



**Department of Museology  
University of Calcutta**

**Two-day International Seminar**

**Theme:**

***Past in the Present: Future of Heritage***

*The past is not dead, it is not even past* (William Faulkner)

Modern collective memory is a phenomenon of rupture and loss. Only when the past has slipped away it is marked to commemorate. Similarly when experiencing memory spontaneously from within is stopped, people/ society begin to “design” memory to create its external signs and traces, such as museums, monuments and historic buildings. The proliferation of the external signs of memory in the contemporary built environment signals the death of a more organic cultural memory, which existed in the premodern past. Museums, monuments, buildings cannot replace the *true* memory in the society rather these are tangible proof of the inner memory. The pertinent question would be if we live in the present, why should we care about the past? The past is essential in understanding the present, because the past lives in the present. The argument follows that the study of ancient culture is not something that comes to an end at some date in the past, but has a continuing life in the present. Contemporary forces hide the continuing life of the past in the present. This hiddenness is produced through museological practices. There are areas of present life whose pastness is not obscure; everyday activities contain abundant material contrivances and practical routines that are owed to the ancestors. The past is present in public life in many different ways, as commemoration, education and entertainment. Audiences encounter history through a wide range of formats, from museum displays, memorials and live performances to historical novels and television documentaries and dramas. Some forms of public engagement with the past are highly participatory, which has been greatly facilitated and boosted by digitization and the Internet. ‘Living history’ museums have proliferated across the world. The term ‘living heritage’ can be countered as having made Heritage as a whole a dead proposition. Living heritage generally is linked with both community and continuity. Strong association of a community to a heritage that has not been subjected to gross changes due to, *inter alia*, urbanisation, globalisation and the resultant modernisation maybe termed as living heritage. This growing interest in the public life in the past as well as the involvement of the scholars in the quest of the dynamics of the public life has led to the development of ‘public history’ in the 1970s. However, the relationship between the public historians, general public, political, institutional and commercial structures that mediate public engagement with the past, continue to be matters of considerable debate. The concept of ‘heritage’ has

been a key focus in these debates. The migratory nature of heritage roots down in alien places and relates to varieties of material artefacts. Some scholars consider such extended association of values have positive and egalitarian effects; while others counter the proliferation of heritage industry to be highly problematic and artificial, privileging tribalism over reason. These debates continued unabated in the new millennium, with increasing attention to the ever-changing impact of digital technologies on the public relationship with the past. 'Digital heritage' has become a new area of study, with the uses of social media, computer-generated imagery (CGI) and virtual reality to create extremely powerful immersive evocations of the past (both accurate and not). While it remains an important anchor of traditional national identities, heritage might be used in various ways to facilitate the emergence of new multicultural, transcultural and cosmopolitan articulations of memory and identity. Beyond an enduring contrast between optimistic and pessimistic perspectives, these debates also highlight differing views on the politics of professional engagement with heritage. Whereas some scholars seek primarily simply to understand the changing dynamics of popular engagement with the past, others believe it is important to interpret those engagements with supportive empathy rather than condescension, while still others see their role as trenchant critics of the commercial interests and other structural forces that shape the consumption of the past in the contemporary world. Beyond this wider conceptual uncertainty, definitions of heritage also differ across disciplines and domains of practice such as archaeology, museology, and history. Most theorists of heritage today agree that it is more useful to consider heritage as a process, rather than as a stable array of objects, places or activities.

In this seminar, the Department of Museology, University of Calcutta, seeks to delve into the importance of the continuity of past in the present charting a futuristic trend of heritage in the post postmodern globalised world especially under the highly powerful all pervasive digital era.

It will be a great opportunity to participate and share the enlightened views of experts in these fields. We hope to be able to make perceptible dent in raising the consciousness to the importance of the issue concerning museology, heritage studies and digital humanities.

### **Sub Themes:**

- Collective Memory and Making Spectacle
- Visualisation of Past in the Present
- Issues and Debates on Heritage
- Living Heritage
- Digital Heritage
- Authenticity in Conserving Heritage
- Community Engagement
- Trends in Museology and Heritage Studies

### **Participants of the International Seminar:**

The organizing committee is looking for the participation of experts & professionals involved in the functioning of museums, archives, heritage centres and cultural institutes of different categories in India and abroad as well as the professionals

engaged in the academics of Museology, Heritage, History, Anthropology, Archaeology, Art History, Cultural Studies and allied subjects.

**Dates of the Seminar:**

28 – 29 November 2019

**Venue of the Seminar**

Department of Museology, University of Calcutta, Alipore Campus, 1 Reformatory Street, Kolkata 700 027

**Abstract Submission:**

Maximum 500 words with 5 keywords maybe submitted to [dmcmusl@caluniv.ac.in](mailto:dmcmusl@caluniv.ac.in) latest by 30.09.2019

Acceptance of proposal would be communicated by 15.10.2019

Full Papers of the accepted proposals have to be submitted latest by 31.10.2019

PowerPoint presentations, saved as 1997-2003 .pps, have to be submitted latest by 15.11.2019

Selected Papers may be published in the Journal of the Department of Museology (double blind refereed journal having ISSN)

**Registration Fee:**

Students of the Department of Museology, CU – Free

Students of other PG Departments – ₹ 100/-

Research Fellows/ Scholars – ₹ 100/-

Faculty Members – ₹ 500/-

Other Participants (Indian/ Foreigners) – ₹ 1000/-