

Call for Papers: Echoes of Conflict, Paths to Peace

International Conference on Museums, Memory, and Post-War Recovery

Conference Theme: In an era increasingly defined by geopolitical instability and the long shadows of historical trauma, museums have moved beyond their roles as mere repositories of artefacts. Today, they serve as active agents in the social fabric of recovery. This conference explores the dual nature of museums in the context of war: as **witnesses to destruction** and as **architects of peacebuilding**.

The 2026 ICEthics Annual Conference convenes at a critical juncture in global history, where the proliferation of modern conflict demands a radical rethinking of how we preserve the past to protect the future. Traditionally, museums of war have functioned as shrines to military prowess or static vaults for trauma; however, this gathering posits the museum as an active, breathing agent of social repair. We seek to explore the “Architecture of Empathy”—the deliberate use of space, testimony, and everyday objects to dismantle the dehumanizing narratives that fuel systemic violence.

In the heart of Sarajevo, a city that transitioned from a besieged capital to a beacon of cultural resilience, we will examine how the “human-scale” narrative—specifically that of children and marginalized civilians—can serve as a universal language for reconciliation. The theme focuses on moving beyond the “what” of war to the “how” of healing: How can curators handle “difficult” heritage without retraumatizing visitors? How can digital archives bridge the gap between divided communities in real-time? By centering the lived experience over the political manoeuvre, museums can transform from sites of mourning into laboratories for peacebuilding. We invite contributors to investigate the museum’s potential to not only document the rupture of war but to provide the pedagogical tools necessary to suture society back together.

How do we curate the “difficult heritage” of conflict without reigniting animosity? Given that museums are situated within particular perspectives and shaped by specific positions and choices, how might they navigate their role in the pursuit of healing?

Dates: October 27-28, 2026

Host Venue: War Childhood Museum, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Submission Deadline: May 31st, 2026

Themes of Interest:

We welcome submissions that address, but are not limited to, the following themes:

- **The Museology of Trauma:** Strategies for displaying weapons, personal belongings of victims, and oral histories of survivors.
- **Neutrality vs. Activism:** The ethical dilemma of museum positioning in ongoing or recent conflicts.
- **Repatriation and Restitution:** Addressing the “spoils of war” and the role of returning cultural property in international reconciliation.

- **Designing for Peace:** The architectural and spatial psychology of memorial museums and peace parks.
- **Digital Memory:** The role of VR, AR, and digital archives in preserving at-risk heritage in active war zones.
- **Education and Empathy:** How Museum pedagogy can dismantle “enemy images” and foster dialogue among youth in post-conflict societies.
- **The Power of the Personal:** How centering individual stories (and everyday objects) transforms the visitor's understanding of conflict.
- **Curating Aftermath:** Best practices for collecting and displaying “living history” while conflicts are still ongoing or memories are raw.
- **The Ethics of Display:** Navigating the fine line between honouring victims and “dark tourism” or the voyeurism of suffering.
- **Transgenerational Healing:** The role of museums in educating younger generations without inheriting the prejudices of the past.

About the Conference:

This conference aims to foster critical dialogue and the exchange of ideas surrounding museums’ crucial role in standing in a city that serves as a global symbol of both devastating siege and resilient reconstruction, IcEthics and **War Childhood Museum** invites scholars, curators, and peacebuilders to Sarajevo.

While traditional museums often focus on the “grand narratives” of strategy and hardware, a growing movement in museology prioritizes the **human experience**.

We invite scholars, museum professionals, educators, and community activists to explore how museums can serve as dynamic spaces for social change, promoting inclusivity, challenging traditional narratives, and fostering ethical awareness.

Submission Guidelines:

- Abstracts (250-300 words) should clearly outline the research question, methodology, and key findings or arguments.
- Please include a brief biographical statement (100 words) and contact information.
- Submissions should be sent via email to chair.icethics@icom.museum and secretary.icethics@icom.museum
- Deadline for Abstract Submissions: May 31st, 2026
- Notification of Acceptance: July 1st, 2026

We encourage submissions from a wide range of disciplines and perspectives.