

## Remembrances of Things Lost

### Triggering the memory of the historic house through loss (and regain)

22-27 October 2023, Belgrade, Serbia

Partners and Sponsors: ICOM-Serbia, DEMHIST, Ministry of Culture of The Republic of Serbia

For more information, please go to the conference website: [www.belgrademhist.com](http://www.belgrademhist.com)

#### Main theme

*"Immediately the old grey house upon the street rose up like a stage set... the house, the town, the square where I was sent before lunch, the streets along which I used to run errands, the country roads we took... in that moment... the whole of Combray and of its surroundings... sprang into being, town and gardens alike, all from my cup of tea."*

— Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, 1913

*"There is no easy story in legacy. What is remembered and what is forgotten?"*

— Edmund de Waal, *The Hare With Amber Eyes: A Family's Century of Art and Loss*, 2010

*"The need to remember often competes with the equally strong pressure to forget."*

— International Coalition of Sites of Conscience

The focus of this conference is the involvement of the private (family-held) or state (public) sector house museum in restoring and safeguarding the memory that has been lost for a variety of reasons including war, state confiscation, colonialist actions, and more. We, as museum professionals, have a moral obligation to thoroughly examine and update the narratives. Many examples of these houses can be found in Serbia, some of which will be seen at the conference in Belgrade. All of these houses hold a distinctive layer of the complex story of historic dwellings as a result of the effects of the Second World War in this region of the world. The main focus of this conference is on how managing difficult heritage and having challenges with heritage protection (risk management due to natural or human-made disasters) can lead to the same concerns of lost memory. These issues need to be addressed not only in the context of European mid-20th century history, but also across the globe, in

communities ravaged by colonialist actions such as the Maori of New Zealand, through the Sepik River communities of Papua New Guinea, indigenous communities in South and Central America, sub-Saharan Africa and First Nations of the Americas. When it comes to keeping the fire of remembrance alive and relevant in the present, what is distinctive to individual historic and traditional homes around the world but also a common factor? What tools are available to maintain the flame of memory? How can historic house museums preserve the history that's still embued in a house's walls yet physically lost? Is the physical non-existence of the memory-holder i.e. the object, so important that it can not be replaced by a simple narrative or a copy? Can the implementation of memory-triggering techniques help us all, wherever in the globe, keep stories alive even after leaving a historic house? What do we choose to remember and what do we decide to forget? One can wonder whether the memory chosen is still relevant to the audience or addresses societal issues. The message of the forgotten, however, may be more crucial for careful examination and may contribute to a community's healing. This leads to the question of how do you curate the forgotten?

## **CALL FOR PAPERS:**

The conference includes paper sessions with presentations chosen from submissions made in response to this invitation, in addition to keynote speeches, expert sessions, and off-site visits. Also, we are accepting ideas for posters that explore instances of the conference themes that are visually appealing. The conference theme is open for submission as papers and posters. We encourage submissions that focus on the three following sub-themes within this larger theme.

### **Theme 1: Remembrances lost and regained**

Curators, owners and managers of historic houses, are dealing with the absence of the object or lost memory. When dealing with the protection of historic houses worldwide we are actually using Proust's methodology of triggering the individual and collective memory through objects. In what way does the use of this methodology help during the process of reinventing the historic house narrative?

- How can we curate the object's memory when the object is missing or is permanently lost? The power behind loss and thus unknown today, making it known and visible, serves as a teaching tool for younger audiences.
- In search of the (forgotten) triggers of memory.
- How to curate the lost memory or to present a story of lost objects? Discussing the ethics behind the use of replicas or similar period pieces. If we are to use the substitute how is the paradox of authenticity dealt with? Do we lose the potential of telling the story about why something is lost in the first place? What memory loss are we choosing to share? Can we share both narratives and if so, how?

## **Theme 2: Historic houses as triggers for community engagement**

How to keep a historic house's preserved memory current, resolve the disconnect, and connect the interpretation for ever-evolving audiences are the key challenges when curating a historic house. How can public house museum curators and public family owners continue to be relevant while offering the easy accessibility to their historic houses as a tool (such as during the postwar recovery process)?

- Collaboration with the local community towards securing the narrative of the shared but lost memory of the historic house.
- Ways of telling a story to evoke the search for the personal (lost) memory upon exiting the historic house.
- Questioning the current curated memory.
- Curating the difficult, forgotten, and abandoned memory.

## **Theme 3: Changing values**

Following the newly adopted ICOM museum definition what can change when we are speaking about a historic house? Concepts of inclusivity, community participation, and sustainability are for the first time being recognised worldwide in defining the museum field and the individual museum. How can they be incorporated into historic houses? How can we use the power of the digital and the power of the community (whether digital community or the community in the environs of the historic house) to secure a new layer of remembrance? Changing values due to a shift in public history narratives can unlock the full interpretative potential of historic houses.

- How can the contemporary visitor benefit from the potential change of the historic house's current interpretation?
- How can the historic house help provide up-to-date answers to community problems?
- The potential of going digital. Museums and individuals are embracing the digital environment, but while the Open Access policy has been implemented by museums all over the world, what are we actually doing with all that digitised memory out there?
- Potential of curating the memory in the digital realm beyond the digitised collection of the historic house.
- Digital remembrance - shared memory as a means of securing the individual loss of memory.

**PAPER SUBMISSION DEADLINE:** April 15, 2023, midnight (Paris time, GMT +1).

## **KEY DATES**

- March 28, 2023: Webinar on conference theme
- April 15, 2023: Paper Submission deadline, midnight (Paris time, GMT +1)
- May 15, 2023: Acceptance notification

- May, 2023 (exact date tbd): Submission deadline for the Jeanne Watson Bursary and ICOM Young Professional travel grant.
- May 15, 2023: Early Bird bookings open
- June 15, 2023: Early Bird booking ends
- July 15, 2023: Ordinary booking rate
- September 30, 2023: Booking closes
- 23-27 October 2023: Conference

## PRESENTATION FORMATS

DEM HIST welcomes paper presentations and posters.

### A proposal should include the following:

- \* A **description** (400 words) for the reviewers with information about the topic and why the paper is important to be included in the programme.
- \* An **abstract** (150 words) that will appear in the conference programme and online if your presentation is accepted.
- \* A short **bio** (100 words) for each speaker.

### Papers will be selected according to the following criteria:

- \* Papers which address the conference themes.
- \* Papers which are deliverable in the format and time allotted.

### Please note:

- \* There is a possibility to accommodate a limited number of live-streamed or recorded video presentations by speakers who may be unable or choose not to travel. However, to encourage full participation in the conference, preference will be given to in-person presentations.
- \* All proposals must be sent in English. However, there is a possibility to accommodate presentations in other languages, for example in the form of pre-recorded video with English subtitles, should this be clearly requested by prospective speakers in their proposals.
- \* **Proposers whose papers are selected for the conference program are expected to attend the entire conference, whether virtual or in person, so as to participate in and contribute to the full range of conversations that result from other presentations.**
- \* The programme committee's decision is final.

### How to apply

Please fill in an online form in the tab "Registration" at [www.belgrademhist.com](http://www.belgrademhist.com)

### Registration

The conference will take place both in situ and in hybrid form to accommodate everyone. There will be no separate registration fee for in-person and virtual participation. Please note: It's compulsory for all speakers to register for the conference. We are unable to offer any financial compensation and/or waive the registration fee. However, speakers may apply for one of the limited number of travel grants available (Jeanne Watson Bursary or ICOM Young Professional Travel Grant).