INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM DAY 2025

"Museums as Bridges of Culture and Understanding: Navigating Change, Fostering Unity"

Prof. Dr. Richard T. Griffiths
Lecture Presentation - May 19, 2025

Good afternoon, and warm greetings from Leiden in The Netherlands.

First, let me thank the organizers of this International Museum Day celebration for the kind invitation. I am honoured to join you today to reflect on the role of museums in bridging cultures, fostering unity, and navigating the shifting landscapes of our global society. In our time together, I hope to offer both a grounded view of the challenges we face and an optimistic sense of what is possible—particularly when we rethink what a museum can be.

International Museum Day 2025 encourages us to pause and reimagine the museum not just as a space for preservation, but as a platform for dialogue. The theme, "Navigating Change, Fostering Unity," could not be more timely. All around us, communities are contending with racial and religious intolerance, discrimination and disinformation, ethnic conflict, open warfare, and even attempts at cultural erasure. Yet despite these pressures—or perhaps because of them—museums, whether physical or virtual, are being called upon to do more than display.

They are being asked to connect.

Professor Richard Griffiths

Founder and Curator, Silk Road Virtual Museum

This presentation is structured around three main sections:

1. **Defining a Museum** — What are the core functions of a museum, and how are they evolving in the digital age?
2. **The Silk Road Virtual Museum: A Case Study** — How the SRVM exemplifies these functions through its structure, exhibitions, audience engagement, and educational outreach.
3. **Bridging Cultures, Navigating Change, Fostering Unity** — How museums, both physical and virtual, can act as platforms for connection and dialogue in a fractured world.

Now, let's begin.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF MUSEUMS

Museums have long been seen as guardians of the past—repositories of art, artifacts, and knowledge. Yet today, they are increasingly called upon to serve as spaces of negotiation: over identity, over memory, and over truth. This shift challenges the very notion of the 'universal museum,' a concept now critiqued as a relic of colonial power structures.

Over the recent decades, groups have rightly demanded restitution of artifacts, equity in representation, and inclusion in governance. These demands compel curators, educators, and digital creators to ask: For whom are we speaking—and who gets to speak?
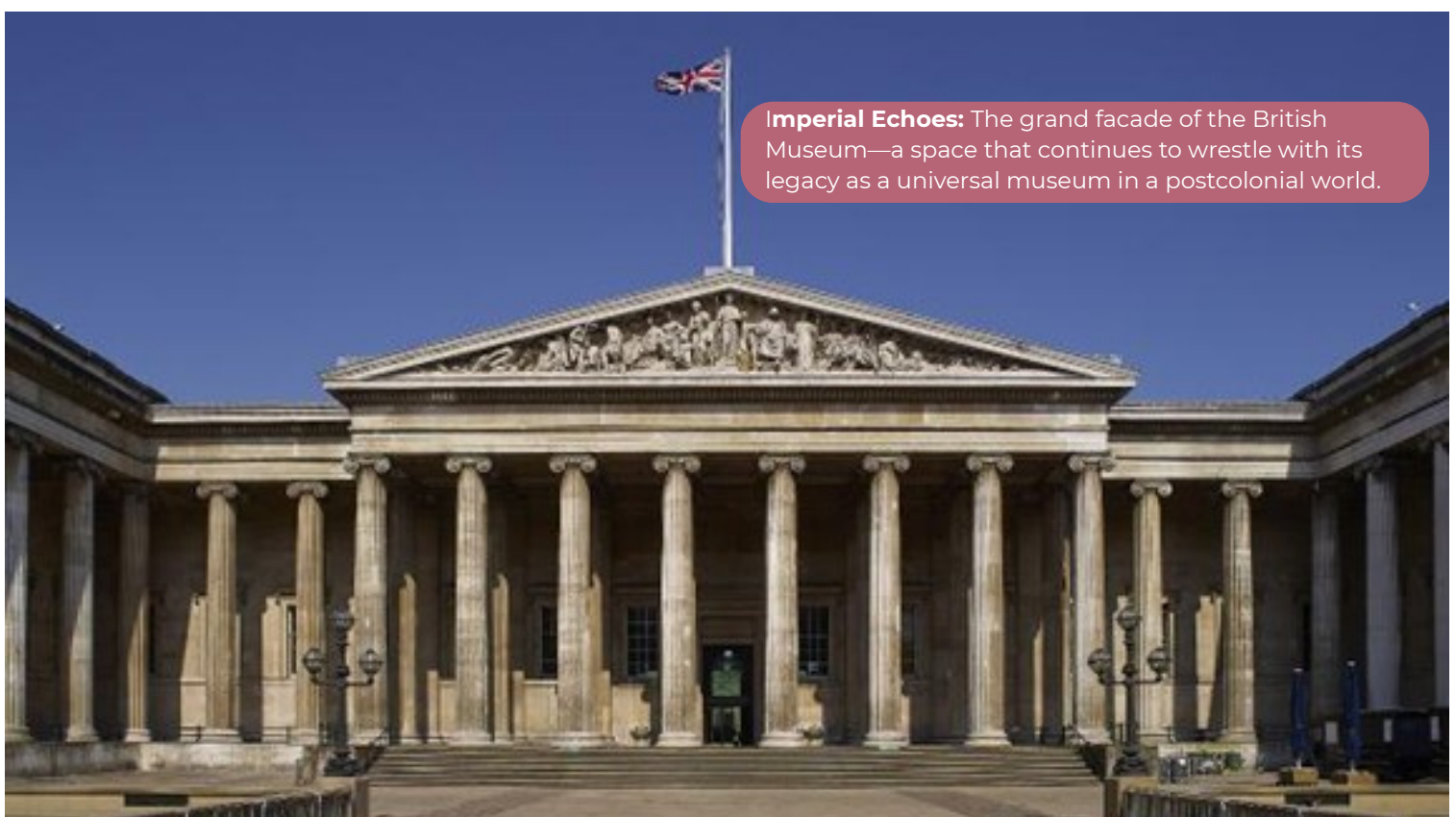
Imperial Echoes: The grand facade of the British Museum—a space that continues to wrestle with its legacy as a universal museum in a postcolonial world.

