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The Gallo-Roman Museum in Tongeren, Belgium, won the European Museum of the Year Award 2011

The European Museum Forum presented three awards and six commendations

Bremerhaven, Germany, May 21, 2011 – The European Museum Forum (EMF) has awarded the **Gallo-Roman Museum in Tongeren, Belgium**, with the prestigious **European Museum of the Year Award (EMYA) 2011** on the evening of Saturday, May 21, 2011. From May 18 to May 21, the EMF Annual Assembly and the Awards Ceremony was hosted by the German Emigration Center in Bremerhaven, Germany, which won EMYA in 2007.

EMF also honoured the **Museum of Broken Relationships in Zagreb, Croatia**, with the **Kenneth Hudson Award** and the **Watersnoodmuseum in Owerkerk, Netherlands**, with the **Silletto Prize**. **Special Commendations** went to the **British Music Experience in London, UK**, the **Douro Museum in Peso da Regua, Portugal**, the **Museum of the Artist and Story-Teller Stepan Pisakhov in Arkhangelsk, Russia**, the **Museo Memoria de Andalucia in Granada, Spain**, the **Schiller National Museum in Marbach, Germany**, and to **Tampere 1918 – Museum of Finnish Civil War in Tampere, Finland**.

The European Museum of the Year Award is the most prestigious museum award in Europe. It stands for innovation, public quality and professional excellence in museums and brings together both professional reputation and public benefit under one umbrella.

Forty museums applied for the European Museum of the Year Award 2011, which has been run by the EMF since 1977. Over the decades, the European Museum Forum has developed significantly: It operates under the auspices of the Council of Europe and museums from all 47 member states can apply for the EMYA competition.

Of the forty museums, which applied for EMYA 2011, 34 were nominated by the EMYA Judging Panel for consideration. Museums were primarily assessed on their public quality, defined by EMF's founder Kenneth Hudson as "the extent to which a museum satisfies the needs and wishes of its visitors." The EMYA Judging Panel travelled throughout the continent to visit all 40 candidates – from Arkhangelsk in Russia to Belfast in Northern Ireland, and from Tampere in Finland to Coimbra in Portugal. After a rigorous three day meeting in Istanbul, Turkey, European Capital of Culture 2010, in November last year, the Judging Panel selected Europe's best museums. These have now been honoured at a prestigious ceremony organized by the EMF and the German Emigration Center in Bremerhaven:

- The **Gallo-Roman Museum (Gallo-Romeins Museum) in Tongeren, Belgium**, has been awarded the **European Museum of the Year Award 2011**. According to the EMYA Judging Panel, the museum "does not shy away from the task of dealing with the uncertainty, and the presentations guide the audience through the issues but do not assert firm conclusions. The exhibitions are authoritative but not authoritarian. They provoke thought and provide the visitor with the information needed to take a view." Regarding the social aspect, the Judging Panel concludes: "The museum is socially engaged not just with issues of heritage but also with its role in the local economy and in its commitment to education for which it has provided excellent facilities and for which it works with a large number of teachers who are employed by the museum. The integration with the town of Tongeren is strong – the museum is a meeting place available to all citizens' groups." (www.galloromeinsmuseum.be)

