

CALL FOR PAPERS

MUSEUMS AND DIFFICULT HERITAGE

ICMAH Annual Conference 2011 – IAMH 10th International Conference

ORGANIZERS

Helsinki City Museum
ICMAH, ICOM's International Committee for Museums and
Collections of Archaeology and History
IAMH, International Association Museums of History

PLACE

Helsinki, Finland

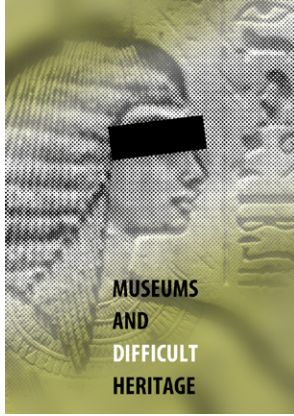
DATES

16 - 18 June 2011

BACKGROUND

The definition of difficult heritage introduced by *Sharon Macdonald* (ICMAH Annual Conference 2007) may be used as a starting point for the conference: "The difficult heritage is concerned with histories and pasts that do not easily fit with self-identities of the groups of whose pasts or histories they are part. Instead of affirming positive self-images, they potentially disrupt them or may threaten to open up social differences and conflicts. Difficult heritage deals in unsettling histories rather than the kinds of heroic or progressive histories with which museums and heritage sites have more traditionally been associated."

The subject of difficult heritage is relevant not only to museums focusing on the recent past, but also to all archaeological and historical museums, which may present problematic and controversial subjects. ICMAH and IAMH challenge museum professionals and researchers to consider the role, possibilities and limitations of museums in presenting difficult heritage.



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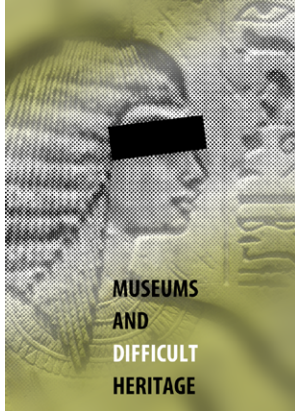
TOPICS

What kind of subjects have archaeological and historical museums tackled in striving to bring difficult heritage to the fore? What are the social, political, cultural or historical themes to which museums can contribute in terms of topical discussion? Should museums be more active in bringing up controversial themes?

How will these challenges be reflected in practical museum work? In the end, how much does handling difficult subjects change the museum professional's role as a conservator of cultural heritage? Can a museum use an exhibition to take a stand or should it retain an objective attitude and distance itself from the subject? How can museum professionals deal with difficult heritage without looking at the past in a tendency-oriented manner or from too narrow a perspective?

Have the position and significance of museum objects been changed by the addressing of difficult subjects? How should museum professionals regard the fact that artefacts in exhibitions are decreasing in number and are being replaced by other forms of presentation? Will archaeological and historical museums eventually end up like science museums, which turned into science centres once interactive equipment became more common?

How do museum visitors feel about exhibitions on such subjects? To what extent and in what ways should the number of visitors and the feedback received from visitor surveys influence the exhibition and collection policies of archaeological and historical museums? In other words, should museums offer the public only what it expects?



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PARTICIPATION

Helsinki City Museum, ICMAH and IAMH invite all museum professionals and researchers to submit proposals for presentations and to participate in three days of professional exchange and discussion. Presentations are limited to 20 minutes.

The length of abstracts should not exceed 250 words. Also, include a short CV with the contact address and the professional details (name, position, address, telephone and fax numbers, e-mail).

Please, submit the abstract of your presentation in English by **22 April 2011** to: jari.harju@hel.fi

LANGUAGE

The plenary and case study sessions will be held in English.

CONTACT

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