This is not just a curatorial concern—it's a political one. When museums choose what to display, how to frame it, and whom to consult, they send signals about whose stories matter. Today, the most influential museums are not necessarily those with the largest collections, but those with the courage to become platforms for listening, healing, and dialogue.

Let's pause for a moment at the question: What is a Museum?

WHAT IS A MUSEUM?

For most visitors, a museum is a place to admire objects and acquire knowledge. But, in reality, the museum's role is more complex. Traditionally, museums serve three core functions: to display, to conserve, and to study. But how do these functions evolve in a digital age?

Virtual Museum

Virtual Museum

What is a Museum? From display to conservation to study, museums are evolving. But how do these functions translate in the digital age?

First, museums display artifacts.

They interpret objects, give them context, and present them to the public. Yet, what is considered significant is itself culturally and politically loaded. Today, technology allows us to extend these narratives far beyond the gallery space.

FlyoverZone, for instance, offers immersive 3D tours of ancient sites like the Roman Forum and the Acropolis in Athens, allowing visitors to engage with heritage sites as they once were.

Rome Reimagined: Step into the ancient heart of Rome through a 3D tour of the Forum, digitally reconstructed by FlyoverZone.

Palmyra Reborn: A digital reconstruction of Palmyra by the Pergamon Museum restores what was lost, highlighting the fragility and resilience of cultural heritage.

Similarly, digital reconstructions of destroyed Syrian heritage sites provide powerful reminders of what has been lost and why preservation matters.

Second, museums conserve.

They protect objects against deterioration and loss. Modern tools like photogrammetry and 3D scanning now allow us to create digital backups of fragile or threatened artifacts.

After the 2019 Notre Dame fire, architects turned to a digital recreation by Life3D from to assist in restoring the cathedral's iconic spire (and not, as rumoured, the video game by Assassin's Creed).

Digital repositories also enable us to track dispersed collections, helping researchers compare similar artifacts across regions—such as the network of Viking silver, much of which was traded rather than looted.

For curators, a virtual museum can source artifacts globally, assembling diverse collections without the logistical challenges of moving objects across borders or even across cities. It can tell more comprehensive stories, linking dispersed items to show how they fit into broader networks of trade, migration, or cultural exchange. And without the costs of climate control, security, or physical maintenance, resources can be directed to research, storytelling, and audience engagement.

Our recent survey of 200 SRVM subscribers highlights these points. This was a particularly engaged group: over 79% had visited at least one physical museum in the past six months. A third were occasional visitors, one or two museums. A quarter were highly engaged, visiting five or more. But a fifth—20.9%—had not visited any physical museum recently, despite engaging with the SRVM.

The data revealed some interesting contrasts. Nearly half of respondents said that engaging with the SRVM increased their interest in visiting physical museums, suggesting that virtual experiences can serve as gateways, not substitutes. Over a third emphasized the authenticity and atmosphere of real-world museums, a reminder that while virtual platforms can democratize access, the physical experience remains irreplaceable.

Confronting the Past: A moment of reflection in Ayutthaya: How physical encounters with heritage can deepen our understanding of history.

As one respondent put it **'There's a magic to standing in front of something ancient and real'.** I had exactly that feeling earlier this year when visiting the splendidly refurbished extension of the Chao Sam Phraya National Museum in Ayutthaya, earlier this year in preparation for one of our future exhibitions.

