Where women and the sea dialogue with history"

Glenda Hecksher

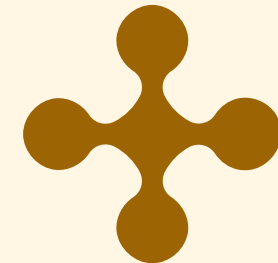
The Museo de la Mujer in Casa Turquesa, Cancún, highlights the unique identity of Mexico as both part of North America and the living heart of Latin America. This dual belonging—geographically northern, yet culturally and spiritually Latin—makes Mexico a bridge of civilizations and a fertile ground for dialogue. Set against the turquoise waters of the Caribbean, Cancún becomes the symbolic stage where the voice of women resonates across time: from ancient roots to contemporary achievements. The Museum's mission is to recognize, preserve, and celebrate the legacy of women in Mexico and beyond, honouring their strength, wisdom, and creativity as essential threads in the fabric of history. This museum will feature the music of Mexican women—both composers and performers—alongside poetry and vocal expressions, creating a living atmosphere where art and memory intertwine. This is not only a museum, but a living space of reflection and inspiration, where the sea and the spirit of women converge to envision a more just, dignified, and luminous future.



Restructuring the narrative of Miss Laura's Social Club

Shelli Henehan & Micki Voelkel

Miss Laura's Social Club is a former Victorian brothel (heritage site) and Visitor Centre in Fort Smith, Arkansas. For decades, the narratives glamorized and sanitized prostitution. We shared how our collaborations with a current employee and a volunteer historian reimaged this site to be historically accurate in terms of the violences and challenges of these women's lives. Discussions centred on feminism, untruths, ideas elitism, and the conflict between the site's role as a museum versus a tourist attraction.

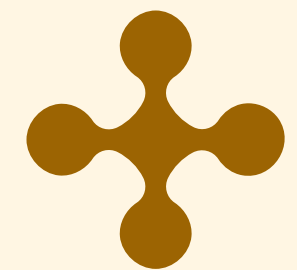


The Bojagi Project

Kyehyeong Ki

The artwork in the photo is a bojagi (a traditional Korean wrapping cloth) titled “Women’s Resistance and Liberation in Korean History.” The Gender Museum carried out this project with students and citizens to remember women’s roles and honor their contributions on the 80th anniversary of Korea’s liberation. Korean women have long sewn together leftover pieces of cloth to make bojagi, used to wrap daily necessities or precious belongings. However, until the bojagi was re-evaluated in the 1960s, it had been regarded merely as a woman’s handicraft or an ordinary household item. Through this project, we sought to reinterpret the bojagi as a medium that embodies the narratives of 20th-century Korean women who strove to create a better world.

We selected 100 characters from women’s rights declarations, women’s proclamations for Korean independence, and women’s movements slogans. Then, 100 participants each sewed individual pieces. Finally, all the pieces were joined together into a single bojagi. On the front of the bojagi, a woman stands holding the declarations in her hands. Around her, people of all ages—men and women alike—join hands, singing and dancing together. The 100 characters embedded in the bojagi still carry profound meaning in 2025: gender equality, national independence, democracy, fairness, the abolition of discrimination, humanity, solidarity, unity, passion, strength, love, and peace.



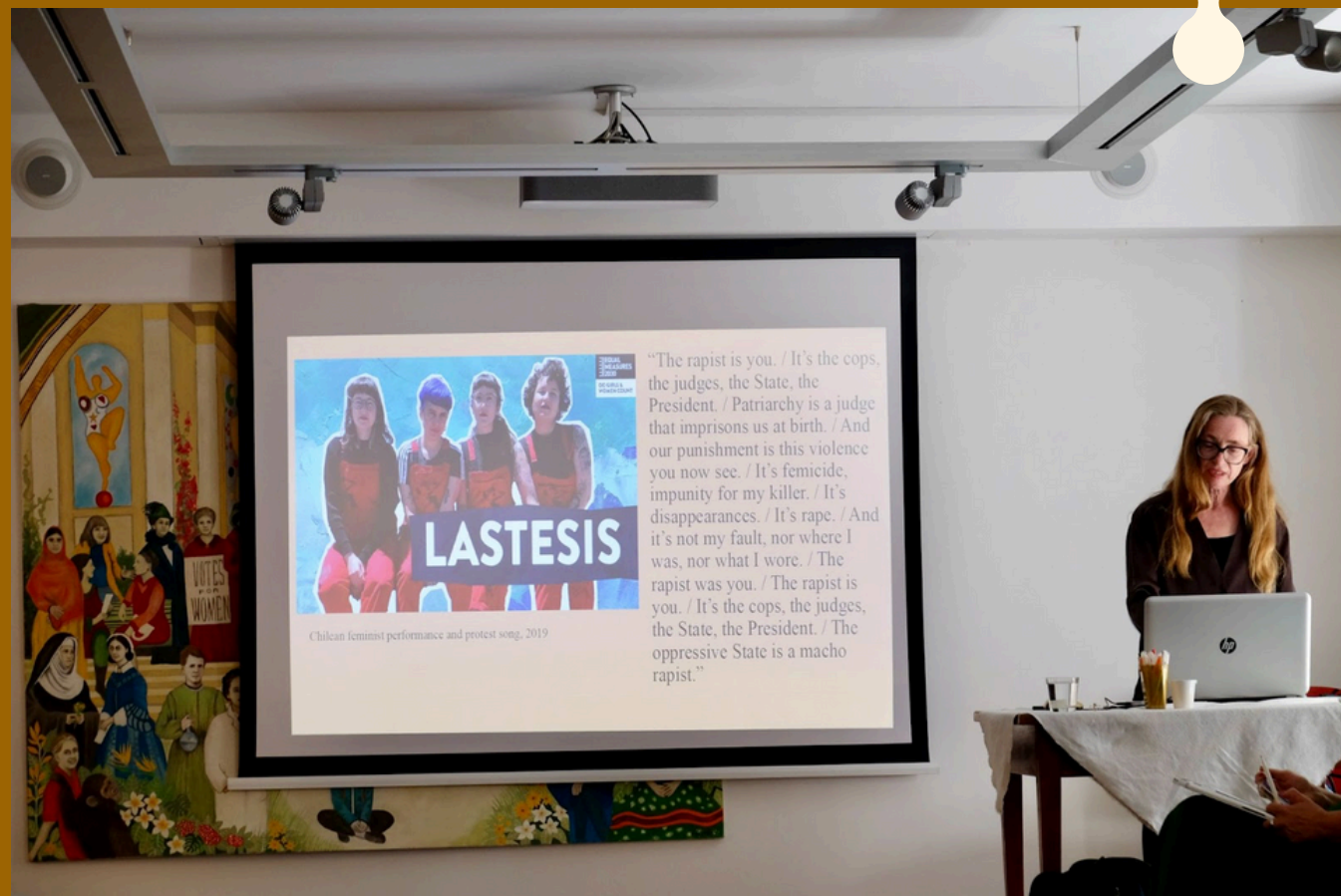
Transnational resistance against feminicides and the museum

Elke Krasny

“Museums can play a crucial role in transnational, feminist solidarity and collection action.”

The focus of my presentation was on current transnational resistance against feminicides and how feminist curators, cultural workers, and educators in museums and institutions of education organize exhibitions and public programming dedicated to resisting violence against women. This critical cultural work aims to raise awareness of and build resistance against the ongoing “war against women” (Silvia Federici). I showed how transnational resistance against feminicides takes the form of large-scale public performances, of media activism, of temporary monuments, and of self-organized academic publishing. I reviewed the recent transnational mobilizations and their visual and performative activism as well as on critical feminist theorization of feminicides and the “writing on the body of murdered women” (Rita Segato) I introduced the concept of a tribunal against feminicides and think about how women’s museums can act as a global platform.

“Museums as state apparatus
Making movements visible.”





Free to dream: Exploring gender-based challenges through art, feminism, and activism

Federica Liberti

Federica's research builds on the power of images beyond imagination to create emancipatory connections with the world within and around us, because if there is a crisis of imagination, then there can be no true freedom to dream. In this context, Federica presented the experience of Prototipa, a transfeminist collective founded in Naples on April 1, 2025, within the commons space "Giardino Liberato di Materdei," where she is an activist. This collective represents a path of collective care and an exploration of the challenges posed by patriarchy. Through artistic practices such as self-portraiture, collage, and textile work, Prototipa seeks to engage with the complexities of identity, power, and societal structures. How can art be used as a transformative practice? And how might care be decolonized through artistic engagement?



