

Preface

The Artifact, its Context and their Narrative: Multidisciplinary Conservation in Historic House Museums, a collaborative endeavour in 2012, looked at the comprehensive approach to conservation within the context of historic houses. It followed two successful ICOM-CC joint interim meetings: the ***Upholstery+*** Conference - the 2007 Joint Interim Meeting in Krakow, Poland, which focused on a single object within a collection, and the ***Multidisciplinary Conservation: A Holistic View for Historic Interiors*** Conference - the 2010 Joint Interim Meeting in Rome that was devoted to the holistic approach to multidisciplinary conservation within historic interiors. The 2012 Symposium continued on this theme and expanded to include issues related to public, presentation and management. It was hosted by The Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles, USA.

The symposium was organized by two international committees of ICOM: ICOM-DEMIST, the International Committee for Historic House Museums, and ICOM-Committee for Conservation with three working groups: (1) *Sculpture, Polychromy, and Architectural Decoration*, (2) *Textiles* and (3) *Wood, Furniture, and Lacquer*. They came together to promote the concept of multidisciplinary conservation within Historic House Museums.

The theme of the symposium focused on managing degradation processes within historic house museums related to balancing public access with standards of practice in conservation. Historic buildings and their interiors consist of multiple facets and materials often altering dramatically throughout their life spans due to change imposed by society, their environment and use. The proper care for historic interiors and their edifices draws from many conservation specializations as well as from many other fields. The artifacts in a Historic House Museum are matters of conservation as well. Therefore it is essential to look at each project in a holistic manner using a multidisciplinary collaborative approach involving all stakeholders. The visual history of a Historic House Museum depends on its state of conservation, and a conservation project tells a story as well.

The selected papers for the conference focused on key issues relevant to the topic: conservation policy, methodology, protocol, diagnosis, scientific analysis, education, preventive measures, historical and aesthetical aspects as well as practical treatments including conservation, preservation, restoration, reconstruction, sustainable management and presentation. Many speakers addressed the themes and challenges of sustainability – which houses can be maintained, which not – and of originality. The way in which the speakers emphasized how the interpretation of the narrative of each museum related to its context can be called out as “spirit of place,” “keeping it real” and “synergy”. Those phrases are as good a summary as can be made for a conference with such a wide reach.

The number of participants was limited to 120 and the program had been organized with alternating days of lectures and touring. This gave participants time to meet one another and discuss the lectures, the sites visited, and one another's work.

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Thanks to this collaboration and to the speakers, ***The Artifact, its Context and their Narrative: Multidisciplinary Conservation in Historic House Museums*** Conference was indeed a great success.

We are sure that this on line publication of the papers will be very useful to many professionals, students, people interested in the subject and all those who were not able to participate in the Los Angeles event.

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