

Music as Intangible Cultural Heritage

The Southeast Asia Music Museum (SEAM), Bangkok, Thailand

Tiago de Oliveira Pinto

Abstract

What is the social importance of a public museum, and how do we define a collection of musical instruments? The objectives of the Southeast Asia Musical Instruments Museum (SEAM) at Mahidol University in Bangkok are to collect musical instruments and to relate them to society and the audible culture of Thai music. SEAM will open its doors to the public at the end of 2019.

Practitioners of intangible cultural expressions are the main agents to keep their cultural manifestations alive. This is to say that music comes into being through performance, which occurs mainly on musical instruments. Human actions related to music and to the performing arts consequently have a privileged place in the concept of SEAM. As a museum with a very specific collection, SEAM is a place to experience the country's music history and that of the whole of the Southeast Asian region, with its facts and tales from the past that contribute to knowledge in the present. It will serve as a strong local basis for global exchanges in musical culture.

SEAM will be a »living museum« where social and historical settings are recalled in installations, performances, workshops, live presentations, educational programs, etc. in order to simulate past time periods and the cultural diversity of our time, providing visitors with an experiential and sensorial interpretation of Southeast Asian culture and history. Its main objects of presentation, the musical instruments – pieces of intangible heritage, so to speak – are to be exhibited in connection with performances and music. They will be displayed not only in a conventional way, but will be designed to capture the (auditive) attention of the museum's visitors, augmenting the sensorial experience significantly with musical artifacts. As a museum that belongs to a university, teaching and academic research in connection to musical instruments will be paramount at SEAM.

Musik als immaterielles Kulturerbe. Das Southeast Asia Music Museum (SEAM), Bangkok, Thailand

Was ist die soziale Bedeutung eines öffentlichen Museums und wie definieren wir eine Musikinstrumentensammlung? Die Ziele des Southeast Asia Musical Instruments Museum (SEAM) an der Mahidol University in Bangkok sind es, Musikinstrumente zu sammeln und sie zur Gesellschaft und der hörbaren Kultur der thailändischen Musik ins Verhältnis zu setzen. Das SEAM wird Ende 2019 eröffnet.

Praktizierende von immateriellem Kulturgut sind die Hauptakteure, um diese kulturellen Erscheinungsformen am Leben zu erhalten. Musik kommt sozusagen ins Sein durch Ausführung, was hauptsächlich durch Musikinstrumente geschieht. Menschliche Handlungen, die mit Musik und ausführenden Künsten in Verbindung stehen, haben daher ein privilegiertes Forum im Konzept des SEAM. Als Museum mit einer sehr speziellen Sammlung bietet es einen Ort, um die Musikgeschichte des Landes und der ganzen südöstlichen Region Asiens zu erfahren, samt ihrer Gegebenheiten und Geschichten aus der Vergangenheit, die zum Wissen in der heutigen Zeit beitragen. Es wird als starke lokale Basis für globalen Austausch in der Musikkultur dienen.

Das SEAM wird ein »living museum« sein, in dem soziale und historische Schauplätze durch Installationen, Performances, Workshops, Live-Präsentationen, Bildungsprogrammen usw. abgerufen werden, um vergangene Zeiten und die heutige kulturelle Vielfalt zu simulieren und dem Besucher erfahrbare, sinnliche Interpretationen der südostasiatischen Kultur und Geschichte anzubieten. Die hauptsächlich präsentierten Objekte, die Musikinstrumente – Teile des immateriellen Erbes – werden in Verbindung mit Aufführungen und Musik gezeigt. Sie werden nicht konventionell ausgestellt, sondern sollen die haptische und akustische Aufmerksamkeit des Besuchers erregen, um die Sinneserfahrungen mit musikalischen Artefakten erheblich zu steigern. Als Museum, das zu einer Universität gehört, werden Lehre und Forschung im Zusammenhang mit Musikinstrumenten am SEAM Vorrang haben.



1 Exterior view of the SEAM, Bangkok.
Photo: Tiago de Oliveira Pinto

Prologue: A New Museum

The Southeast Asia Music Museum (SEAM) is a new center for the collection, preservation, promotion, and research of the musical traditions of the various peoples of South East Asia. Visitors of SEAM are to become acquainted with the history and the way of life of the many peoples of the region through one of the most significant aspects of their cultural heritage – music. There will be 4,500 square meters of space for exhibitions, and another 3,000 square meters for workshops, lectures, music performances, screenings etc. (fig. 1 to 3).