And so, the question becomes: How can virtual museums balance these dual roles—expanding access and contextual depth while also sparking the desire to engage with the tangible and the authentic? To explore this further, let me introduce you to the Silk Road Virtual Museum.
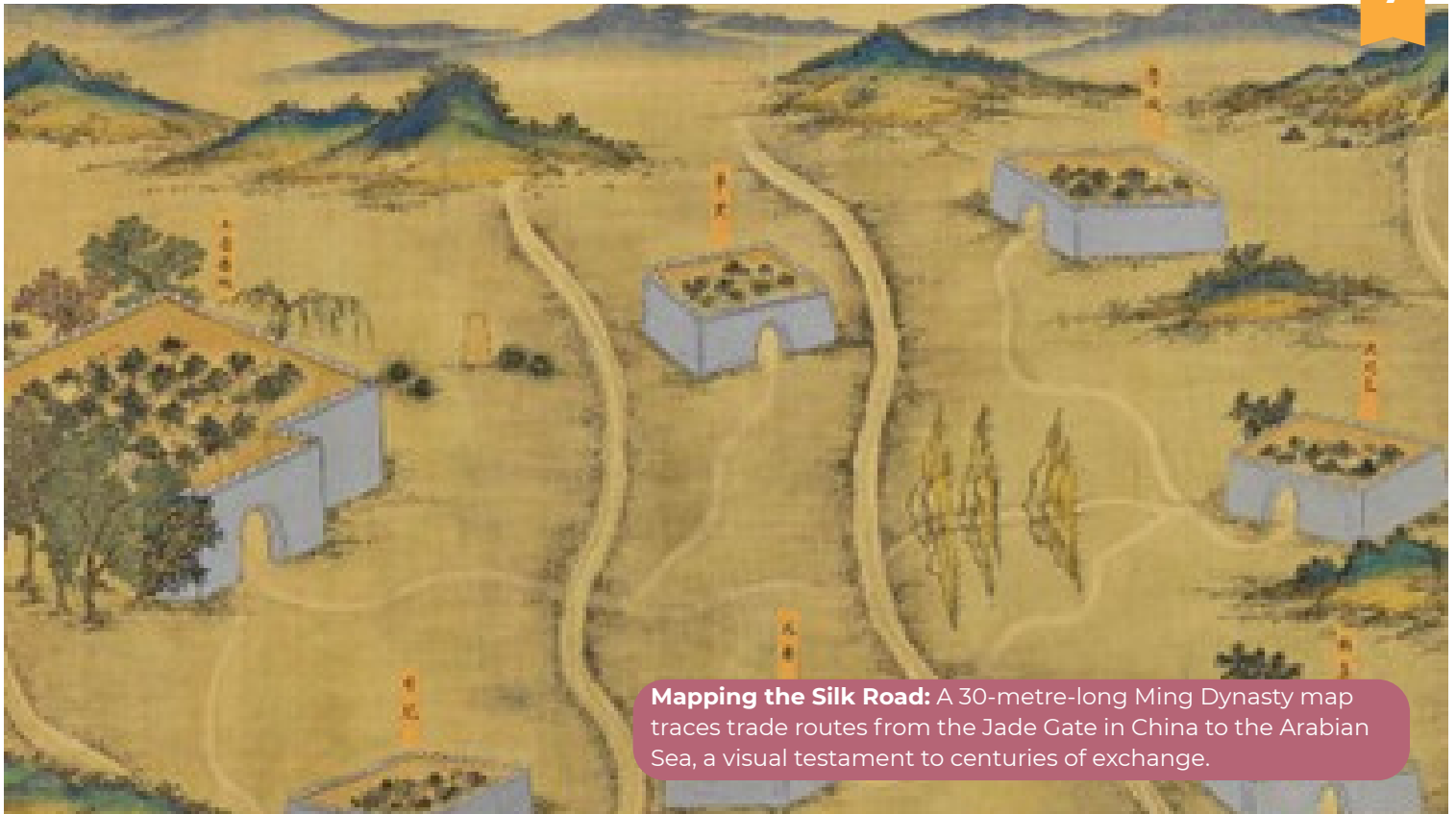
Mapping the Silk Road: A 30-metre-long Ming Dynasty map traces trade routes from the Jade Gate in China to the Arabian Sea, a visual testament to centuries of exchange.

WHY THE SILK ROAD VIRTUAL MUSEUM?

We're living in a time when technology allows us to revisit our heritage in ways that were once unimaginable. The ancient Silk Road was not just a route for commerce and trade—for silk, spices, and ceramics—but also a pathway for the exchange of ideas, music, and culture.

It was, in essence, a network of cooperation and mutual enrichment between East and West. And in creating the Silk Road Virtual Museum, our aim has been to capture that spirit and extend it into the digital age.

Today, I'd like to share the vision behind the SRVM. I want to explore how it can serve as a model for future collaborations and why it holds relevance for both our shared history and our future ambitions.

By combining tradition with innovation, we can create a space that educates, inspires, and connects people around the world.

The Silk Road has long been a symbol of connection, spanning both time and geography in an unparalleled way. Its history stretches over 1,700 years, encompassing periods of war and destruction but also extraordinary moments of constructive interaction.

