

Lisbon, 27th June 2020

Gemeente Rotterdam
Commissie ZOCS
p/a Griffie
Postbus 70012
3000 KP Rotterdam
info@griffie.rotterdam.nl (cc voorzitter commissie Lies Roest l.roest@raadrotterdam.nl)

In Defense of the Museum of Rotterdam

Dear Commissie ZOCS,

Dear Voorzitter Commissie Lies Roest,

The ICOM International Committee for the Collections and Activities of Museums of Cities – CAMOC, is an international group of professionals dedicated to the work and study of city museums and their influence in society. CAMOC is one of the international committees of ICOM, the International Council of Museums, a UNESCO affiliated organisation. We are writing to you as we became aware that the Rotterdam Council for Art and Culture has recommended the closure of the Museum of Rotterdam.

CAMOC was created in 1995 and now has more than 500 individual members and 70 institutional members covering every continent. We are a forum for people who work, or are interested, in museums about the past, present and future of cities. The Committee reflects the growing focus in cities across the globe: their economic importance, their spectacular growth and the problems and possibilities they present.

You should know that more and more city museums are being opened up in the world. This is because cities themselves are rapidly changing and now hold the majority of the world's population. This growth of population and housing density is becoming increasingly urgent to address, a task suitable for our museums. Moreover, city museums are not only becoming more important for cultural life but also for politicians and managers. You may want to consult on this matter the recent OECD project on museums' impact in local development ([CULTURE AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT: MAXIMISING THE IMPACT](#) Guide for Local Governments, Communities and Museums).


One of the most interesting and also challenging issues of our cities in the present time is the migration movements. Urban populations are becoming increasingly diverse in languages, cultures, ways of life and work, which brings incredible richness to urban landscapes, but, in the same measure, carries social, economic and wellbeing challenges.

You must be aware that the Museum of Rotterdam is one of the best museums in tackling urban cultural diversity. The Museum shares with the public how the city has transformed itself into what it is today. Moreover, the Museum of Rotterdam knows the contemporary Rotterdammers and works upon their cultural diversity by engaging the city's communities and by acting as a spinning rod between the public and many of the diverse multicultural resident communities. When we, members of CAMOC, speak and write about the importance of today's city museums, the Museum of Rotterdam is held up as an example of best practices, able to tackle history and present the past and present in innovative and modern ways.

It recently came to our knowledge that the Rotterdam Council for Art and Culture has recommended the closure of the Museum of Rotterdam as a whole. We urge you not to do it. The type of exhibitions, public programmes and community engagement the Museum of Rotterdam has been capable of doing is only possible because of years of slow, invisible work; something very difficult to build, but very simple to destroy.

We are absolutely certain that Rotterdam needs the Museum of Rotterdam, as the Museum of Rotterdam needs the city, with its culturally diverse people. They should be allowed to keep working together towards a better, more solidary and more progressive Rotterdam.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joana Monteiro', written in a cursive style.

Joana Monteiro
CAMOC/ ICOM, Chair

CAMOC Board Members subscribers of this letter:

Catherine Cole, Consultant, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Association of Museums,
Canada

Sarah Henry, Deputy-Director of the Museum of the City of New York, USA

Jelena Savic, Heritage and Design scholar at the Polytechnic Institute of Porto, Portugal

Patricia Brignole, Coordinator of the City Museum of Cordoba, Argentina

Jan Gershow, Director of the Historisches Museum Frankfurt, Germany

Michal Niezabitowski, Director of the Museum of Krakow, President of Polish Museum Association,
Poland

Chunni Chiu, City Museum Researcher, Visiting Researcher of the National Museum of Ethnology,
Japan

Gege Leme, Founding Partner at Much|Media and Culture, and Regional Program Manager at the
Internacional Coalition of Sites of Conscience, South Africa

Christian Nana, Publisher of the website “Magazine on African Culture” and President of the ICOM
National Committee of Camaroon

Joana Sousa Monteiro, Director of the Museum of Lisbon, Portugal