“What about if we resist the impulse of transcribing meaning but rather embody it through doing?”

Visualisations of decolonial resistance to violence against Afro-Caribbean women in Costa Rica

Claudia Mandel-Katz



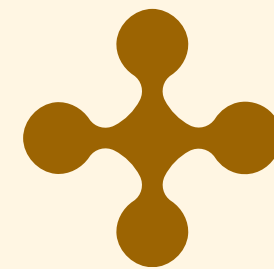
“Women’s museums are fighting for the right to existence in space.”

One of the factors that have contributed to the increase in violence against Afro-Caribbean women in Costa Rica is the decimation of education programmes aimed at addressing gender violence and racism. In the Museum of Women Costa Rica (MMCR) we are filling this gap by curating feminist decolonial exhibitions and other creative methods in collaboration with other institutions in Costa Rica and beyond. I shared three: An Ibero-American Video Art and Animation Festival called Zero Violence Against Women we developed in partnership with the Cultural Centre of Spain and my university; A workshop titled “Violence against women as a mechanism of patriarchal control” in partnership with the Museums of the Central Bank of Costa Rica (2023); and 3) The exhibition “Memories and Resistances” in partnership with Instruments of Memory and the Queretaro Image Centre, Mexico (2024)

Women's Museums: Recording military action and peacemaking in a conflicted Ireland

Sinéad McCooile

The focus of my presentation was on Irish women's experience from the 1880s to the present. The need for women's museum to tell a story in context of women in military action and as peacemakers. I explored the lens through which Irish women have been seen through the medium of photographs and why digitisation of material for universal access is important. I also addressed the role of the curator and art historian in the navigation of the materials and their use in understanding the context of war, and colonisation and their impact on women and others who have been marginalised and oppressed.



The museum(s) of absence: Addressing gender-based violence and 'difficult knowledge' creation in museum spaces

Maggie McColl, Egenur Oztelli, and Claudia Aucello

We shared findings from the Erasmus-funded study of museums as spaces that house objects and stories often pre-determined by individuals who are physically, intellectually and emotionally removed from these objects and stories. Frequently, the critical issues of gender-based violence are absent from museum narratives. We identified and analysed underlying ideological implications and power structures within cultural institutions; particularly the discrepancy between explicit statements and ways in which such messages and spaces are articulated. We explored instances of gender-based oppression that are perpetuated and reinforced by the design of museum spaces and the subliminal messages of discomfort, ignorance and patriarchal stereotypes they communicate. We outlined how their feminist research project is addressing and disrupting museum's structural violence. Collectively, we bring an international, multicultural perspective to this topic (Turkey, Serbia and Scotland), a structural analysis of violence in museums but also offer inspirational examples of good practice and how poetry can be used in museum explorations

“Naming in museums is an ethical stance to name realities differently.”

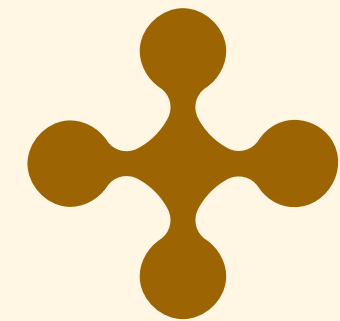


Vietnam Women's Museum: Where the aspiration for peace is told through a gendered lens

Nhung Le Cam & Nguyen Thi Tuyet

The desire for peace is a longing shared by people around the world, no matter where or when. For a country that has endured many wars throughout history to defend its independence, every Vietnamese person deeply understands the sacred meaning of the word "peace." The aspiration for peace has become the essence of the Vietnamese nation, carried on by generations of Vietnamese, including countless Vietnamese women, who have tirelessly contributed their efforts and sacrifices to nurture and preserve it.

My presentation featured stories and images of the Vietnamese people's struggle for peace, alongside the support of international friends, through various historical narratives and ongoing journeys of Vietnamese women and the Vietnam Women's Union in fulfilling their peace mission. Drawing from the historical lessons of a resilient Vietnam and its courageous, intelligent women, the presentation celebrates the value of peace and shares experiences while seeking new ways to enhance the meaningful participation of women in peacekeeping activities.



“Let us join hands to build and nurture peace for humanity.”



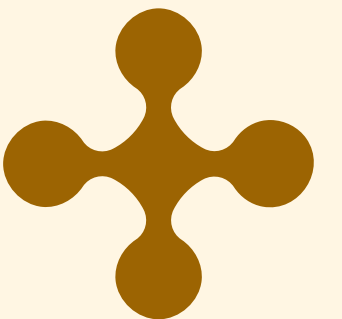


Museums and reproductive rights

Lara Perry

The reproduction of plants and animals including humans is a topic which is treated in a huge variety of museums and their displays, with crucial implications for the public knowledge and understanding of women's reproductive rights. In this talk, I framed this topic by considering the range of museums that are concerned with explaining reproduction and some of the typical ways in which museums of natural history, for example, address reproduction in their collections and displays. In particular, the presentation will consider the way in which gendered and racialized thinking about human reproduction structure museum accounts of reproduction across the living world which are taught to the public and reflect on the potential for feminist thinking about reproductive freedom and reproductive rights to intervene into museum narratives of reproductive activity.

“Silence as a form of institutionalisation.”

