

CALL FOR PAPERS

Workshop (110): Certain Museums of Uncertain Pasts

Hosted by the European Association of Social Anthropologists Conference 2012
Nanterre University, France, 10/07/2012 – 13/07/2012

Deadline: 28 November 2011

Convenors

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Short Abstract

This workshop aims to open up the debate regarding the way museums and their collections relate to the controversies and uncertainties of their past and of that of the societies to which they belong. How can sheer disquiet of the past ever be displayed?

Long Abstract

Museums always seem to provide their visitors with definite and confident narratives about the past, thus making strong claims towards ordering the present and the future. However, the past life of objects, collections and of museums themselves is full of uncertainties, contradictions and unrest. Although much debated by scholars, these issues rarely make their way into exhibitions and displays.

On the other hand, war, revolution or social unrest impact directly on the life of museums. Their buildings are destroyed, looted or occupied temporarily, their collections affected. Such events usually provide opportunities for new representations of the past. Examples range from classical ethnographic exhibitions to the memorial museums of anti-communism in Eastern Europe, or the newly opened impressive spectacle buildings of museums in the field of art.

This panel invites papers that engage with the way such institutions reflect or come to terms with the traumatic events and contested moments in their past and that of the societies they claim to represent. How do they effectively deal with the inherent uncertainty and continuous social unrest? Can uncertainty be socially accepted and exhibited? Papers are welcome across the whole range of museums from anthropological or historical institutions to military or scientific ones. We also encourage discussions on other forms of visual representations (e.g. performances, photography exhibitions, installations, and events). Presenters could also focus on the life of particular objects or collections that leave or enter museums in times of historical rupture or engage with the social practices affecting their collections.

How to apply

Proposals should consist of a paper title, a (very) short abstract of <300 characters, and an abstract of 250 words. Proposals can only be submitted ONLINE.

Submit your proposals directly on:

<http://www.nomadit.co.uk/easa/easa2012/panels.php5?PanelID=1184>

or from the workshop page, by following the **Propose a paper** link

<http://www.nomadit.co.uk/easa/easa2012/paperproposal.php5?PanelID=1184>

PLEASE NOTE:

To propose a paper, you do not need to be a member of EASA. However, if your paper is accepted, you will need to become a member. Please do not apply for membership until your paper has been accepted. You can apply afterwards, via the [ONLINE APPLICATION FORM](#).