SEAM is a place to gather forgotten instruments. Previously, the musical instruments that will become part of this collection have been kept in »invisible« places, in temples, private houses etc. SEAM is the new and »visible space« for these instruments, affording them to start a new existence. These instruments can finally become protagonists of a culture of remembrance. The best way to connect the silent musical artifacts of the past with the contemporary society of Southeast Asia is to promote musical and artistic encounters at SEAM. Here, musical diversity can gain new and broad visibility.

UNESCO Convention on the Intangible Cultural Heritage

What is the public importance of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), and why has it achieved so much global interest, especially in relation to museums in recent years? Almost three decades after the UNESCO defined and established an international recognition of cultural and natural heritage sites and devised ways of protecting them, a completely new approach to cultural heritage emerged with the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003 (hereafter 2003 Convention).¹ This global agreement for the maintenance, protection and dissemination of cultural manifestations and achievements that are not – like the previous items of world heritage – tangible objects or immobile monuments, was a remarkable milestone in international cultural politics. This new understanding of cultural heritage owes much to representatives from Asian, African, and

1 UNESCO: Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Paris 2003), URL: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention> [3. 11. 2017].



2 Exterior view of the SEAM, Bangkok. Photo: Tiago de Oliveira Pinto

Latin-American countries. In fact, just a few years after the promulgation of the 2003 Convention, the world cultural heritage map had already lost much of its European predominance. Asian countries such as China, Japan, South Korea, and India very soon produced a list of manifestations of their own centuries-old (and, in some cases, even millennia-old) national cultural heritage.

The process of heritage enforcement («heritagization»), that is the commodification of cultural manifestations was thoroughly discussed in the context of the implementation of the 2003 Convention on many different levels. Local industries, especially those of tourism² and of commercial show productions, use the presence of traditional performan-

ces and national spectacles to make money out of ICH. Museums of art and culture are especially aware of the importance of ICH, because it gives their concept of a «living museum» a factual tinge. Museums have assumed such an important role because – unlike the material heritage, that is the immobile cultural and natural sites of world heritage – ICH can be displayed and engaged within a museum. Museums house this type of cultural manifestation since

2 See the discussion about tourism in communities in John Turnbridge: Sustainable communities. The roles of heritage and tourism. In: Heritage 2010. Heritage and Sustainable Development. Ed. by Rogério Amoêda, Sérgio Lira and Cristina Pinheiro. Barcelos 2010, pp. 325-331.



3 Exterior view of the SEAM, Bangkok. Photo: Tiago de Oliveira Pinto

ICH is often attached to material goods or objects that embrace much of their significance, which becomes apparent in public performance. In the museum, objects of ICH offer additional forms of presentation and interaction. Musical instruments are an excellent example of material artifacts that gain fulfilment mainly through human action.

The register of intangible cultural heritage has placed communities in the crucial position of deciding what is and is not their own cultural heritage. Investigating music in the context of, and in collaborative interaction with communities necessitates a renewal of methodological approaches in musical research.

Intangible Cultural Heritage and Music

Music belongs to a cultural domain that can, first and foremost, be understood as intangible. Music is experienced intellectually, it exists in time, and it remains in memory. It can only be heard; it cannot be seen, smelled or tasted. It produces a physical reaction but cannot be grasped. It touches the emotions but cannot be touched by any physical act, although it is physical action alone that brings it into being in its most essential form, as sound. Soundscapes produced by humans shape the most significant evidence for musical and cultural life in the most contemporary sense. Music and musical soundscapes will always be the result of collective human action, based on shared intentions of varying nature.

Music is a universal phenomenon. No single civilization or human society is known to have existed without music. But its formal structure, genres, uses, and functions are specific to individual peoples, cultural contexts, regions, and periods of history. Therefore a single and universally valid definition of music is almost impossible to achieve.

As the result of a more recent discussion of ICH and its institutional promulgation and concretization by the 2003 Convention, music acquired a new conceptual framework which finally enabled a sustainable approach that no longer belonged exclusively to either historical musicology or ethnomusicology.

In contrast to a permanent cultural object or a building that can be restored, the maintenance of ICH depends primarily on its practitioners. Only these practitioners are in a position to sustain their heritage and to keep it alive. External action programs such as governmental safeguarding measures must be cognizant of the cultural phenomenon itself. Such programs are different from case to case. They may give support to cultural processes but are not a substitute for them. SEAM is such an effort to give musical culture an explicit dynamic.