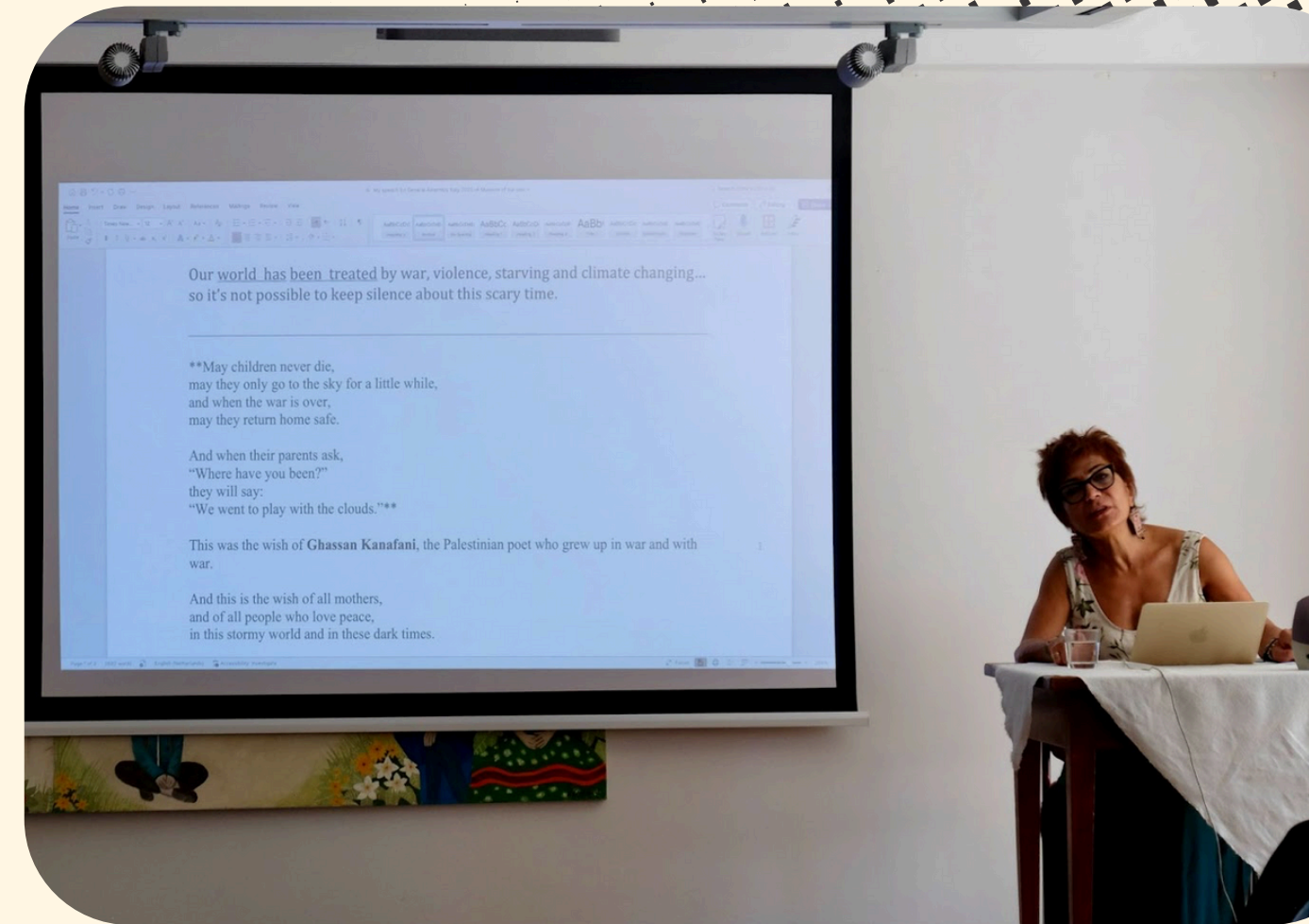


A Museum of our own: Born in Iran, growing in Diaspora

Mansoureh Shojaee

“Women’s museums as a product of women’s making. Being vulnerable together creates the magic.”

In 2008, Iranian Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Shireen Ebadi, inspired by the Merano Women’s Museum in Italy, proposed the idea of Iranian women museum to me. When I first began imagining a space for “Iranian women’s movement museum”, it was just an idea — quiet, personal, maybe even fragile. I didn’t imagine how deeply collective this journey would become. But as I shared it with others, something unexpected happened: the vision grew, shifted, and began to belong to many. What was once mine became ours. What started as a personal initiative turned into a shared genesis, a collective birth! I want to share how that transformation happened, how a solitary beginning became a shared genesis, a transnational feminism shared. It is documenting through writing a book, as a historical fiction of creative a women museum. Alongside the narrative of the Board of Trustees, some members of the International Association of Women’s Museums, also the notices from several prisoners those are still in Evin Prison.



“Weight of shock and sorrow - Transform sorrow into the joy of collective collaboration. Provide kindling for a feminist revolution War has not stopped women’s creativity.”

How can you push the agenda without being pushy? Balancing activism and audience engagement in museums

Dr.sc. Aleksandra Berberih Slana

“Storytelling is essential to effectively championing social justice.”

In an era where social injustice movements like feminism and human rights in general are shaping societal discourse, museums and galleries are increasingly motivated to reflect these themes in their exhibitions and programming. However, a recurring challenge is how to promote critical societal agendas without alienating visitors or losing sight of the core mission of the cultural institutions. The speaker will present her experience dealing with human rights topics in museum work.

“How can we talk about others when we are all the other?
Recognise and accept resistances from our visitors.”



Feminism in the countryside: Building bridges, breaking boundaries

Stefania Pitscheider Soraperra

“Feminism is experienced in cities, not the country.”

FMH Women's Museum Hittisau collects, preserves, and exhibits and interprets. It offers a lively venue for feminist political education by making women's lives visible, promoting gender equality and diversity and questioning traditional narratives and practices in particular, oppression and violence against women and girls, as structural barriers and intersectional discriminations. A major challenge is that our museum is in the countryside, a place where decisions are made that have a major impact on women's lives and our work. There has been a very problematic shift to the right in many parts of Europe including the imposition of restrictive abortion laws and support for this comes from rural populations. I discussed how our museum works in this context to strengthen and promote a more open-minded, gender-equitable and inclusive society.



“Feminism is expected in the city but
not in the countryside.

Invisibility is a risk in the
countryside. Art isn't to illustrate
things, but to make truth visible.”



War, museums, and fiction-based research: Creative writing as a tool to (re)story gendered violence and resistance

Nancy Taber

“Bring the museum to life.”

This presentation explored how feminist fiction-based research can assist with museological learning about gendered violence and resistance. The session began with a brief discussion of the aims and processes of fiction-based research, the use of fiction in feminist adult education, and the potential of narrative to conceptualize and enact social transformation. Using examples from two published short stories and a novel, informed by and set in Bletchley Park (*Secrets and Stockings*), the Canadian Museum of Human Rights (*Khaki and Emerald Green*), and the Acadian Museum of Prince Edward Island (*A Sea of Spectres*), the presentation discussed how fiction-based research can support a feminist engagement with war museums and exhibits in order to (re)imagine women as complex agentic protagonists.



“Fiction as a method of knowing.”

The power of digital technologies to (re)writes herstories

Samba Yonga

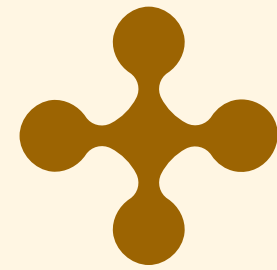
“Museums can engage with community-led research to reconstitute knowledge systems. Museums have invalidated the lives of our people.”

We believe in our museum that by fostering inclusive methodologies, we empower women to reclaim their narratives and offer a more authentic representation of their histories. I presented how in the Women’s History Museum of Zambia we are leveraging digital technologies to harness and restore indigenous women’s knowledge and cultural heritage. In my work, I’ve seen firsthand how these technologies work as powerful tools in addressing the erasures of African women’s historiographies and oppressive patriarchal cultural power. I shared how we use digital platforms to document and preserve oral histories, traditional practices, and knowledge systems of women that have long been marginalized.



“Rematriation is a way to activate and return knowledge and authority to women and their communities, is a form of return to matrilineal forms of knowledge systems.” ²⁸

Feminist Curatorial Practice in Education



Curation as a pedagogical tool for empowerment

Curation transforms spaces into **educational platforms**, fostering critical discussions around gender and identity.

Understanding the significance of bodily experiences in learning

Emphasizing embodiment allows participants to connect **emotionally** with the material and personal narratives shared.

Utilizing body mapping for deeper engagement and reflection

Body mapping serves as a creative method, enabling individuals to express **personal stories** and experiences visually.

Curatorial practice as feminist adult education: A workshop

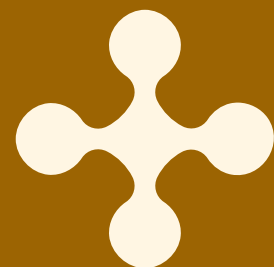
Claudia Diaz-Diaz

“A place where I go to cry.”



Curating has long been recognised as a feminist tool of gender activism and knowledge production (e.g., Krasny & Perry, 2023). The purpose of this workshop was to deepen our understanding of curation as a pedagogical tool to combat gender violence, particularly from the perspectives of educators working in and with women's and other types of museums. This workshop centred participant's embodied experiences as a means to explore the curatorial process as a feminist pedagogical tool. It affirmed the importance of embodiment in educational work and curatorial practice by drawing on tools such as body mapping to better understand curation as a powerful educational practice in the fight against violence toward women.

“Racism is a lazy sport.”

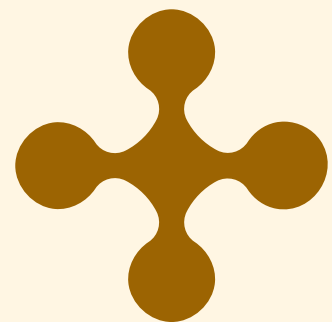


Workshop: Curatorial practice as feminist adult education

By Claudia Diaz-Diaz & Darlene Clover

Curating has long been recognised as a feminist tool of gender activism and knowledge production (e.g., Krasny & Perry, 2023). However, it is only recently that feminist adult educators and museum scholars together have begun to explore curatorial practice as a feminist pedagogical approach.

The purpose of this workshop was to deepen our understanding of curation as a pedagogical tool to combat gender violence, particularly from the perspectives of educators and curators working in and with women's, gender and other types of museums. We explored curation—the practice of selecting, organising, and presenting —and its potential to shape how the public learns, unlearns, and relearns about gender violence, gendered power practices including stereotyping, and the systemic underrepresentation or exclusion of women's perspectives throughout history.



