

Houses as museums/museums as houses



(Back State Room, Wallace Collection, London)

The relationship between museums and domestic spaces is a long and complex one. Museums were born in the houses of collectors, while the reconstruction of the house or domestic room – of ‘home’, effectively – continues to be an influential if controversial model for museum display. On the other hand, museums have at times invested heavily in the idea of their spaces as public, scientific and definitely non-domestic. The line between house and museum is therefore also one between public and private, scientific and domestic; and house-museums/museum-houses have acted both to confirm, to alter, and to undermine this line completely.

The 2014 MGHG conference seeks to understand the historical development of this relationship by investigating the ways in which museums have acted as houses, and houses have acted as museums. It will also explore the ways in which house-museums/museum-houses have been positioned in boundary zones of space and time, and what effect they have had on those boundaries.

The conference will take place at the Wallace Collection, London, on Friday 12 - Saturday 13 September 2014, itself an illustration of the ways in which houses may become museums, or are (re)designed as museums by their owner, as Hertford House was by Sir Richard Wallace.

We also encourage papers on aspects as diverse as the growth of the celebrity house museum, cabinets of curiosity, curatorial practices of the homeowner in contrast to those of the professional curator, and the development of open air museums and their approach to house reconstruction. Our focus is on the historical development of these themes, but papers which consider the interaction of historical and contemporary practice will also be considered. We encourage papers from museum professionals, researchers, and students from multiple disciplines.

Keynote speakers confirmed so far: Helen Rees Leahy, Professor of Museology at the University of Manchester.

Possible topics for papers include, but are not limited to:

- Country houses as museums
- Artist/writer/scientist house museums
- Houses converted into museums
- Museums in houses: cabinets of curiosity, children's museums, amateur museums
- Museums in other domestic settings such as 'inn parlour' museums
- Museums as places to live, for curators, caretakers and others
- Owners, custodians and curators
- Subjective and eccentric taxonomies

Please send proposals for papers, of no more than 250 words, with brief biographical information, to secretary@mghg.org, by **Monday 17 February 2014**.