Geographically, the Silk Road encompassed almost half the world's land area. It was never a single route but a vast network of pathways that functioned not just as commercial highways but as vital conduits of cultural exchange. Goods were traded, yes—but so were philosophies, languages, artistic styles. The Silk Road is a powerful reminder of how interconnected the ancient world was and how civilizations mutually influenced and enriched one another.

And why does that matter today? Because the Silk Road connected cultures that are often portrayed as mutually antagonistic in modern narratives: Arab and Jew, Hindu and Muslim, Sunni and Shiite, Buddhist and Muslim, autocracy and democracy, East and West. Understanding this shared past offers valuable lessons for the present.

It reminds us that these cultures were once closely linked through exchange and dialogue. Perhaps the passage of time can provide an opportunity to revisit these connections with fresh perspectives and renewed respect. In that sense, I see the Silk Road Virtual Museum not as a collection of objects but as a peace project—a platform for dialogue.

Now, let me now introduce you to the SRVM itself. First of all, let's remember —it only opened nine months ago, so we're still at the beginning of our journey. From the start we made two decisions. We deliberately chose not to move quickly into VR, preferring instead to keep the technological barriers as low as possible. We also made the decision to keep access entirely free at source, democratizing access to global cultural heritage.

Chronologically, our coverage starts around 500 CE, which is admittedly arbitrary. The reason? To avoid getting sucked too much into the European 'classical period' and to focus more on the intercultural exchanges along the Silk Road. We end at 1500, just before the Portuguese and Spanish 'voyages of discovery' began to redefine global trade networks.

info@silkroadvm.com

SILK ROAD VIRTUAL MUSEUM

Home   About   eLibraries   Newsletter   Magazines ˅   Contact

Welcome to the Silk Road Virtual Museum Experience

The Virtual Museum Sites and Exhibitions are listed in alphabetical order. Enter the virtual museums below.
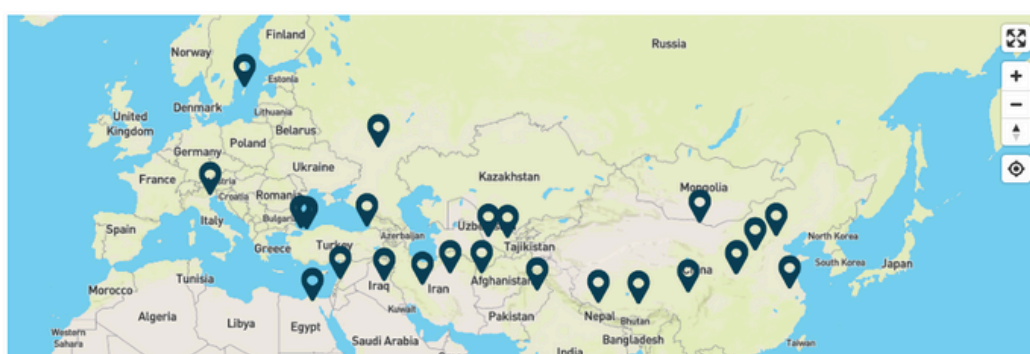
Please note: some museums may take longer to open due to the higher quality and larger number of images employed

Take a tour of the Ancient Silk Roads. Select your period then choose your destination.

All   Special Exhibitions (6)   500-1000 CE (9)   1000-1500 CE (10)

A Gateway to the Silk Road: Where the journey begins: Explore over 1,400 artifacts across 21 exhibitions spanning 1,000 years of cultural exchange.

Locations Map

The Mamluk Sultanate: Power and Patronage: Step into the SRVM's newly expanded exhibition on the Mamluks, where glass, metalwork, and monumental architecture tell a story of artistic brilliance and political power.

This cut-off point is deliberate. It prevents everything from becoming a self-serving paean to European exploration and the achievements of the Dutch and English trading companies, and it allows us to focus instead on the rich interactions that shaped the many centuries before their arrival.

Our geographic focus is primarily on the overland routes between China and Europe, but there are important maritime connections as well. We anchor our exhibitions in the early Ming capital of Nanjing—the starting point of Admiral Zheng He's treasure ship voyages—and we end in Venice, the home city of Marco Polo.

As of March, this year, the SRVM comprises twenty-one exhibitions displaying over 1,400 artifacts.

Nine exhibitions cover the years 500-1000 CE, eight exhibitions focus on the period 1000-1500 CE, and six special exhibitions cut across chronological boundaries. These include exhibitions on silk, maps, chess, caravanserais, afterlives, and most recently, the 'heavenly horses' so coveted by the Chinese.

Every exhibition is supported by a growing eLibrary of open-access resources—currently over 900 articles and reports, along with more than 100 videos. This eLibrary is designed for those who want to go deeper, explore further, and connect more dots.

Now, let me give you a few highlights of what's coming next.

Later this month, we're relaunching our exhibition on the Mamluks of Egypt. The Mamluks were a slave army who seized power in 1250 and ruled Egypt for the next 250 years. This was one of our earliest exhibitions, originally featuring 28 pieces of exquisite glasswork. Now, the glass collection has almost doubled, and we've added two new rooms—one dedicated to metalwork, with over fifty pieces, and another dedicated to architecture.