We position gender violence as a psychological but equally, an embodied experience. Feminist scholarship, and particularly feminist adult education, has long emphasised embodiment— the lived experience and emotional realities carried through women's bodies —as a lens for understanding issues of identity, power, and the materiality of learning. This workshop centred participants' embodied experiences as a means to explore the curatorial process as a feminist pedagogical tool. It will affirm the importance of embodiment in educational work and curatorial practice by drawing on tools such as body mapping to better understand curation as a powerful educational and political practice in the fight against violence toward women.

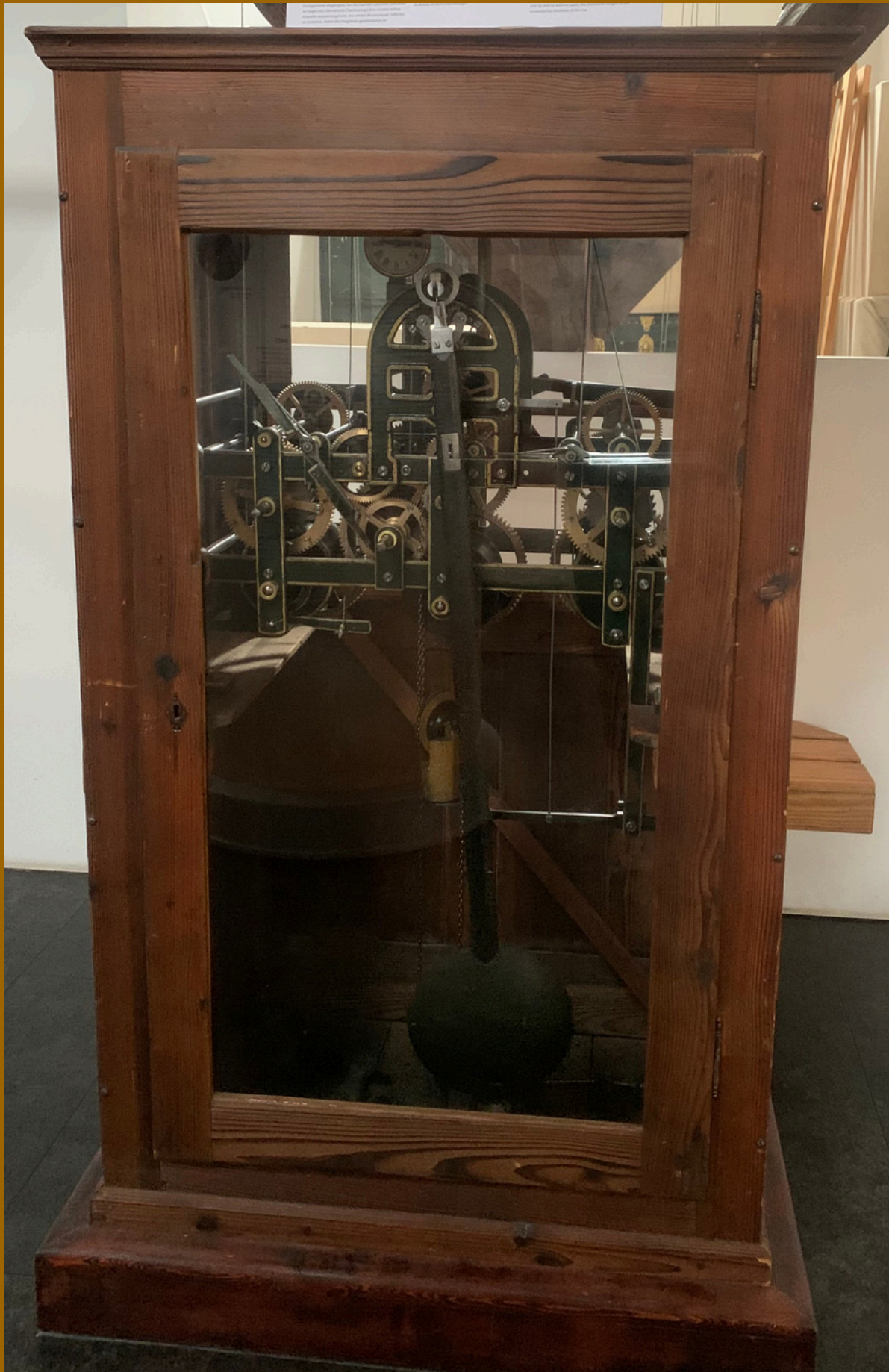


The Power of Collective Storytelling

Amplifying Voices, Building Solidarity in Communities

Collective storytelling serves as a powerful tool in **fostering connections** among marginalized voices. By sharing personal narratives, women can unite against gender-based violence, creating a **supportive community** that amplifies their experiences and inspires change.

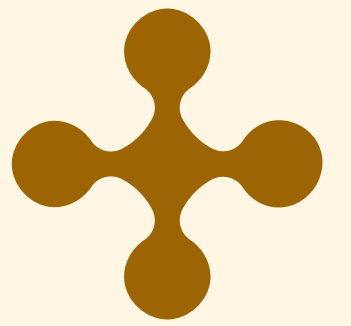




What we did:

Experiential workshop

Nancy Taber as session facilitator



Practising creative writing with flash fiction: Feminist museological pedagogies

This workshop began with a flash fiction exercise, “I am,” with participants creating a story based on their responses to prompts such as: “If I was an animal, I would be...”; “If I was a fairy tale character, I would be...”; “If I was a season, I would be...” The workshop continued with definitions, descriptions, and examples of flash fiction writing, including one inspired by a travelling Canadian War Museum exhibit on world war women (Bombshell Beauties). Using a series of museological writing prompts, participants conceptualised, drafted, and shared their own flash fiction. The session ended with a brief discussion of how flash fiction can be used to support participants’ educational strategies in relation to museums and gendered violence.

Nancy Taber's Story

I am

I am a turbulent ocean whose briny citrus waves sculpt rubies into violet stories, as shimmering cymbals sing the enigmatic present into the depths of history, racing toward an enchanted future.

Ensnaring Time

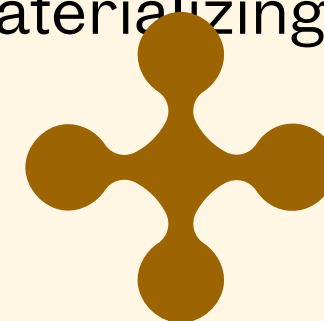
Chronometers empirically measure seconds, minutes, hours. An impressive, exact science. But clock-minders and clock-winders have a power of their own. To skip through time, forward or backward. Even, to stop it entirely.

Gears and levers mesh in juxtaposed contradictions, cascading through specific moments, circumstances, emotions. Creating portals a woman could step into, if she so desired, to grasp onto her own story. To hold it in her mind, turn it over in her palms, consider it from a forgotten angle. Contemplating the shape of the narrative, like a goddess who, with a flick of her fingers, could counterbalance injustices, overturn wrongs.

Unlike goddesses, human women don't have that capacity.

But we do have the power of words. Placing one after another, before, beside, under, and above, across and in between, until they morph into something more potent than time. A storied exhibit of women's lives, materializing into learning, understanding, inspiration.

Into change.



Sinead McCool's Story

She was impatient. Nothing new. She had arrived in Merano early for her meeting at the bank. The teller told her to wander and look at the murals, it was some ancient convent, murals in the banking hall, saints. The mural of St Barbara, the patron saint of warfare. She was geared up for this meeting, waiting seemed forever. She thought if she could channel ancient Barbara to forfeit her soul, strengthen it, so she could battle to get the money she needed to expand her business, all would be well again. She glanced at her wrist, time and steps in a glance. How would she make 10,000 today, travelling by train all day? Still 20 minutes to wait. She saw a sign. Fraumuseum - Women's museum 3rd floor, she would wander there to kill more time, get in more steps, walking up the ancient steps. She paid in, not willing to have pleasant exchanges, she glanced at her watch. That made the person behind the counter work at the required speed, as barely took them in as they hand her the ticket and took her money. No more was needed from her, or from them. It was as she wanted it.

As she suspected, the artefacts displayed showed women's struggles, the clothes they wore, as objects of desire...umm the marriage market and she thought well that was changed for the women she knew, her set, her social circle. Or was it really...her thoughts intruding, giving her example after example. She shut it down. Enough she roared to her internal self. This vocalising, her alter ego was distracting.

