



**The 6<sup>th</sup> ENCOUNTER Conference**

# **Country House Museums**

**Historical perspectives, current developments and future visions**

**Julita manor, Sweden, 17–19 September 2020**

Country house museums and their impressive collections of artefacts, of symbols and representations, can present and visualize history to visitors, as well as art, architecture and how the estates and households were inhabited and organised. A country house can speak to all of us. It is a collective cultural memory and a shared experience that can emphasize the uniqueness and “unrepeatability” of what has ceased to exist, encapsulating time and place.

Country house museums as historic sites primarily focus on the residential structure, the interior decoration and the lives of individuals being part of the community in and around the houses. In recent years a more pronounced interest in the social and political history, that coexist with the collections as integrated narratives, is evident in presentations of country houses.

The fragility of the estates and the financial challenges of keeping the houses going were the driving forces behind the transformation of private estates into public house museums in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many of these museums were founded during the same period and are now facing similar issues regarding future financing, curating and preservation as well as presenting the past for new visitors with new expectations.

**We welcome papers in the following areas:**

### **1. The creation and re-creation of the country house museum**

The conference will explore why and how country house museums have developed during the past century. What considerations, policies and strategies shaped what was considered worth saving, and what features and narratives were rejected? What is communicated in a country house museum and what kinds of stories are told? What voices are allowed to be heard and which individuals are not being represented? How do today's museological and educational concepts relate to the original ideas and future visions?

### **2. Preservation and restoration**

The conference will cover the rising interest in country houses in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the willingness to preserve historic houses and landscapes for the future, as part of a national and cultural heritage. What architectural and museological practices were influential in transforming country houses into museums? How was the built heritage and the domestic environments interpreted? How do these ideas impact country house museums today? The conference will also discuss the role of curators and other professionals dealing with country house museums, particularly how curatorial work combined with museum policies have determined the shaping and re-shaping of country houses and their surrounding landscapes.

### **3. Present and future challenges**

The final theme will examine the organisation and financial structure of a country house museum. Today we see an increased focus on commercialization. The urge to attract diverse audiences, interested in both local and national history, offer the opportunity for new experiences in "heritage tourism". How will the requirements for commercial success and new marketing strategies affect the different aspects of a country house museum today and in the future? How can country house museums enhance their position in society to attract both new and old visitors? What is needed to encourage relevant research initiatives? In which ways can different historical sources and collections be used to unveil stories that have not yet been told?

**Papers on any aspects of the above mentioned topics relating to country house museums in Europe will be considered. Enquiries and abstracts of no more than 400 words should be sent to Göran Ulväng before 24<sup>th</sup> of April 2020 at the following address: [goran.ulvang@ekhist.uu.se](mailto:goran.ulvang@ekhist.uu.se)**



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