I'd like to say a bit more about that architectural exhibition.

Before Christmas, I met Mohamad El-Gendy, whose passion for traditional architecture in Cairo was so compelling that I offered him a full exhibition site and said, 'Tell your story.'

And he has. Through his eyes, visitors can now take a virtual tour of ten Cairo mosques and other traditional religious structures. This is the first time I've given a full exhibition site to a single scholar. Previously, the closest we came was a wall given to Dr. Jane Kershaw from Oxford to present her research on the source of Viking silver. And no—it wasn't from pillaging churches.

Architectural Stories from Cairo: Mohamad El-Gendy's curated tour of Mamluk religious architecture brings the grandeur of Cairo's mosques to the digital stage.

Kingdom Beneath the Sands: Explore the lost Buddhist kingdom of Khotan through digitally enhanced excavation photos and a 3D temple experience.

WHAT'S COMING UP?

Over the summer, we will open two more exhibitions. One will tell the story of the Buddhist kingdom of Khotan, which lay buried under desert sands for over a thousand years.

We'll tell the story using colour-enhanced photographs of the original excavation and a 3D immersion in one of the Magao Caves, sponsored by the Khotan royal family. The Japanese scholars who created this reconstruction have generously allowed us to use it.

Art and Life Along the River: From urban scenes to burial murals, the Song Dynasty exhibition reveals the everyday life of 12th-century China.

The second summer exhibition will focus on the Song Dynasty in southern China (960-1279). We're using fine handscrolls and hanging-scrolls to showcase art, but we're also bringing scenes from daily life to the forefront.

We're 'unscrolling' the five-metre-long 'Along the River During the Qingming Festival' and transforming it into a virtual five-minute walk through a bustling riverside town.

We're also incorporating tomb murals —art that will never be moved to a physical exhibition but can be presented virtually as a cohesive narrative.

And here's another upcoming development: we're 'soft-launching' an exhibition on Music along the Silk Road.

Travellers by land and sea not only exchanged goods—they exchanged music, discussing plucking techniques, bowing styles, and the materials used to make instruments. This exhibition will feature almost 100 musical instruments, and we're inviting local museums to replace our artifacts with instruments of their own.

We're also planning to replace AI-generated sounds with actual recordings from living musicians, documenting not only the music but the performer and institution as well.

Architectural Stories from Cairo: Mohamad El-Gendy's curated tour of Mamluk religious architecture brings the grandeur of Cairo's mosques to the digital stage.

FLYOVER ZONE©

One more project before the big announcement—we're collaborating with FlyoverZone to create a digital recreation of the Forbidden City in Beijing, the largest surviving wooden building in the world.

This will be a guided virtual tour, supported by a parallel exhibition on the Yongle Emperor's grand projects: the Porcelain Tower of Nanjing, Admiral Zheng He's treasure fleet, and the completion of the Grand Canal.
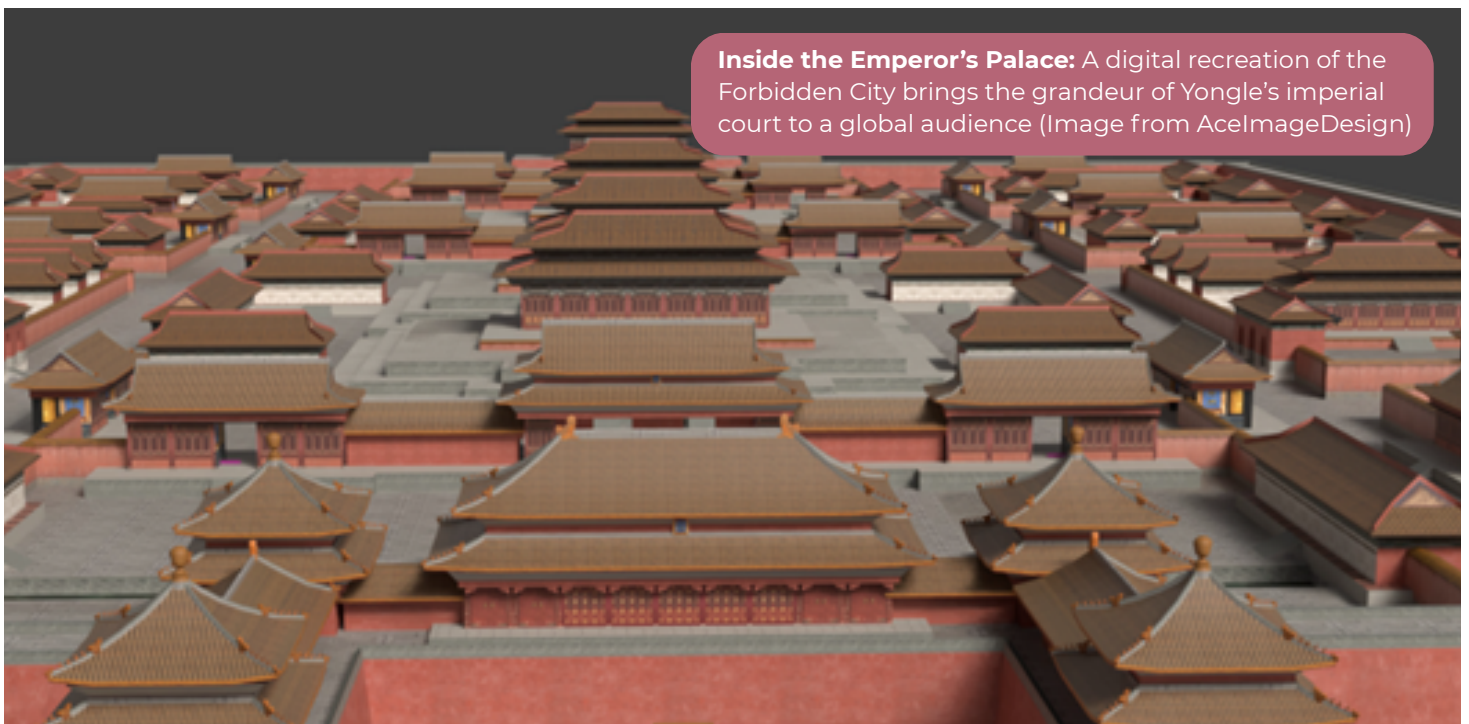
Inside the Emperor's Palace: A digital recreation of the Forbidden City brings the grandeur of Yongle's imperial court to a global audience (Image from AceImageDesign)

