



Orhan Pamuk and his museum.

Photo: Refik Anadol & Innocence Foundation

The Museum of Innocence: Cities and Their Authors

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"It was knowing that all these things, saturated with memories of people who had once walked the streets of Istanbul, and lived in its houses, and were now mostly dead, would eventually disappear without ever having been brought together in a museum, or sorted, or set within a frame."

Orhan Pamuk, *The Museum of Innocence*

Some writers have always been identified with particular cities: Dickens and London, Dostoevsky and St. Petersburg, Joyce and Dublin, Kafka and Prague. To this list, in more recent years, must be added the name of Orhan Pamuk, the great chronicler of modern Istanbul.

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Whether seen through the eyes of a child or of a narrator in pursuit of an everyday object, the city is an indispensable element of Pamuk's novels. At the same time, the novelist's work traces his own life story, highlighting its integral connection to the historical flow of the city around him.

In a manner not unlike Pamuk's stories, contemporary city museums connect the personal stories of their visitors to the wider history of their community--helping them to become, in a sense, the actual owners of the city. It seems particularly appropriate, then, that Pamuk has conceived of a project that draws on the capabilities of the museum and of the novel. →

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"The Consolation of Objects"

Photo: Refik Anadol & Innocence Foundation

Museum of Innocence as a Novel

The Museum of Innocence (<http://www.masumiyetmuzesi.org/W3/Default-ENG.htm?sRefresh=True>) is both a novel and a museum. Pamuk's book of the same name was published in 2008; his museum opened in the spring of 2012. Pamuk has said that the idea for this dual project first came to him at a family gathering in 1982, when the writer met Ali Vâsib Efendi, an Ottoman prince then conducting guided tours at the İhlamur Palace, where he had lived prior to his exile from Istanbul in 1924. The idea of the Shehzade (prince) guiding visitors through the palace where he had spent his own childhood inspired the writer. "That was how I came to feel the excitement of a person describing to others, years later, the life he had lived along with all its objects," Pamuk says. "And that was the core idea for the Museum of Innocence, as a novel and as a museum!"

The book, set in Istanbul between 1975 and the present day, is the love story of Kemal, the son of a rich family, and his distant relative Füsün. The novel explores issues of East and West, sexuality, love and life through the juxtaposition of this son of a modern family and a girl from a conservative environment.

The Museum of Innocence, which interacts with several of Pamuk's previous novels, presents Istanbul's changing physical and social scene. The city's transient nature, and the lost stories of the people who once lived there, bothers Kemal. Seeking a lasting, daily reminder of his love for Füsün, he begins to collect her personal belongings, at the end of the novel turning them into a museum.

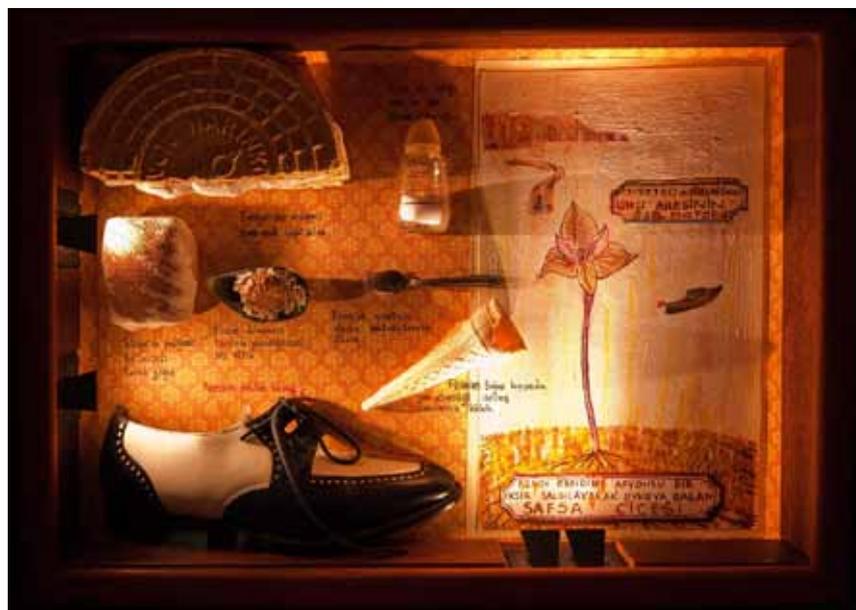
Museum of Innocence as a Museum

Although the events of the novel begin in 1975, its flashbacks and memories make it possible for the reader to trace life in Istanbul as far back as 1950. Thanks to this approach, *The Museum of Innocence* displays the flow of everyday life across a half-century of change in modern Istanbul.

Pamuk's interest in the project reflects his larger interest (verging on obsession) in collecting. Speaking to an interviewer, the author recalls that "even while I was writing *My Name is Red*, I already had started collecting from junk shops things the Keskins used, the things that are on display today, such as a Temiz-İs brand insecticide pump. Whenever I found a new item (a quince grater, for instance) I would not only feel happy as I found a real but weird item for my novel, but also imagine that my gradually enlarging collection would look good in the museum one day. It is perhaps how I happened to construct a novel in the form of notes written for every single object displayed in a museum."