She was barely focused reading and not reading the labels, engaged but yet disengaged, for her sole focus was in her act of waiting. And then she saw the item that arrested her, made her focus. Unlike the other displays, this was not a mannequin but a figure, a puppet face and body, grotesque, yellow face, with distorted features. Was the fabric used in a way, which she knew was suggestive of the bee sting lips and skin stretched by Botox, she realised she was hollow laughing out loud. The women behind the counter noticed but appeared as if they didn't. In the small quiet space, her unplanned reaction startled them, startled her. It was that in the moment her face and that of the puppet were merged, she saw her reflection in the glass, doubled, double take, startled to let out a sound, hollow laughter, because she did have the look of the puppet, as if they had made a version of her. Up to this she like that there were no lines on her face, even if she was now expressionless - it worked in the corporate world.

Sinead

The voices in her head grew shrill sometimes, the left side, talking to the right side. She thought now of how a friend had described her burnout, and how she encouraged others to believe in her quest for mindfulness to restore calm. That was weakness, she thought again, as she stood in front of the case, nothing fazed her, but today here as she witnessed a series of women through time, she knew, expectedly she had come face to face with herself. How had they labelled her in a case, *Mamma Macho*. In that moment she saw herself for what she was, what she had become...

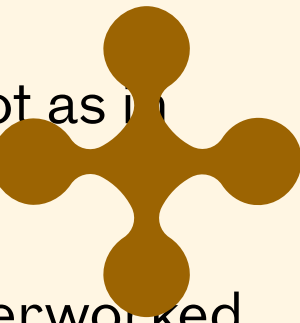
The puppet woman had a clock hanging from her waist, tick, tock. She knew the daily countdown: how many hours it took to be three people. She knew the exhaustion of never having a break from domestic work, work, work, work, business, family, children, parents...The caricature of a modern woman was holding a phone, and had a laptop open, she had her baby strapped to the chest, the best for the baby, the advertisement for their product argued. That voice again.. that was how babies had been carried for centuries, yet mothers were never more disconnected. Surely the baby strapped to her chest skin, studies had proven the importance...back to Africa, the first Eve was Ethiopian, found there she read about that, she liked the science, the fact not conjecture. She half heartedly thought she would look it up, but again the voice comes in, she won't have time.

The 'Macho Women' had on her back a tennis racket; she had so many friends who looked exactly like this. Her adrenaline choice was gym, and cardio workouts, a PD advising this bit and then that. It was exhausting listening to all you needed to stay well. Then she noticed, the curator had attached the brush and pan to her puppet also. She was now thinking of it as her puppet. All the labour saving devices, washing machine, dishwasher, cleaner came in, but still had to take up the brush and pan, to sweep up the fallen debris....of life that little voice said. Was it house pride or a way of keeping control, pristine in and out. Then her thoughts came like a roar. Our developed world is not alright. She saw herself as enslaved, she saw herself as she was not as in control, doing it all.

And she took herself to the restroom with her thoughts. In the mirror of the washroom she saw herself as a yellowed version, overworked and so so tired.

The adrenaline was gone, replaced by this fearful sense that she had been confronted by herself.

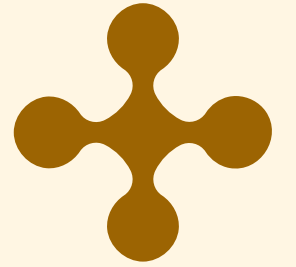
The need for fresh air was overwhelming, and she rushed out the door, she found herself gasping...her meeting time ticked by and she had missed her meeting time, and with that the future changed.



