Children in Museums Award

Press Release

House of Stories, Paris, France, winner of the 2026 Children in Museums Award

On Friday 25 September 2026, in a ceremony during the European Museum Academy meeting in Alicante, Spain, the results of the 2026 Children in Museums Award were announced. Fifteen museums took part in the competition from eleven countries, with five museums listed as finalists. This is the fifteenth year the Award has been presented.

From the left: Jörg Ehtreiber, President of Hands On!; Annemies Broekgaarden, CMA-Director; Anita Elefsen Chair of CMA-Jury; Karen Katz from House of Stories, Paris, Winner of CMA 2026; Deana White, from La Nube, El Paso, Winner of CMA 2025

Credit: David Revenga

hands on! int. Association of Children in museums

EMA European Museum Academy

Thanks to:

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The winner receives a cash prize of 7,500 Euros and will hold for one year a a bronze statue of Miffy, the world-famous children's character created by Dick Bruna. The sculptor is Marc Bruna, Dick Bruna's younger son.

Background of the Award

The Children's Museum Award was established in 2011 by the European Museum Academy and Hands On! International Association of Children in Museums to enhance the recognition of excellence in the specific sector of international children's museums. In 2014 the name of the Award was changed to the Children in Museums Award, to reflect the wider range of provision for children in today's museums. Applications are welcomed from children's museums and from education, children departments in museums and science centres, both long-established and recently opened.

Summary from the Judges' Report

The Winner

House of Stories, Paris, France. This outstanding project shows how a private, independent cultural institution for early childhood can achieve excellence without public funding. It offers an international model for initiatives of this kind, combining publishing expertise, artistic co-creation and museum practice in a self-sustaining literary ecosystem for young children. Its screen-free environment strengthens the connection between parent, child and physical book, laying the foundation for a lifelong love of reading at a time when reading for pleasure, especially among young people, is in decline.

Special Commendation

ALICE – Museum for Children, Berlin, Germany. The museum demonstrates a strong and consistent commitment to respecting children as capable thinkers, contributors and active citizens. Particularly commendable is its willingness to address complex and socially relevant issues in ways that are accessible, engaging and hopeful for young audiences. *Green Planet Berlin* offers a compelling model of how museums can address complex issues while supporting children to develop knowledge, critical thinking, empathy and a meaningful sense of agency.

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Finalists

Technopolis, Mechelen, Belgium. The project is exemplary in its combination of play, education, and the long-term cultivation of curiosity through embodied learning and emotionally engaging approaches to interpretation. It demonstrates a forward-looking understanding of how meaningful learning experiences can be created by connecting knowledge in a beautiful and engaging space with physical experiences, emotions, and active participation for the youngest children.

Cricoteka, Kraków, Poland. This institution demonstrates a willingness to actively push its boundaries. In a region and country where museums are largely traditional and conservative, this is of significant and inspiring value. Cricoteka does not know where *Wild Frolics* will ultimately lead, but its success, both internally and externally, is opening new doors. Existing objects are given new narratives and contemporary relevance, yet still in keeping with the vision of its avant-garde founder.

POLIN – Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Warsaw, Poland. POLIN should be recognised as a highly significant example of crisis-responsive and socially engaged museum leadership. Its ability to combine a major historical institution and collection with inclusive educational practice, multilingual community engagement, participatory approaches and sustained support for displaced communities offers valuable inspiration for museums internationally. Particularly noteworthy is its willingness to adapt the institution itself – not merely its programmes – in response to changing social needs.

Previous Winners of the Award

2012 Tropenmuseum Junior, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
2013 Please Touch Museum, Philadelphia, USA
2014 National Gallery of Denmark (SMK), Copenhagen, Denmark
2015 Lifetime Achievement Awards: Boston Children's Museum, USA and ZOOM Children's Museum, Vienna, Austria
2016 GeoFort, Herwijnen, The Netherlands
2017 National Museum of Science and Technology, Stockholm, Sweden
2018 The Keppel Centre for Art Education, National Gallery Singapore
2019 Ker ImagiNation, Dakar, Senegal
2020-2021 The Dutch Open Air Museum, Arnhem, The Netherlands
2022 Creaviva Children's Museum, Bern, Switzerland and Leeds Museums and Galleries, United Kingdom
2023 Tokyo Toy Museum, Japan
2024 The Museum of Solutions (MuSo), Mumbai, India
2025 La Nube STEAM Discovery Center, El Paso, USA
2026 House of Stories, Paris, France

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The European Museum Academy (EMA)
EMA is a non-profit Foundation established to reflect museums at the international level, to promote research on museography and museology as a high cultural activity, to provide constructive criticism and promote discussion on new exhibitions and museums, and to disseminate museological knowledge and ideas among members of the profession. It aims to promote the conception and development of new as well as of traditional museums as tools of social change. EMA co-operates with Hands On! International Association of Children in Museums for this Award. European Museum Academy members of the Jury of the Award are also members of EMA's Pool of Experts. www.europeanmuseumacademy.eu

Hands On! International Association of Children in Museums
Hands On! International Association of Children in Museums is an international professional organisation representing and advocating for its non-profit member institutions. It actively stimulates the creation and development of children's museums (including science centres, large collections based institutions serving young visitors) and more space for cultural and educational activities for children and young people. Hands On! supports the important role of children's museums as centres where play inspires creativity, informal and lifelong learning.
www.hands-on-international.net

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