Transcultural Processes in Music

Transcultural processes enable exchanges as well as new cultural and artistic outputs. Affinities between different manifestations are able to act as an interface for diverse kinds of mutual communication and for collective and individual creative productions. Musical transculturation occurs within

collective practices in musical culture and / or musical performance. Any social group or populace, whether ethnically and / or historically heterogeneous or not, gives rise to musical transculturation by critical selection, mutual adaptation, and a common continuing development of functional, structural, and thematic components of these musical traditions and practices. The use and transformation of musical instruments are vivid examples of these processes. Although transculturation processes and intangible cultural practices are not interchangeable, they relate to one another in a very specific way. It even seems that the intangible nature of music opens especially broad possibilities for transcultural developments. While products of transculturation are visible and can be perceived by outsiders, they are formed by, and even kept alive through actions based on implicit meanings and tacit knowledge that is transmitted orally. In sum, the commonly understood ideal for a Museum for Southeast Asian Music is to bring partners together – musicians, scholars, experts, students, and the wider audience – by encouraging exchanges on a local, international, and global basis.

ICH is understood as living practice and also as a tradition / form of creativity, which is, at the same time, part of a human spiritual activity (speech, performance, handwork, theater, dance, ritual, marriage customs, festivals, etc.). Seen in this light, music most undeniably falls within the remit of ICH, independently of the way in which music is understood or of any local or historical definition of it. The most general of statements about ICH hold true also for music:

1. it exists universally, although
2. it should always be understood in its own right.

If we turn to the UNESCO Representative List of ICH, we find that approximately 70 per cent of the list relates to music, either directly to music itself or to matters connected with music in the wider sense. The categories of ICH listed by the 2003 Convention are the following:

1. oral traditions,
2. performing arts,
3. customs and usages of human society (including rituals, festivals, etc.),
4. knowledge and practice focusing on nature and the universe, and
5. specialist knowledge in the field of traditional handwork techniques.³

It is surprising that none of these five categories includes music explicitly. That it is absent as a concrete topic in the definition of ICH and, at the same time, plays such an important role within all kinds of ICH, points to the ambiguous nature of music. Music is, so to speak, »undetectably material« and – simultaneously and in apparently contradictory terms – »substantially intangible«: its fluid and evanescent appearance becomes concrete in performance.

Music can be perceived only in real time and is directly dependent on the real action of its practitioners, except in some cases of electro-acoustic and popular music. While benefiting from specific social and cultural relations, music becomes a powerful vehicle for symbolic and conceptual contents. It is for all of these reasons that it seems unnecessary to create a special category for music in addition to the five categories of ICH already designated in the Convention⁴. Furthermore, such a special category could not easily be covered by a workable definition, because of the complex, multifaceted, and even self-contradictory character of music. In fact, music is inherent in all of the five categories of ICH listed above, even if not named as such.

The following selection outlines some musical elements included in the UNESCO Representative List:

- Instruments: *guqin* (China) and *tar* (Azerbaijan)
- Forms / genres: *shashmaqom* (Uzbekistan and Tajikistan)
- National genres: *fado* (Portugal) and *tango* (Argentina and Uruguay)
- Rituals / initiation rites: *makisi* (Malawi and Zambia)
- Dance / music: *samba de roda* (Bahia, Brazil)
- Ensembles: *timbila* (Mozambique) and *gamelan* (Indonesia)
- Theater / drama: *wayang kulit* (Indonesia)
- Carnival: Oruro (Peru), Gant (Belgium)
- Processions / parades: *sirio* (Belém, Brazil)
- Throat and over-tone singing: Mongolia
- Sung texts: *asik* (Turkey)
- Education / schooling: *mugham* school (Baku, Azerbaijan)
- Vocal polyphony: Georgia and Sardinia
- Trance music: whirling dervishes (Turkey)
- Courtship: *verbunkos* (Hungary).

4 Christoph Wulf complements the five categories of ICH (outlined above) with further criteria, such as the process of »mimesis« etc. in his article *Immaterielles kulturelles Erbe. Aktuelle Entwicklungen und grundlegende Strukturelemente*. In: *Die Tonkunst* 4, Oct. 2016, pp. 371-377.