Embodied Curation, A Collective Poem

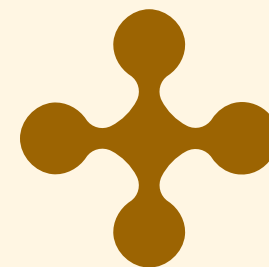


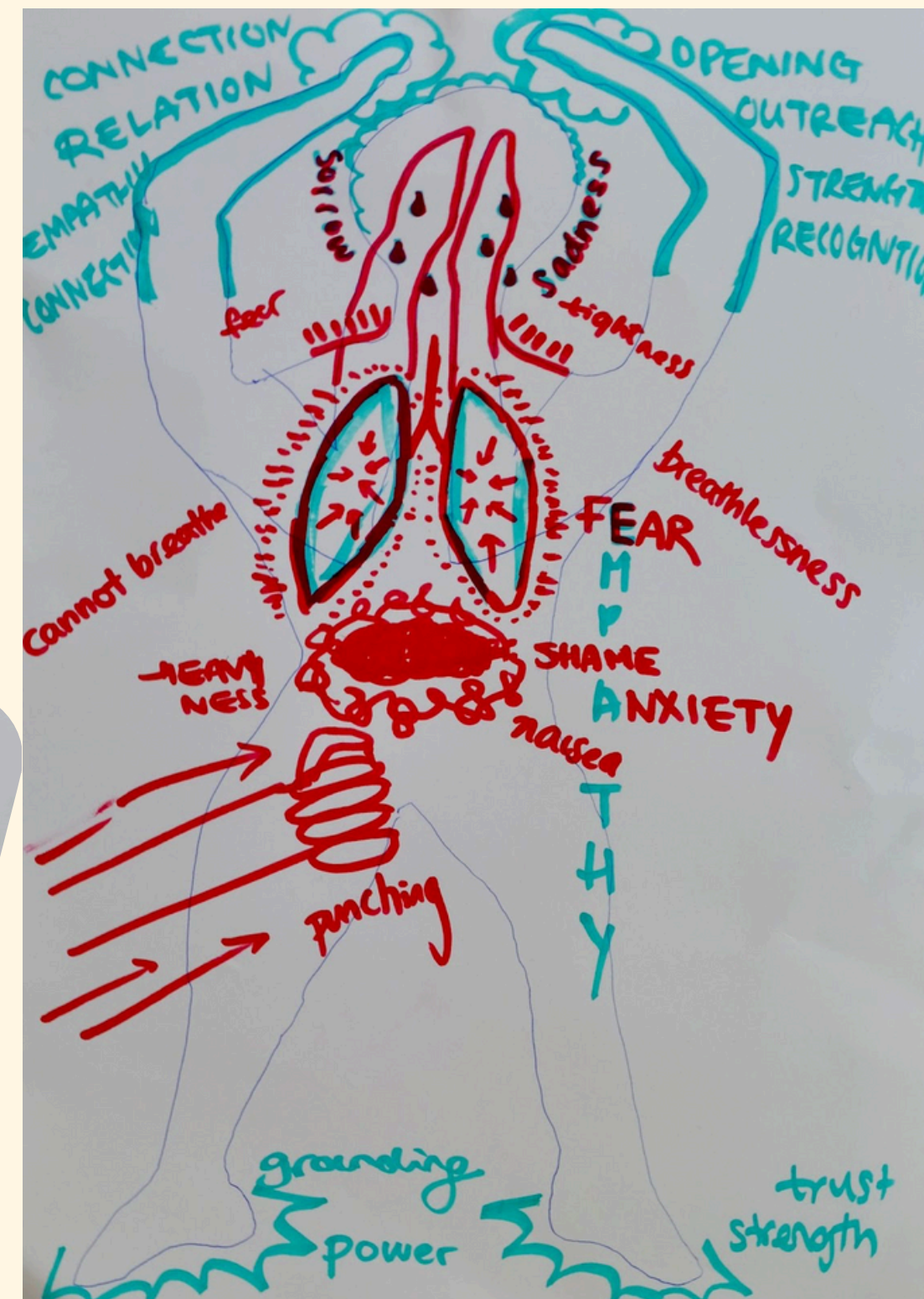
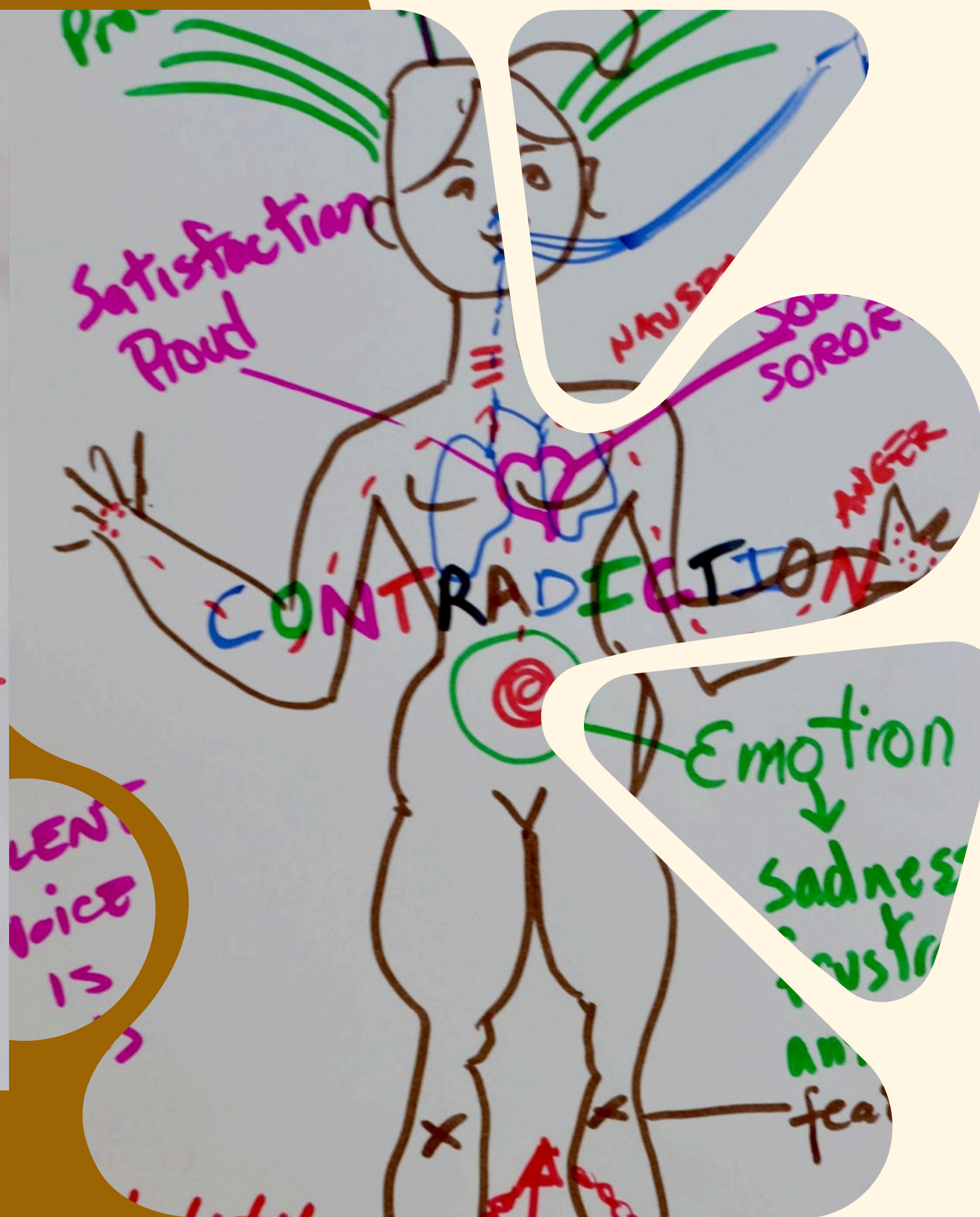
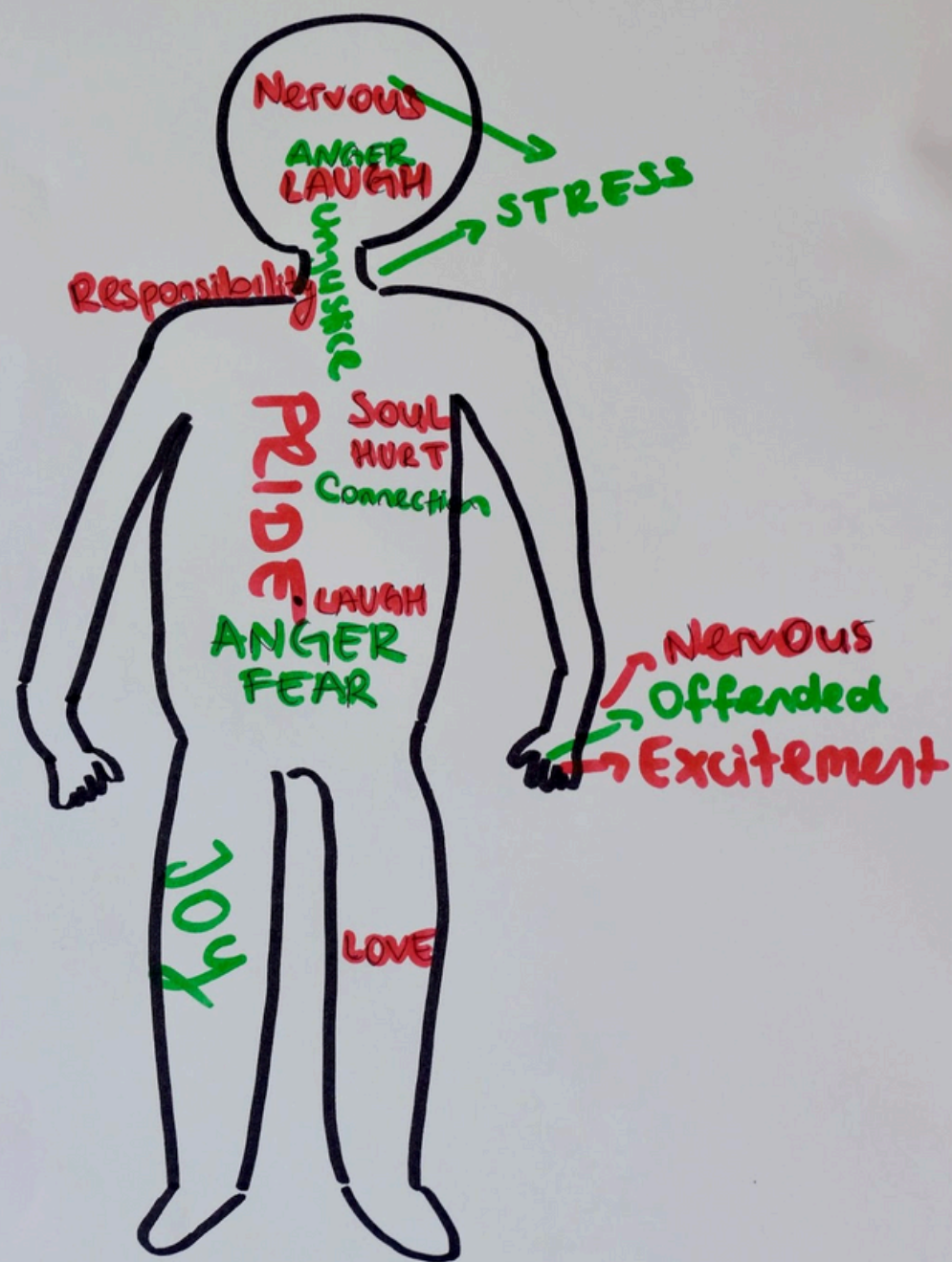
A sense of empathy and curiosity
How I felt
shared experience, constraint, fear, entangled, tired
Rush of blood and anger
Feeling touched, solidarity
Feeling heavy, empowerment in our hands
Contradiction
Hopeful and angry
Hope, a full breath
Anger, a noxious feeling
Alone, at home, with a friend
Throat, lungs, chest
When it's hard to breathe
Shaking like me
Paralysis
Our eyes glitching
Injustice in my throat



My tears
Pride in our chest, and my soul is hurting
Joy and Jump
Love, knees giving up
Visceral
Losing all the air
Contraction
Calling in sorrow
Reaching outward
Bringing up a shame
Gut punch
Grounding
How is it born?
Violence without violence
Back pain and tiredness
Question Mark