INTRODUCING THE MARITIME SILK ROAD EXHIBITION

Beneath the Waves: Step into the SRVM's new underwater exhibition space, where shipwrecks like the Nanhai One reveal the secrets of maritime trade.

And now, the major announcement. In September, we will launch the Maritime Silk Road exhibition. Just as we did with the overland routes, we won't attempt to cover everything at once.

The exhibition will grow over time, starting with shipwrecks, cargoes, and port cities in Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and Arabia.

We're creating a special underwater exhibition space to highlight the shipwrecks and other underwater discoveries.

One of the first wrecks will be the Pandanan wreck, located off the coast of the Philippines, and we're pleased to be working with researchers from the National Museum of the Philippines on this project.

Each of these developments reflects our ongoing commitment to capturing the richness and diversity of the Silk Road. Whether through archaeology, music, or maritime history, we're constantly expanding the museum's offerings, creating new ways for visitors to engage with the past.

Before we conclude, let me share some of what I've personally learned through curating the SRVM. One of the most striking themes that has emerged for me is the way tombs reveal cultural intersections—how people chose to commemorate their lives and their beliefs in death.

Take, for example, the Sogdian merchants buried in northern China.

These were people who originated in Central Asia but were buried in Chinese-style chamber tombs with distinctly Zoroastrian imagery. Their burial couches are adorned with scenes of hunting, dancing, and trading—activities that reflected not just their lives but also their afterlife aspirations. And yet, they were probably cremated, not buried—a fascinating contradiction, suggesting a melding of cultural traditions.

Dancing Through Eternity: Burial couches of Sogdian merchants in China depict a Zoroastrian afterlife filled with music, dance, and trade.

A Farming Scene in a Nomadic Tomb? A single mural in a Kitan tomb reveals the complex cultural negotiation between nomadic origins and settled aspirations.

The Kitan Empire, more commonly known as the Liao Dynasty, provides another intriguing example. The Kitans were nomadic people who practiced sky burial, burning the bodies of the dead and dispersing the ashes to the wind. After all, people who moved constantly had no reason to commemorate a specific place of burial.

But when they began to adopt Chinese-style tomb burials, they didn't just replicate what they saw. They reimagined it. In some tomb murals, we see scenes of daily life—not just grand processions or cosmic visions, but, in one remarkable exception, a farming scene. That single image speaks volumes about a people negotiating between their nomadic origins and a desire to be seen as part of a settled, agrarian society.

Amber from Afar: Burial treasures of the Princess of Chen include amber from Scandinavia, a poignant reminder of the Silk Road's far-reaching connections.

And then, of course, there is the spectacular tomb of the Princess of Chen. Her burial treasures tell a very different kind of Silk Road story. The most common item found in her tomb was amber—amber that almost certainly came from Scandinavia, carried thousands of miles through Central Asia and China to be buried with a Kitan princess.

These tombs are more than just repositories of artifacts—they are narratives in stone and lacquer, clay and amber. They show us how people tried to shape their identities in death, negotiating between their origins and the cultures they encountered along the Silk Road.

For me, they have been some of the most evocative and illuminating insights in my own journey along the ancient silk roads.

So that's the Silk Road Virtual Museum —a project that, in less than a year, has evolved from a concept into a living network of exhibitions, stories, and connections. In building it, we've seen how digital platforms can do more than display artifacts—they can reveal unexpected intersections, amplify lesser-heard voices, and weave together narratives that resonate across time and space.

