

MEDIA RELEASE

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International Museum Day 18 May

Museums in a Changing World: New Challenges, New Inspirations

We live in a changing world – what does that mean for museums, and for museum visitors? With change accepted as a given state of society, public institutions need to move with the change: what can museums provide that is relevant to the process of social change? This week our museums and galleries are asking these questions.

All over the world, around 18 May, museums celebrate their role in society. International Museum Day was established by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) 35 years ago. Originating in the northern hemisphere, where May is the start of the summer exhibition season, in some countries it extends to a whole month of special museum activities. International Museum Day is also linked to the European Night of Museums, an all-day all-night museum festival throughout western Europe.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, International Museum Day is becoming known as a time for museums and galleries to offer something special to visitors. This year's theme – museums in a changing world – is being explored through a wide range of activities.

"International Museum Month is a unique time for all museums globally to consider their roles in society. The world is changing at a pace that is gathering momentum", says Dr Eric Dorfman, Director of the Whanganui Regional Museum and member of ICOM's IMD 2012 planning committee. His museum is addressing climate change and the challenges of our future through a series of films, talks, demonstrations and workshops throughout May.

In the far north, The Kauri Museum is marking International Museum Day – and 50 years in operation – in two significant ways. "We are promoting free entry to local people as of the first of May," says Collections Manager Andrea Hemmins. "We're also now officially carboNZero certified – the first museum to achieve this." By working with the carboNZero certification process to manage and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, The Kauri Museum is acknowledging its roots in our timber-milling past, and making a commitment to addressing issues of climate change in a practical way.

In Timaru, South Canterbury Museum is offering a behind-the-scenes tour to show visitors how they research and store their collections. Other special events this month include talks on local native insects and caring for medals.

Waikato Museum is inviting visitors to join staff for a pecha kucha-style presentation on the future of museums. "This international observation day is an opportunity for us to raise awareness of the changing museum environment with particular reference to our local situation. Expect a colourful mix of visions from our museum staff", says Acting Director Andy Lowe.

South Otago Museum is highlighting new ways of accessing and contributing to their collection information. Curator Gary Ross writes a newspaper column about particular case studies and will be speaking on local radio.

Museums Wellington invites visitors to photograph their favourite museum objects. This ties in with the international 'Me in My Museum' photo competition run by ICOM. The International Museum Day Facebook page now has hundreds of images of people experiencing museums around the world.

These are all ways in which museums can be part of our communities and contribute to their changing future.

Museums Aotearoa supports and promotes our public museums and art galleries. "The fact that the world is changing is well understood by museum people, and they are constantly looking for new ways to engage with current issues. This was reflected in the practical achievements recognised by the 2012 NZ Museum Awards, including online projects, environmentally-conscious building developments and a reusable temporary wall system," says Executive Director Phillipa Tocker.

"Exhibitions too are engaging with change. Christchurch and Dunedin Art Galleries were joint winners with *De-building* and *The art of anatomy*, which both addressed the relationship of the present to the past and the future. The Awards highlighted just a few of the ways in which museums can be a significant part of the process of social change." says Tocker.

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FURTHER DETAILS

Museums Aotearoa

New Zealand museums and public galleries care for more than 40 million items relating to New Zealand's history, culture and creativity. Generating in excess of 1000 public exhibitions and publications and attracting well over 8 million visits each year, museums and galleries are currently ranked as the top attraction for New Zealand's overseas visitors.

New Zealand museums are actively focused on enriching their communities by enhancing the quality of their facilities, collections, programmes, products and services.

The last decade has seen unprecedented growth in the establishment and development of museum facilities and services in most regions of New Zealand. Over 3500 people are currently employed in New Zealand museums, and at least twice that number of volunteers. Total annual museum operating and capital expenditure is well in excess of \$300 million.

Museums Aotearoa strives to be the strong, objective, fully representative voice for the evolving museum community, and to promote a shared sense of professionalism, solidarity and identity.

ICOM – International Council of Museums

ICOM was created in 1946 by and for museum professionals.

ICOM is a unique network of almost 30,000 members and museum professionals who represent the global museum community in 137 countries and territories. The network includes 117 National Committees and 31 International Committees dedicated to various museum specialties.

ICOM has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, is a leading force in ethical matters, and is one of the founding members of the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS).

<http://www.museumsaotearoa.org.nz>

<http://imd2012.icom.museum>

<http://www.facebook.com/internationalmuseumday#!/internationalmuseumday/photos>

<http://www.wrm.org.nz>

<http://museumswellington.org.nz/?fullSite=1>

<http://www.timaru.govt.nz/museum.html>

<http://www.waikatomuseum.org.nz/>

<http://www.kauri-museum.com/>

<http://www.kiwinorth.co.nz/home/what-s-on>