3 UNESCO 2017 (note 2).

To date, the UNESCO Representative List lacks examples from western art music. Pop music is absent as well, though it can be motivated by or even originate from musical genres that have previously been inscribed or inventoried as ICH because of their national significance. Tango and samba are two such genres that highlight a national musical idiom, by stimulating different regional popular styles. Popular styles frequently reveal a regional diversity, which can be assimilated by local communities in order to gain increased cultural relevance in the future.

Musical instruments as such have been included in the Representative List of the ICH several times and have also been inventoried in national lists. Musical instruments are central elements of musical traditions such as *asik* (Turkey) or *verbunkos* (Hungary), which are strongly based on *baglama/saz* playing and on violin ensembles respectively. Musical instruments are so closely attached to musical genres that they are sometimes coterminous with the genre: in addition to a specific drum, the term *ngoma* also designates the music and dance related to this specific membranophone in Tanzania and other Bantu-speaking countries.

In Germany, the recent inventory of church organs, their construction, and music has finally called attention to so-called Western classical music, which formerly had not been included in the concept of music as ICH. Organs are multifaceted cultural objects that embrace knowledge about wood and metalwork, require sophisticated skills in regard to tuning systems, and have always been intimately intertwined with performance, musical style, improvisation, and tacit knowledge of different kinds. It is significant that organ building has been the work of specific groups of instrument makers, even of families. A good deal of the knowledge that has to do with organ building technologies is passed from generation to generation.

Shared History and Shared Heritage: The Basis for Safeguarding ICH

When associated with tangible and intangible culture, history and heritage can be seen as two closely connected but essentially different concepts. From a critical viewpoint, history is shared and can be studied by anyone, while heritage is individual, community based, and specific.

Different societies have different concepts of heritage. The Western separation of culture into two distinct categories, material culture and intangible heritage, does not concur with indigenous or locally based conceptions in which material and intellectual skills are inseparable. For instance, designs on handcrafted objects are often mental templates that manifest intangible heritage.

Heritage is the foundation of identities. It provides individuals with an opportunity to learn about their own history, about cultural and environmental developments of the past, opening the way for them to understand their place and their role in today's world.⁵ Therefore heritage is not only limited to that which has been passed on from generation to generation, but it is constantly composed in the present, from direct remains of the past and its re-elaborations.

This is why knowledge about heritage must be unlocked for those who inherit and preserve it. But this is by no means a common practice in academic research or in governmental policy. Many peoples, especially indigenous groups, still do not retain control over their intellectual property, be it related to material or to intangible culture. »Who owns our past?« is a frequently asked critical question in communities when research and its results remain within the realm of academia. It is clear that heritage bearers must have access to their history which is, at the same time, their heritage. While history is past, heritage is past and present. To work on safeguarding measures means to start working on the present state of any cultural output of ICH.

Creating new approaches to future developments that are based on this awareness and knowledge will, at the same time, be the best stimulus for any safeguarding project that materializes out of the communities themselves. Safeguarding experiences and projects that are generated within the tradition's own rules and social significations are inscribed in the »Best Practice« program of UNESCO's ICH Convention.⁶

If history is shared, especially by different people in the same region, its interpretation is often quite diverse, even

5 The UNESCO Chair in Heritage Studies at the University of Cottbus carries out research and international projects in different countries and scientific areas. Special attention is given to research on heritage conflict, since cultural development is heavily threatened by conflicts of different kinds; cf. Marie-Theres Albert, Francesco Bandarin, Ana Pereira Roders (Eds.): *Going Beyond. Perceptions of Sustainability in Heritage Studies* No. 2. Cham 2017.

6 Cf. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/404/bestpractice/> [6. 11. 2017].

treated controversially. The interpretation of history will always depend on the viewpoint of those reporting it. Heritage is more individual, and to share heritage depends on cultural connotations; in other words, in the end it is cultural activity that determines what can be shared and what cannot.

The debate concerning »shared heritage« has recently been given much attention in the wake of the reorganization of museums, especially of ethnological collections of different origins and provenances. Particularly European museums that keep objects from a colonial past suggest that their main responsibility is that of a depository. Instead of claiming to share the material heritage of its collections, seeking for shared responsibilities is what seems to become an appropriate solution. Not only the collections and curators, but also researchers and practitioners participate in the cultural material in question and consequently share responsibilities for it.⁷

Ownership becomes more complicated if we think of intangible heritage. On the one hand, this heritage is of the utmost importance for any conscientious practitioner, on the other, its intangible nature limits any notion of ownership, especially in a museum. Museums and archives materialize this heritage by collecting sound, image, and video materials, but they will never be able to hold onto and capture any cultural expression as such.