In other words, perhaps for the first time in the history of museology, a literary work has been derived from a museum collection. Having first gathered the objects, Pamuk then fitted them into the framework of a piece of literary fiction, and finally exhibited them in a real museum. The result is an archaeological narrative—in objects, images, and sounds—of fifty years of everyday life in Istanbul.

Just as the novel grew from the original collection, the museum exhibition is structured according to the story. Items used, worn, heard, collected, or imagined by the characters in the book's 83 chapters—some of them authentic, others reproductions produced by the museum's creative team—are displayed in 83 different boxes in the museum. Visitors are welcomed at the entrance by a "wall of cigarettes": 4213 cigarette butts smoked by Füsün and collected by Kemal, each one →



"Happiness Means Being Close to the One You Love, That's All"

Photo: Refik Anadol & Innocence Foundation

dated and annotated by Pamuk. This exhibit, which is also supported by a video narration, is probably the most impressive installation in the Museum. Continuing to the second and third floors, the visitor finds the boxes in which various items collected by Kemal between 1975 and 1984—including everything from a single earring and a yellow shoe to a handbag to bottles of Meltem soda, cologne, perfume, and liquor—are displayed, according to the chapters of the book.

The Museum of Innocence is located in the house that serves in the novel as the setting for the home of Füsün's family. Located in Cukurcuma, near Tophane, a neighborhood of traditional early-twentieth-century streets, the house becomes a part of the museum collection itself. Throughout the process of its restoration, the writer—who studied architecture for a short period—collaborated with

eminent Turkish architects. Yet the final signature is Pamuk's.

Will—or should—the Museum of Innocence, which intersects literary and museum worlds, serve as a model for modern museums? Can we regard it as an opportunity to open up discussions of transitional and experimental narrative models and content within the field of urban museology? At the very least, it is evident that the story of Istanbul cannot be told with a single museum and a single narrative. The Museum of Innocence could perhaps be envisioned as part of a future network of museums to narrate the city's multiple stories. Beyond that, its bold mix of narrative genres and display techniques ought to inspire museum professionals everywhere who seek to draw on the personal drama that a great author can bring to the history of a great city. ■

■ From the CAMOC Chair

None of us has been immune to Euro 2012 or Olympic fever as you can see from browsing through our Newsletter and web site. Even so, we have managed to put together a report on all our recent and forthcoming activities.

There seem to be two conference seasons a year, one at the beginning of summer and the other at the beginning of winter. June is the time for representatives of the International and National Committees of ICOM to gather in Paris for a range of meetings including those of the General Assembly and the Advisory Committee. The last quarter of the year has been CAMOC's time for Annual Meetings for the last four years. This year we are opening the season quite early with a meeting in Rio de Janeiro scheduled for August 20-24.

The **Rio International Meeting on Museums of Cities** ultimately aiming at the rehabilitation of the Historical Museum of the City of Rio de Janeiro is our joint project with the Cultural Secretariat of the Municipality of Rio and ICOM Brazil. CAMOC is proud to take part and we hope to contribute not only to the making of a world-class city museum but also to the rebranding of Rio de Janeiro through this new museum. We will have a thorough report on this event in our next newsletter. At this point I would like to share with you a wonderful development: Maria Ignez Mantovani Franco, our Board Member, has recently been elected the Chair of ICOM Brazil. Sometimes all rivers fall into the same sea!

The **CAMOC Annual Conference 2012** is not too far away now. It will take place in **Vancouver** on October 24-26. Catherine Cole, our Board Member responsible for the organisation has done an impeccable job, which I believe will provide a model for others to follow in the coming years. We are fortunate to have the Museum of Vancouver as our partner. Nancy Noble, the CEO, has collaborated with Catherine in miracle making. We have a cornucopia of presentations and ignite talks. The sites where these sessions will take place are extraordinary. Perhaps it cannot be anything else when the setting is Vancouver. The level of registrations as of today signals that we will have a good

number of delegates coming to Vancouver from various corners of the world. You may want to go to page 11 and register right now.

A few words on the ICOM June Meetings: one of the highlights of the meetings was the launch of **ICOMMUNITY**, "ICOM's collaborative new web platform dedicated to ICOM members, enabling them to keep up with the network and share information and expertise". It was made accessible to all members on June 30. (<http://icomcommunity.icom.museum>). Another highlight was the election of **Milan as the host city of ICOM's 2016 General Conference**. Meanwhile the theme of the International Museum Day 2013 will be "**Museums (memory + creativity) = social change**".

We, as the CAMOC Board, took the occasion of the Paris meetings also to hold a business meeting of our own. The items on our agenda included the preparations for the Rio and Vancouver meetings as well as discussions on new projects, collaboration with other ICs, the update and possible revisions of our database project (ah, there is hope), publication matters and the redesign of our website. We also had an exchange of ideas on the potential of CAMOC's professional network to highlight and advance the role of museums as *cultural industries* in the cultural and social development of today's urban societies. Museums need to make their contributions more visible in publications concerned with cultural development and CAMOC's Database Project can be pivotal in this respect. We hope to discuss these topics further at our plenary meeting in Vancouver.

Last but not least, our Board Member Jack Lohman, the new CEO of the Museum of British Columbia and the former Director of the Museum of London has been made a Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the Queen's birthday honours list 2012. On behalf of CAMOC I would like to warmly congratulate Jack on his award. Cheers!

Suay Aksoy