Embrace yourself
Be still and stomp







Being Elsewhere in the Dying Light

A radiant smile from the top of stairs

The corseted figure descends

To greet her guests with

The swish of a gown

The scent of perfume

In the dying light

Behind the elegant façade

Dreams of a different life

An escape from corset that binds and

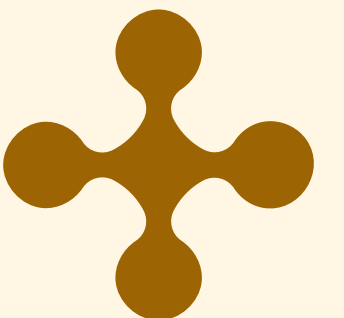
The swish of the gown

The scent of perfume

In the dying light

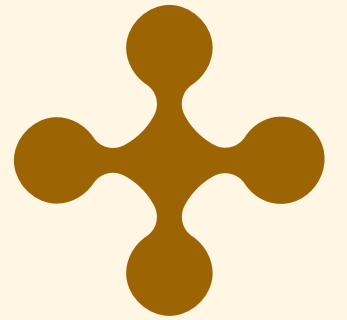
Darlene Clover,

August 27, 2025, occasion of Cartographies workshop



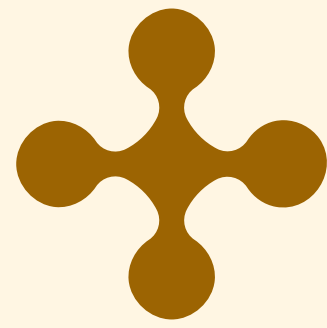


Feminist Guided History Walk

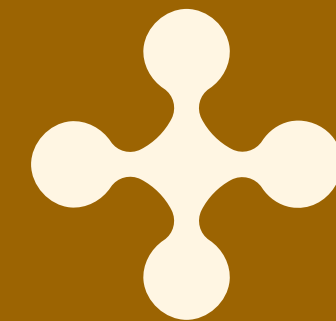


On August 24, we were taken on the Feminist guided walk through the history of Merano/Meran through women's eyes and deeds. The walk covered a period from the Middle Ages to Merano/Meran's golden age as a spa town. Our guide Judith Mittelberger and interpreter Hannelore Schettler invited us into stories of female princesses, citizens, workers, farmers, artists, and musicians of diverse ethnicities and religions and how they helped to shape the city as we see it today. This type of educational event is important. Despite their contributions, these women are seldom mentioned in any history books or on normative tours of the city.

Reception



On Tuesday, the 26th of August we were invited to a reception hosted by the Frauenmuseum as an official welcome to the participants of the IAWM General Assembly. Also in attendance were a number of city officials including Ingrid Hofer, President of the Merano Tourist Board, and her colleagues Karin Hofer and Katharina Hohenstein. Mayor Katharina Zeller made a welcome speech. City Councillors Antonella Costanzo and Barbara Hölzl, and Department Director of the municipality of Merano Sabine Raffener were also in attendance, along with Siegfried de Rachewiltz, Lord of Brunnenburg Castle, and Ulrike Kindl, President of the Merano/Meran Frauenmuseum.





Who We Are

Connection Workshop, Merano, Italy

Istanbul Gender Museum: Intervening in public space with women's words

Meral Akkent

Meral is a feminist scholar with a focus on inclusion in ethnic and cultural contexts. She was a founding member of Women in One World (Nuremberg) and the initiator and founding member of the Museum of Women's Culture Regional – International (Fürth, Bavaria). In 2010, she began researching the history of women's and gender museums worldwide. Based on this work, she founded the Istanbul Women's Museum in 2012 and the Istanbul Gender Museum in 2021. Her expertise lies in employing exhibitions and other forms of public outreach to address complex and divisive ethnic and gender issues, thereby fostering new perspectives and understandings. Her most recent publication is dedicated to the earliest known female composer whose works survive, *Kassia (c. 810–c. 890): Kassia – Words of Encouragement*.

Objects of Memory, Spaces of Safety: Women's Remembrance in Times of Insurgency

Walai Buppha

Walai is a Thai documentary filmmaker and curator dedicated to amplifying the voices from Thailand's conflict-affected Deep South. Since 2019, Walai has worked as a curator at the Deep South Museum and Archives, curating exhibitions showcasing 20 years of community resilience. Her fieldwork uses anthropological and participatory methods to build trust with local communities, forming the foundation of her debut feature documentary, *If the Air Has Memories*, which centres lived experiences of struggle and survival. Walai's community-driven approach bridges archival practice and cinematic storytelling to reclaim marginalized narratives. Recognition in 2025 by the CrossCulture Programme Fellowship from the IFA (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen) in Germany demonstrates how her community-centred filmmaking can transform cultural memory.

Feminist museum work in the context of the Russian Ukrainian war

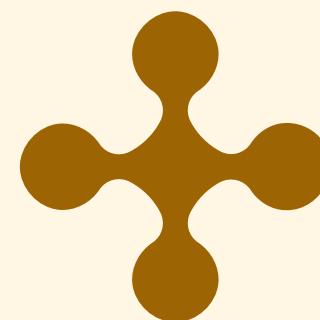
Tetiana Chernetska

Tetiana is a Board Member of Gendermuseum and Vice-Chairperson of the non-governmental organization “Centre of Gender Culture”. She is the coordinator as well of the Women, peace, security” Coalition. Tetiana brings decades of researching and curating women's strengthening the women's movement. She will discuss the compounded issues for women during times of war and challenges of curating and advocating in times of war.

Curatorial practice as feminist adult education: A workshop

Claudia Diaz-Diaz

Claudia is an Assistant Professor at Simon Fraser University (SFU), Canada. Her SSHRC-funded project, Women Activists and Pedagogies for Climate and Gender Justice: A Participatory-Exploratory Study, focuses on climate justice and women water protectors in Latin American contexts. She brings a decolonizing and intersectional perspective to the work of women museum educators and artists, creating tools and pedagogical interventions that advance the role of women's museums in fighting gender injustice.



Stitched resistance against war and oppression: Narrative textiles that cry out

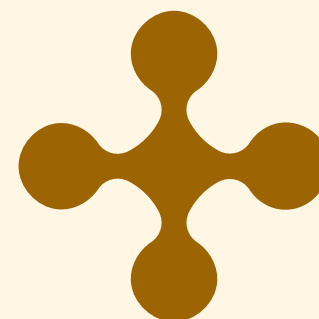
Gaby Franger

Gaby is retired professor of international social work and founding member of Women in One World and the Museum of Women's Culture Regional – International. Her research focuses on regional women's history, migration; art, crafts, and resistance in Latin America. She has published numerous books and exhibition catalogues, most recently a biography of Jewish designer Else Oppler (1875–1965). She is board member of Women in One World and since 2023, has been Chair of IAWM.

The case of Istanbul Women's Museum in the context of structural violence in Turkey

Burcu Yılmaz Gündüz

Burcu is a member of the curator collective at the Istanbul Gender Museum and contributes to the museum's campaigns. Her research and work focus on cultural studies, women's museums, gender studies and anti-gender politics in Türkiye.



Women's Museum, Casa Turquesa, Cancún: "Where Women and the Sea Dialogue with History"

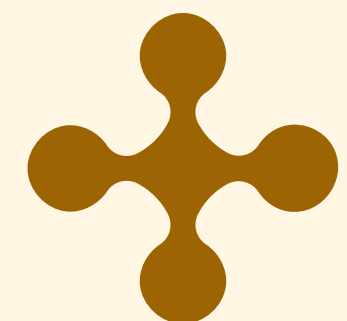
Glenda Hecksher

Glenda is a feminist sculptor, founder of two women's museums in Mexico. She is currently founding another in response to increasing femicide. Glenda brings creative but also institutional development and advocacy strategies for gender justice and change.

Restructuring the narrative of Miss Laura's Social Club

Shelli Henehan & Micki Voelkel

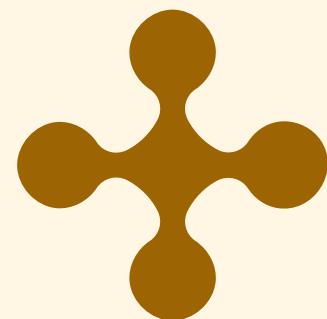
Micki is Professor of Leadership and Management. Shelli a Professor of Education and director of Early Childhood Education at the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith. For the past decade they have been working collaboratively with a museum to transform its narrative. Micki and Shelli bring an expertise in using feminist participatory research practices to transform stories and storytelling in museums.