Since heritage is attached to someone or to a specific collective, and not primarily to material ownership, importance needs to be directed to the way in which objects are treated and presented. This is the main contribution institutions can make to ensure a living cultural heritage.

Regarding the material and intangible usages of culture, ownership develops new implications when ICH is used as a commodity within organized and public presentations of traditional performing arts. Festivals, events, and spectacles all over the world, which are attended live and can be seen on YouTube and other media, have increased both in number and in local importance. The visual and audible senses of traditional performing arts are gaining increased presence worldwide. Is cultural heritage benefiting from this development? For the moment, this question must remain without a precise conclusion.

⁷ For a more detailed discussion about the role of museums with regard to ICH, see UNESCO-ICOMOS Documentation Centre: Intangible Heritage, Paris, 2011. URL: <http://icomosdocumentationcentre.blogspot.de/> [13. 11. 2017].

A Collection of Musical Instruments: From Things to Beings

Whereas music is of intangible nature, musical instruments are not. Musical instruments are visible and tangible human products, through which music is performed and put into sound. Similar to the human voice that also produces music, the tangible nature of musical instruments enables musicians to learn and to improve their knowledge, their practical skills, and virtuosity. They might appear to be objects, but they are a very special kind of object, since the musical imagination can only be perceived through them.

Due to their materiality, musical instruments enable the development of physical action and abilities, yet at the same time musical instruments can be seen as the extension of the physical human body, completed by them, engendering a specific individuality that comes into expression through music.

The most extraordinary aspect is that musical instruments are more than artifacts of music alone; often, they are pieces of craftsmanship and even of fine arts in their own right. By representing true art objects, they fulfil human beings' deepest aesthetic needs, visually and audible, especially when words alone are not enough to communicate inner feelings and emotions.

By combining sound and aesthetic visual beauty, musical instruments achieve deep symbolic meanings. In many cases, these symbols have become so powerful that musical instruments even acquire the status of a national icon: the harp in Ireland and Myanmar, the horse-head fiddle in Mongolia, the pan flute in Bolivia and Peru, or the alphorn in Switzerland are just a few of innumerable examples. Ultimately, musical instruments gain their own, singular personality: they receive personal names, they give voice to spirits and to deities, and can even become, in the end, powerful beings themselves.

The SEAM Collection

There is no previous collection. This is a challenge for museology. In fact, SEAM is still a »museological lab«. Following the idea that a collection can also be perceived as a context, the wider Thai context has to provide the materials for a representative collection. There is no logic behind any collection, but the logic is generated together with the collection. There-



4 Part of the SEAM drum collection. Photo: Tiago de Oliveira Pinto

fore the objects will illustrate the process of musealization at SEAM. Different kinds of networks will contribute to the museum's fast growth. All those involved with SEAM, visitors, interested citizens, the people in the villages – all share the responsibility for the materials and for the intangible and symbolic contents of SEAM. Consequently, SEAM is a true example of a museum that is grounded in a »heritage community« since the network that makes it grow and that holds its collection together is of utmost importance (fig. 4).

Music from the Villages

Unlike material heritage, e.g. artifacts, historical buildings and immobile estates, ICH relies primarily on human action.

Practitioners alone are in a position to maintain their intangible heritage and to keep it alive. This is to say that music comes into being only through performance. Human action therefore has a privileged role in the concept of SEAM.

In a way, SEAM is regarded as an extension of »the music from the villages«. Living musical activities are to be found everywhere in Thailand, in very little venues like concert halls, theaters, etc. Moreover, instrument builders' workshops will always have a space at SEAM. »Extended museology« at SEAM means that anything can happen within its space. It has to be living and to make sense to people.

The Museum: A Space for Exhibitions, Performances, and Exchange

What is the social importance of a museum and how do we define a collection? »Objectives of the museum are to collect musical instrument[s], roles of music that relate to society, and sound of Thai, folk, and Southeast Asian musical instruments«. ⁸

As a museum with a very specific collection, SEAM is a place to experience the country's music history and that of the whole Southeast Asian region, with its facts, stories, and tales from the past, all of which contribute to knowledge in the present. As such, the museum will serve as a strong local basis for global exchanges in musical culture.

