

Historic Houses and the Interpretation of the Cultural, Social and Urban Landscape

Call for papers

International Committee for Historic House Museums– DEMHIST

MiCo Milano Congressi,

Milano/Italy, 3-9 July 2016

At its meeting in 2004 entitled "Camera con vista" (Room with a view) DEMHIST discussed the relationship between a museum and what lies outside of it, especially the garden and the agricultural or natural landscape. But the term "landscape" includes not only nature: it is also the result of the interaction of many factors, both human and social.

For ICOM Milano 2016 we would like to focus on the potential of historic house museums to describe "human" rather than natural landscapes. Historic houses can illustrate cultural and economic change, showing how developments in society contributed to creating and modelling the actual environment, as we perceive it.

Places where people lived and worked reveal stories composed of spaces, objects, gestures, and the accumulation of knowledge or wisdom. On the one hand they are a special instrument for showing how roles, etiquette and events interacted in the life of a house or a rural estate, and on the other, how these behaviours and relationships changed over the years.

Daily family life was not the only activity within the house; working life also played a role. How much history can we "read" in a studio or in an atelier, where an artist or a writer spent important parts of his or her life and built his or her own career? To take a broader view, the historic, social, urban and cultural landscape of a city can be narrated through the eyes of those who lived, worked, built collections and left behind their traces – filtered by time, political environments, different characters, etc. – as testaments to a specific historic identity, often proudly local.

The 14th DEMHIST Annual Conference will be held in Milan, a city that has been a major center for the booming development of Italian industry. Milan provides an excellent environment for the study of historic houses as a means of reading urban change, of exploring modernity together with the sense of the past in reference not only to natural landscapes but also to constant change in the world of the professions, industry, and commerce, and to the transformation of the social, economic, and urban landscape.

This call for papers asks for innovative proposals on the central role that historic house museums play as witnesses to the evolution of social, cultural and economic development outside the museum; to urban and rural environmental changes; and to the stratification of human migration, experiences, and customs expressed by different generations and cultures. Proposals that are especially innovative in terms of their ideas, methods, or media used to put individuals or family histories in this broader perspective will be especially welcome.

The Siena Charter on Museums and Cultural Landscapes proposed by ICOM Italy at the ICOM meeting in Siena in 2014 provides a helpful guide to possible paper topics (specifically in Paragraphs 5 through 10), as well as information regarding the criteria that will be used for their assessment. The text of the Siena Charter is available at the following link:
<http://bit.ly/1Ob7eLL>

The deadline for submission is December 31, 2015

Please send an abstract of your presentation, including the following:

1. An abstract of no more than 300 words, outlining the purpose, methodology, findings and conclusions
2. Title
3. Author (s) name (s) and contact info
4. Biography of no more than 150 words
5. Two jpg or tiff images, each under 2 MB

Send your submission by e-mail to: icommilano2016@gmail.com