Transnational resistance against feminicides and the museum

Elke Krasny

Elke is Professor for Art and Education at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Her scholarship includes ecological and gender justice, transnational feminisms, body politics and violence in art and museums. In addition to a presentation at the workshop, Elke will deliver the keynote address at the public event.



Free to dream: Exploring gender-based challenges through art, feminism, and activism

Federica Liberti

Federica is a Ph.D. student and amateur photographer exploring the social representations of care practices and spaces of mutual care. Integrating cross-cultural perspectives, she explores vulnerabilities, identity and relationality by using feminist imaginary, art-based practices and activism. The questions which guide her research are: How are feminist pedagogies of care and arts-based practices helping people to navigate the world as it is and to imagine alternative futures? What role does the ‘feminist imaginary’ play in this work? How do feminist practices of learning and unlearning inspire critical conversations and actions needed to rethink private and public spaces and promote new conditions for authenticity, resonance, reflection, and freedom.

Visualisations of decolonial resistance to violence against Afro-Caribbean women in Costa Rica

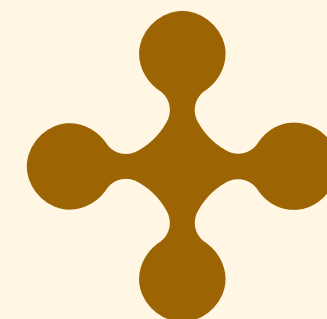
Claudia Mandel-Katz

Claudia is Founder and Director of Costa Rica Women's Museum and teaches at the University of Costa Rica. She is also a member of the Research Group of the IAWM. She brings expertise in decolonial feminist practice and issues of violence in the context of Afro-Caribbean women. She brings skills in designing decolonial festivals, exhibitions and workshops and working cross-nationally (e.g., Spain and Mexico) and cross-institutionally.

Women's Museums: Recording military action and peacemaking in a conflicted Ireland

Sinéad McCooile

Sinéad is currently Head of Exhibitions, Learning and Programming at the National Library of Ireland. She has written extensively in modern Irish History and more recently she has begun to write plays. In 2023 she curated Mna 1916 – Women 1916 the national centenary exhibition which toured venues in Ireland and was showcased in the Irish embassies in Nairobi and the US. She brings an expertise in curating, scripting writing, podcasting, photo-essays and development of international webinars series. Sinéad is a Board Member of the IAWM.



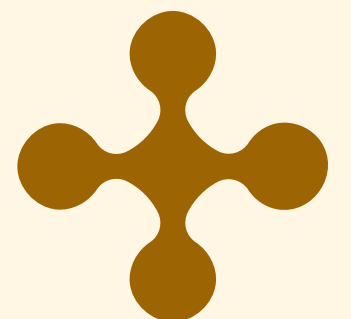
The museum(s) of absence: Addressing gender-based violence and ‘difficult knowledge’ creation in museum spaces

Maggie McColl, Egenur Oztelli, and Stanislava Paunovic

Maggie McColl is Director of the International Master of Museum and Heritage Education at the University of Glasgow where she facilitates opportunities for discussion and workshops with international students on various themes of diversity and inclusion in/through the museum and cultural heritage. For this workshop, Maggie will collaborate with two graduate students from the International Master of Education in Museums and Heritage programme.

Egenur from Turkey brings experience in contemporary curating and working with women’s organisations. She is a graduate student in the University of Glasgow who is applying critical and feminist theory to explore how museums violate women's rights. Her latest article titled The Museum of Innocence explores practices of objectification. Oztelli will present with fellow Uof G graduate student Stanislava Paunovic.

Stanislava uses feminist and queer theory to explore anti-fascist, Yugoslav heritage. Alongside these students and providing the funds is Dr Maggie McColl, Director of the International Master of Museum and Heritage Education (UofG) where she facilitates workshops with international students on various themes of diversity and inclusion in museum and cultural heritage sectors.



Vietnam Women's Museum: Where the aspiration for peace is told through a gendered lens

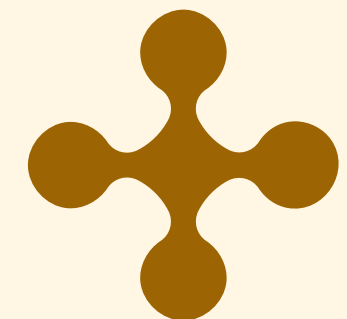
Nhung Le Cam

Nhung is Head of Communication and International Cooperation Department of Vietnamese Women's Museum.

Museums and reproductive rights

Lara Perry

Lara is a Canadian-British scholar who is Dean of Humanities and Social Science at the University of Brighton where she has taught and supervised research in History of Art and Design since 2006. She is currently completing work on an edited anthology with Hilary Robinson of curators' writing on feminist art exhibitions from around the world titled *Feminisms/museums/surveys: An anthology* (Wiley, forthcoming 2025). Lara brings a very diverse perspective on gender-based violence and museums – through a 'natural science' lens.



A Museum of our own: Born in Iran, growing in Diaspora

Mansoureh Shojaee

Mansoureh is an activist, researcher and writer in the field of women and human rights. After being forcibly expelled from the university during the Cultural Revolution and later studied for a bachelor's degree in French translation. She is retired from the National Library of Iran. Mansoureh has studied human rights and gender studies at Institute of social science in Erasmus Institute of social science in Erasmus and continuing her study in Iran Academia. She is currently engaged in work as a visiting researcher in the field of women study with the Department of Social Sciences of the Free University of Amsterdam (VUA) and the Iranian Academy of Social Sciences (ISSH), while she is collaborating with the Aasso multimedia as a contributor producing the reviews on Women's issues.

How can you push the agenda without being pushy? Balancing activism and audience engagement in museums

Dr.sc. Aleksandra Berberih Slana

Aleksandra is Director of the Zagreb City Museum in Croatia, previously serving as the director of the National Liberation Museum in Maribor, Slovenia. She has extensive experience in curatorial work, cultural policy, and museology, advocating for more socially engaged and ethically responsible institutions. She was involved in numerous projects that aim to foster community engagement and reflect contemporary societal issues within cultural and museum environments. Her work often focuses on integrating historical narratives with current social themes, such as human rights, gender equality, and social inclusion.

Feminism in the countryside: Building bridges, breaking boundaries

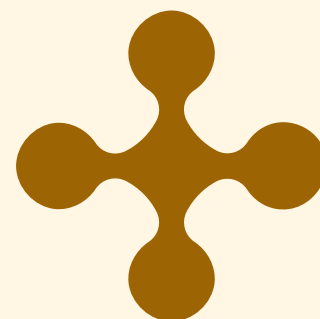
Stefania Pitscheider Soraperra

Stefania has been Director of the Frauenmuseum Hittisau since 2009. As an art historian, curator and cultural manager, she has expertise in research on socio-political and feminist issues. Stefanie also has experience working in a diversity of museums in Austria and Luxembourg. As a member of the artists' group WochenKlausur, she brings in curating large-scale public outreach art projects. Stefanie comes from a minority population called the Italian Dolomites and has experienced forms of gender-based violence.

War, museums, and fiction-based research: Creative writing as a tool to (re)story gendered violence and resistance

Nancy Taber

Nancy is a professor at Brock University in the Department of Educational Studies. Her qualitative and fiction-based feminist research explores the ways in which learning, gender, and militarism interact in daily life, popular culture, museums, academia, and military organizations. She is a retired military officer, a former co-director of the Transforming Military Cultures Network, an expressive writing facilitator with Writers Collective of Canada, and a creative writing instructor. Her debut novel, *A Sea of Spectres*, is published with Acorn Press.



The power of digital technologies to (re)writes herstories

Samba Yonga

Samba is the Co-founder and Director of the Women's History Museum of Zambia, an award-winning journalist, and a communications specialist and cultural curator based in Lusaka Zambia. The aim of the Women's History Museum is to research and restore African indigenous women's narratives, knowledge and 'living histories' using digital technologies. Samba curates exhibitions as part of her decolonial practice efforts and works with a variety of organizations to help them to design communications strategies across Africa.