Sound productions are the sensitive experience that most directly drives us straight to a present time perception. Being aware of this, a Southeast Asia Musical Instruments Museum has to be a »living museum«. Choosing intangible heritage such as performance and music as its main object for display, the museum needs to ensure that its objects are not only displayed behind glass, but that the haptic and sonic appeal is as important as the visual exhibition of artifacts.

A University Museum

As a museum that belongs to a university, teaching and academic research are intended to play a significant role. The academic research at the museum is twofold: on the one hand, it is devoted to community based musical practices, where mastery of musical knowledge is at the core and where collaborative projects support local and international musical activities; on the other, documentation and research results serve as input for music education and for the safeguarding and revitalization of traditional and other musical life and music productions in the country and in the whole of the Southeast Asian region. In this case research will be oriented according to the UNESCO Convention of 2003, where »Safeguarding« means »measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage«. ⁹ Students of musicology and performers of Thai traditional music and dance will have

an excellent space for their study and research. Workshops and master-classes, including world music studies, or instrument making courses will be among the programs offered by the museum on a regular basis.

Investigating music in the context of and in collaborative interaction with communities necessitates a renewal of methodological approaches in musical research. How can the UNESCO's definitions of heritage, outlined in its »Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage«, be fully comprehended within applied academic research? How can this research be of benefit to those tasked with the recognition and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage? How can we define meaning in orally transmitted music history? Is heritage already represented by a particular section of a musical performance? What about the broader frame of intangible uses and functions: can music be separated from these in order to be analyzed? To whom does music analysis matter in the first place? And how does music interact with contemporary musical life? Is popular music determined by musical heritage or is it indebted, first and foremost, to global styles? Can performance belong to someone or be commoditized just like any material good? And how does commercial production influence musical output? These are some of the questions concerning the duties of SEAM in the near future.

An Open Museum: Sections and Departments

The Southeast Asia Musical Instruments Museum is a place for collecting the country's music history and that of the whole region, with its stories from the past that contribute to knowledge in the present. Through its programs and exhibits that encourage interaction, the overall concept is to make the museum »open«. The more its projects bring new insights and concepts, the more the museum develops as a whole.

Among its different sections and departments, the following might be included (in random order) to ensure a living, socially dynamic museum that is involved in research:

- A musical world map,
- A musical map of Southeast Asia,
- History of music research: establishment of the Thai Court Orchestra from 1900,
- A musical world tour: musical instruments of the world,
- Systematization of musical instruments: China, India, Southeast Asia, Europe,

⁸ URL: https://old.mahidol.ac.th/en/SE-AM_museum.htm [6. 11. 2017].

⁹ URL: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention#art2> [13. 11. 2017].

- The origins of music and musical instruments: birds, bone flutes, and lithophones,
- Musical instruments as representatives of ICH: Chinese chin, Azerbaijan tar, Indian sitar, Afghan rubab, Indonesian gongs, Birman harp, Italian violin, etc.,
- Permanent and special exhibitions,
- The instrument builders' atelier, where visitors can observe the process of making an instrument,
- Studying the world's musical instruments (courses, workshops),
- Gongs and bells: interaction and plays for youths and adults,
- Educational programs,
- Performance stages,
- Film screening spaces,
- The musical café,
- Meeting point / Community space (just to come, to meet, to see what is going on),
- Virtual museum,
- Sound lab,
- Digital archive,
- Online-platforms,
- Interface with the world (live connection to other musical instruments museums),
- Research and work-in-progress (having access to the backstage of the Museum),
- Documentation department (to film and document the programs, encounters, events, etc.),
- The SEAM Museum webradio.

Vision

SEAM will be a »living museum«, where social and historical settings are recalled in installations, performances, workshops, live presentations, educational programs, etc. in order to simulate past time periods and the cultural diversity of our time. Visitors will be provided with an experiential and sensorial interpretation of Southeast Asian culture and history. Its main objects of presentation, pieces of intangible heritage, are to be exhibited in connection with performances and music. Instruments will not only be displayed in a conventional way, but in such a way as to capture the auditive attention of its visitors, significantly augmenting the sensorial experience of musical artifacts, objects, and meanings.

Tiago de Oliveira Pinto is UNESCO Chair holder in Transcultural Music Studies and Director of the Department of Musicology at the University of Music FRANZ LISZT, Weimar, Germany.

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