**Panel for EUROSEAS conference in Amsterdam, July 22-26 2024**

**SE Asia Museums: Exploring Stories**

Convenor: Monica Janowski, Curator, SE Asia Museum, University of Hull, UK

Email: M.Janowski@hull.ac.uk

A story is defined by dictionary.com as ‘a narrative, either true or fictitious, in prose or verse, designed to interest, amuse, or instruct the hearer or reader’. Stories are arguably central to effective communication, both generally and more specifically in the context of museums. Museums can be approached as places that focus not so much on objects but, as Salvador Salort-Pons, Director of the Detroit Museum of Art, recently pointed out in a newspaper article, as spaces for empathy and as a ‘bonding mechanism for our society’, and stories are a central means of achieving this. We can see ourselves in stories told by other people. In a museum there is the potential for a visual and aesthetic dimension to stories, through the objects that the museum holds. Stories told in the context of a museum, by and about people another part of the world, such as SE Asia, are a means of creating a bond between visitors and those people, creating a space that not only brings out experiences and feelings from other places but emphasising the fact that many, perhaps most, of these are common to all humans. This is expressed in the way that the Museum of Broken Relationships in Zabreg describes itself as ‘a museum about you, about us’. Stories generate empathy; they can even bring about change in wider society.

I invite contributions to the panel that explore the use of stories and story-telling within museums, both in SE Asia itself and in European museums with SE Asia collections. This includes the use of stories in museum displays and the creation of stories as part of museum displays and exhibitions, that link visitors to the museum with people in SE Asia. I would also welcome contributions discussing stories that link museum collections and individual museum objects in particular European countries with nations, places, individuals and museums in SE Asia, which may or may not have been used in displays.