But what do these projects teach us about bridging cultures, navigating change, and fostering unity? Let's explore that in the final section.

VIRTUAL MUSEUMS AND THE FUTURE

The rise of virtual museums offers benefits that extend well beyond the digital space. They open new possibilities not just for engaging with artifacts but for enhancing the reach and impact of museums in the physical world. Let me explore four key ways in which virtual museums are making a difference.

First, they democratize access. By breaking down financial, geographical, and physical barriers, virtual museums make it possible for visitors from all corners of the world to explore collections they might never see in person. Whether it's a student in a remote village or an amateur historian without the means to travel, virtual platforms create opportunities for engagement that are often out of reach in traditional settings.

And these benefits are not just for the big, rich, and famous institutions—even the smallest can gain by adopting a virtual existence. Let me illustrate this with a story. Last year, I had a conversation with some people from a small Caribbean Island. They had discovered a shipwreck lying in their bay—a 'pirate ship,' though without much treasure or any legendary artifacts to boast about. Yet, the locals were proud of it and determined to preserve it.

The first step was to engage the local diving community in protecting the wreck. Local divers began to offer guided diving and snorkelling tours over the wreck site. As the site gained attention, a local hotel and café collaborated to build a modest museum to display the few recovered artifacts. It wasn't much—an old anchor, a worn leather boot, some kitchen equipment, a few coins, and bits of wood and rope—but it represented their history and pride.

Now, imagine if they had created a virtual counterpart to this museum. They could have 'borrowed' digital versions of ship paintings, old maps, and even romanticized pirate illustrations from the world's foremost museums. Their small collection, augmented by these digital exhibits, could have included detailed explanatory texts and photogrammetry scans of their star artifacts. And all of this could have been projected for the entire world to see.

In cyberspace, they could have linked with other similar sites, connected with audiences far beyond their physical reach, and perhaps even drawn some visitors to the island specifically because of the virtual museum—not just stumbled upon it once they arrived. And all of this could be achieved at a fraction of the cost of building and maintaining a physical museum.

I offered to help them with this virtual expansion, but unfortunately, they haven't yet responded. Not all stories have a happy ending. But this example shows what's possible, even for the smallest and most remote of museums.

Second, they increase visibility. For smaller or less prominent institutions, a virtual presence can elevate their profile. Digital exhibitions can reach audiences far beyond local borders, attracting international attention and expanding the reach of collections that might otherwise remain relatively unknown.

Third, they foster networks. Virtual museums are not isolated spaces; they have the potential to connect institutions, scholars, and audiences across continents. By sharing resources, expertise, and collections, museums can create more interconnected narratives, linking objects from different places to tell a fuller, richer story. This kind of collaboration can also stimulate new research and lead to new insights that wouldn't emerge within the confines of a single institution.

And finally, they can even encourage physical visits. Virtual museums have the power to generate interest and awareness that can draw visitors to physical spaces.

Our own survey showed that 46% of respondents said that engaging with the SRVM increased their interest in visiting physical museums. In that sense, the virtual can serve as a bridge to the tangible—a gateway that not only educates but also inspires real-world exploration.

And so, we come back to the title of this talk: bridging cultures.

MUSEUMS AS BRIDGES

Nearly thirty years ago, anthropologist James Clifford described museums as "contact zones"—places where cultures meet, clash, and, ideally, find ways to coexist. That definition is perhaps more relevant today than ever before. Museums, whether physical or virtual, are no longer neutral ground. They are active participants in shaping memory and identity.

If museums are to become bridges rather than barriers, they need to do more than just display objects. They need to foster dialogue. This can mean inviting local voices to help interpret exhibits, ensuring that minority languages and indigenous perspectives are present in the narrative, or even reuniting collections that have been scattered across continents, creating digital spaces where these pieces can be experienced together as they once were.

But technology alone is not enough. A virtual museum can amplify voices, but it cannot replace the work of listening, of sitting with difficult histories, of acknowledging contested narratives. This remains human work. And it is work that demands trust.

NAVIGATING CHANGE

The past five years have brought a series of global crises—pandemics, political polarization, refugee crises, environmental breakdowns. Some museums shuttered their doors permanently. Others pivoted to digital engagement, but not always equitably. Communities without reliable internet access, for instance, were often left behind.

And yet, we have also seen remarkable examples of resilience. In Ukraine and Gaza, curators have risked their lives to protect cultural heritage under fire. In Sudan and Myanmar, underground networks have preserved documents, textiles, and oral histories despite regimes of erasure. And in the Philippines, community museums have mobilized around endangered languages and climate adaptation, using heritage not just as a source of pride but as a tool for survival.

These examples show that museums are not just passive reflections of the world. They are active participants in it.