- When a relationship ends, your first instinct might be to get rid of any evidence of your former love. But a museum in Croatia encourages people to keep hold of those mementoes – and puts them on display. The **Museum of Broken Relationships (Muzej Prekinutih Veza) in Zagreb, Croatia**, is a worthy winner of the **Kenneth Hudson Award** who rated the importance of public quality and innovation as fundamental elements of a successful museum. "The Museum of Broken Relationships encourages discussion and reflection not only on the fragility of human relationships but also on the political, social and cultural circumstances surrounding the stories being told. The museum respects the audience's capacity for understanding wider historical, social issues inherent to different cultures and identities and provides a catharsis for donors on a more personal level," the Judging Panel said. The Kenneth Hudson Award, given in honour of the founder of EMYA, goes to a museum, person, project or a group of people who have demonstrated the most unusual, daring and, perhaps, controversial achievement that challenges common perceptions of the role of museums in society and carries forward the spirit of Kenneth Hudson.
- This year is the first time that the European Museum Forum awarded the **Silletto Prize**. The award is presented by The Silletto Trust which was founded in memory of Reginald Silletto, Chair of the Friends of Manx National Heritage for more than 20 years. The objective of the Silletto Award is to encourage and reward good practice and innovation in developing the best voluntary and community involvement of museums in Europe. The **Watersnoodmuseum (Flood Museum) in Owerkerk, Netherlands**, was created by voluntary community effort. According to the Judges, "it took imagination and courage to convert the site where a natural tragedy occurred, into a museum. The Watersnood Museum now stands as a memorial and a place of remembrance where memories, photographs and possessions of the community are preserved and made accessible." The museum is largely run by volunteers with only four full time staff. The EMYA Judges described it as a community effort driven by vision, enthusiasm and commitment. "This museum is now a national monument and its capacity to leverage support from the local community is commendable."
- The **British Music Experience in London, UK**, was honoured with a **Special Commendation** for its excellence and creativity in its communication strategies with the general public. The EMYA Judges felt that "the museum will influence the development of similar museum projects in other countries. By using cutting edge digital technology, the museum has developed creative ways for engaging with its audiences, especially with teenagers and young people, a traditionally hard to reach audience for museums."
- "For the wide range of programmes aimed at raising awareness and pride for the regional cultural identity," the **Douro Museum in Peso da Regua, Portugal**, too was honoured with a **Special Commendation**. The public quality of this museum has been recognised by the Judges as exceptional. "The museum promotes not only the heritage of the region and the history of port wine but also highlights the social history of community life."
- A **Special Commendation** also went to the **Museum of the Artist and Story-Teller Stepan Pisakhov (Музей художника и сказочника Степана Писахова) in Arkhangelsk, Russia**, "for its passionate commitment to social cohesion and positively engaging the young people of Arkhangelsk. The work of this museum is fundamental to supporting and developing the well-being of its community." The EMYA Judges recognised the dedication of the museum staff who unmistakably demonstrated the important role European museums can play to positively engage with their audiences.
- The Memory of Andalusia Museum (**Musea Memoria de Andalucía) in Granada, Spain**, received a **Special Commendation** "for its extensive education programmes and its imaginative outreach work with marginalised communities." The programmes are highly-praised and well-supported throughout Andalusia and the EMYA judges felt that the museum can be seen as a benchmark of best practice in learning provision to education providers and communities.

- The courageous approach of the **Schiller National Museum (Schiller-Nationalmuseum) in Marbach, Germany**, to engage large and broad audiences by consciously choosing to be an object-orientated museum was honoured with a **Special Commendation** too. The EMYA Judges were impressed by the poetic and aesthetic quality of the museum, addressing interesting and sometimes difficult topics. "The museum as an institute of German literature has succeeded exceptionally well in being attractive and exciting and exudes a real passion of literature," they said.
- **Tampere 1918 – Museum of Finnish Civil War in Tampere, Finland**, received a **Special Commendation** for developing an unprecedented courageous project going to the heart of a controversial historic issue that has been a matter of discord in the Finnish society for nearly a century. The EMYA Judges noted: "The museum in Tampere has succeeded to handle the memory of a difficult past with utmost tact and respect resulting in reconciliation in the city community and wider society."

At the Awards Ceremony in Bremerhaven, Dr. Alberto Fernando da Silva Santos, Presidente, Câmara Municipal de Penafiel, Portugal, invited the EMF Assembly to join in the celebrations next year.

For further information:

**EMYA Award 2011 Ceremony at the
German Emigration Center Bremerhaven:**
www.dah-bremerhaven.de

**European Museum Forum and
EMYA in general:**
www.europeanmuseumforum.org

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