

Annual Conference 2020

Difficult Pasts, Complicated Presents, and Ambiguous Futures: Contested Histories in Archaeological and Historical Museums

21-23 October, Bogota, Colombia

Presentation of the Theme

We are living in a time of change when past certainties are being challenged and aspects of the *status quo* are being exposed and denounced because they enhance political, social and economic exclusion. Also, the environmental crisis has promoted the questioning of the already weakened narratives of progress. Formerly silenced or marginalized groups such as the economically disenfranchised, workers' rights campaigners, climate activists, women, and LGBTQ equality supporters, for just naming some of the politically active actors emanating from the civil society, are now making their voices heard. The general discontent with the current political and economic system has also led to the emergence of nationalistic rhetoric, which in turn has amounted to the establishment of far-right populist regimes. These are difficult times, but also quite challenging.

Museums, as institutional actors imbedded in their specific social contexts, can't evade the conflicts that surround them. Archaeological and historical museums respond as much as any other type of museums, if not more so, to their societal environment. Also, these museums have the specificity of an avowedly diachronic perspective: current issues acquire deeper meanings when linked with the historical processes. In the last few years, ICOM and its members have reflected upon these difficult issues. In 2017 the subject for the international museum day was *Contested histories: Saying the unspeakable in museums*, and this year it is going to be *Museums for equality: Diversity and Inclusion*. This year's ICMAH's annual conference intends to contribute with that broad examination of our institutional and professional practices. In Bogotá, we intend to examine some of the "difficult issues" that affect how societies and their histories are represented in museums, and how museums interact with their surroundings. *Difficult Pasts, Complicated Presents, and Ambiguous Futures* and their interpretation and display in museums is certainly a broad subject, that's why we intend to proceed by proposing the following questions: How could museums succeed in decolonizing themselves and their collections? How can societies' marginalized groups be given a voice in museums, in a way that benefits them? How and why do museums represent violence and trauma in their displays? And, finally, how can museums be active agents in their societies?

Themes

1st Theme: Decolonizing the museum

Within the museological context, decolonization refers to the resistance of the reproduction of colonial taxonomies and the vindication of radical multiplicity. According to the decolonial thinking, museums will not be able to decolonize their practices if they stick to the old taxonomies and values of history that was erected during the past centuries. In the era of globalization, museums are trapped in a paradox between the need to make their functions and policies evolve towards the geopolitical revisionism that is informed by the postcolonial perspectives; and, the risk of imposing a new expression of the Western model and preserving the colonial cultural domination. How could museums revisit their policies without the dominations of colonial culture?

2nd Theme: Can the subaltern speak? Politics of identity and representation within the historical and archaeological museums

Modern societies are characterized by outrageous inequality, dynamic that expresses itself not only in socioeconomic terms but also in the dimensions of ideology and representation. Difficult ethical and methodological questions emerge for museums around this subject: What groups are represented in their exhibits? what's the role of the curatorial team in the interlocution with these populations? Is it possible to co-create exhibitions in which the traditionally silenced groups have an actual saying? would this benefit them or just the museum?

3rd Theme: The Elaboration of Trauma: the representation of violent pasts and presents in the museums.

Most if not all countries deal with traumatic pasts or presents – wars, dictatorships, genocide, oppression, etc.—. That's why the way in which some historic processes are represented in historical and archaeological museums acquires greater importance. In these instances, the requirements of history and the specificities of the socially constructed and personal memories interact. Museums might be the place for nationalistic narratives that erase conflict or the sites for debate and the construction of pluralistic discourses that intend to overcome the trauma without denying it.

4th Theme: Freedom to museums: being indispensable agents within societies

One of the most discussed subjects within the museum milieu is the place of this indispensable cultural institution in the changing societies. The communication media, workshops, educational activities, exhibitions, scientific contributions and the politics that determines the “utility” of museums will be presented in relation with the main topic and by case studies. The way of presentations, the museography, potential target groups and

relation with other institutions for serving the society with the knowledge taken from archaeology and from history will be experiences to share.

Participation Information

- The language of the conference is **ENGLISH**.
- The participation to the ICMAH's annual conference is free of charge. The travel and accommodation expenses of participants could not be taken in charge by ICMAH.
- All presentations will take place in the online publication which will be published on ICMAH's official web site.
- **For further information** and details about the conference please visit our web site <http://icmah.mini.icom.museum/>, you may also follow our news in fb.me/ICOMICMAH, or contact icmahsecretary@gmail.com.

Paper Proposal and Acceptance

The timetable of proposal sending and registration is:

- **31st March, 2020** – Deadline for paper proposals.
- **20th April, 2020** – Notice of Acceptance.

Paper Proposition Form

Personal Information

Name:

Surname:

Country:

Organization:

E-mail:

Phone number:

Address:

Session:

Abstract: 200 word max.

Please submit the document to icmahsecretary@gmail.com before 31st of March 2020