To navigate change effectively, museums must rethink what it means to preserve. It might mean digitizing fragile archives before they are lost to conflict or disaster. It might mean embedding museums in schools, refugee centres, or even online classrooms. And in coastal cities from Jakarta to Venice, it may well mean asking: What does preservation look like in a world that is sinking?

FOSTERING UNITY

Unity is often misunderstood as uniformity. But in the realm of cultural work, unity is about recognizing plurality—the idea that differences need not divide us. Museums, at their best, are microcosms of this principle.

A good exhibition does not flatten the world into a single narrative. It invites visitors to stand in multiple shoes, to see through multiple lenses. It makes room for contradiction, for complexity, and even for silence.

In our work at the SRVM, we've aimed to foster this kind of unity without erasing difference. For instance, in our shipwreck exhibitions, we don't explicitly link specific wrecks to particular regional cultures, but we do encourage visitors to make those connections themselves.

Take the Pandanan wreck, dated to the mid-15th century. Its cargo included items from Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, and China—objects that speak to the extensive trade networks that connected these regions with the Philippines. Visitors can choose to associate these trade goods with separate exhibitions on the Cham culture in Vietnam, Ayutthaya culture in Thailand, pre-colonial culture in the Philippines, or the Ming Dynasty in China. It's an open-ended approach that allows for multiple interpretations, reinforcing the interconnectedness of these cultures while respecting their distinct identities.

FINAL REFLECTIONS: WHAT NOW, WHAT NEXT

As we look back over what we've discussed today, a few key themes stand out: the evolving role of museums as spaces for dialogue, the power of virtual platforms to connect disparate voices and stories, and the urgent need to use these tools to bridge cultures, navigate change, and foster unity.

But where do we go from here? How can each of us contribute to that mission in tangible ways?

First, engage with what's already there.
Museums, whether physical or virtual, are more than collections of artifacts. They are spaces where we can encounter perspectives and experiences outside our own. So, explore the exhibitions in the Silk Road Virtual Museum.

Take a moment to walk through a Kitan tomb. pause over a Mamluk glass bowl, admire a scroll painting. Consider how each object connects cultures across time and space. And then think about how those connections speak to the world we live in now.

Second, support the work of smaller, local institutions.
Remember the story of the Caribbean shipwreck? Imagine how many small, community-focused museums could benefit from a modest online presence or a single exhibition that links their local history to a global narrative.

If you're affiliated with a local museum, offer your time, your expertise, or even a small donation to help them build or expand their virtual reach. The payoff may not be immediate, but the impact on community pride and cultural preservation can be profound.

Third, consider creating your own digital exhibition.
You don't need a degree in curation or a multimillion-dollar budget to share a story.

There are accessible platforms that allow you to create virtual galleries, exhibits, and tours. Perhaps you have a collection of family photographs or documents that illustrate a lesser-known aspect of local history.

Or maybe you know someone whose story could be amplified through digital storytelling. We are currently considering an initiative called VirtualMuseum360, designed to support smaller, community-driven virtual exhibits. Why not reach out and get involved?

Fourth, foster connections across disciplines.
Museums don't have to stand alone. The most compelling exhibitions I've seen have been collaborative efforts—historians working with architects, archaeologists with musicians, digital artists with linguists. Consider reaching out to a local university, a heritage centre, or even an online forum to propose a joint project. You might be surprised at how many people are eager to share their expertise and resources.

Fifth, advocate for the use of virtual museums as educational tools.
Schools, universities, and lifelong learning programs are always seeking engaging content.
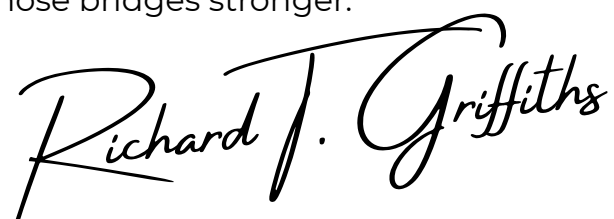
SRVM is free at source for exactly that reason—to encourage use in classrooms, in community centres, in language programs. If you're a teacher, consider integrating a virtual exhibition into your curriculum. If you're a student, suggest it to your instructor. If you're neither, simply share a link. The more people who engage, the greater the reach and impact.

And finally, consider how you might contribute to keeping such projects accessible.
At the SRVM, we've made the choice to keep access free, but that doesn't mean it's free to maintain. Every exhibition hosted, every artifact prepared, every digital library entry comes with costs—costs we currently bear without any institutional support. A small, consistent contribution from our followers could help us not only maintain what we've built but expand our reach, opening new doors to underrepresented voices and untold stories.

So, the call to action is simple: **Engage. Support. Create. Connect. Educate. And, if you can, contribute.**

Museums, whether physical or digital, are not just repositories of the past—they are networks of possibility. And each of us has a role to play in building those connections, and in making those bridges stronger.

Richard J. Griffiths

REACH OUT TO US

✉ INFO@SILKROADVM.COM

🌐 SILKROADVIRTUALMUSEUM.COM

👥 BECOME A FRIEND OF THE SILK ROAD