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**ECHOES OF CONFLICT,
PATHS TO PEACE**

ABSTRACT BOOKLET

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ABSTRACTS & SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES**Arranged according to the conference programme**

Please note: This booklet is intended for informational purposes only. Abstracts and biographical information are reproduced as submitted by the authors and have not been copy-edited or proofread by ICEthics.

PANEL 1 | Transgenerational Trauma, Family Memory and Silence**Can Time Heal All Wounds? Transgenerational Healing and the Memory of the Mala Gajana Massacre (1944)****Marin Pekica & Josip Lučić**

The Nazi massacre in Mala Gajana in January 1944 remains one of the most traumatic events in Istria during the World War II. During the night of 26 to 27 January, villagers were killed, the settlement was destroyed, and numerous residents were deported to concentration camps. This study examines how memories of the massacre and its consequences have been transmitted across generations and how descendants of survivors and victims understand and deal with this traumatic past. The research is based on qualitative analysis of interview footage with massacre survivors, children of survivors and victims, and members of the second and third generations. Using the theoretical frameworks of transgenerational trauma, memory studies, and oral history, the study compares generational narratives, perceptions of the event, and the role of family and community memory in shaping identity. In conclusion, this paper demonstrates that the passage of time alone is insufficient to heal all wounds; however, active engagement with the past can transform collective trauma into social resilience, historical consciousness, and intergenerational understanding. The case of Mala Gajana exemplifies the dynamic relationship among historical trauma, remembrance culture, and transgenerational healing within communities affected by wartime violence.

BIOGRAPHY

Marin Pekica I was born on 30 May 1988 in Pula and I live in Vodnjan, a city 10 km from Pula. I attended Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, Department of Humanities, history course from October 2007. I got the magister degree in May 2013. I am a PhD student at "Modern and Contemporary Croatian History in European and World Context" at University of Zagreb. From 2014. until now I have been a high school history teacher in Pula. I have participated in numerous scientific conferences, organized several public cultural events, and conducted a number of historical research projects, primarily focused on local history related to Istria.

Josip Lučić was born in Vinkovci, Croatia, in 1996 and holds a Master of History degree from the Faculty of Humanities in Pula. He is currently employed as a secondary school history teacher. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, he actively advances his expertise in civic and citizenship education and instructs elective courses at his school. mail: josiplucic99@gmail.com

From Donations to Dialogue: Personal Collections and Youth Engagement in the Museum Interpretation of the Second World War**Danijela Trajkova Krstikj**

Permanent exhibitions are among the most complex forms of museum communication and represent then institutional identity of museums, as they simultaneously construct, mediate and communicate interpretations of the past to diverse audiences. The subject of this study is the reconceptualization of the permanent exhibition "Macedonia in the Second World War (1941-1945)" in the NI. Museum of the Macedonian Struggle for Independence through the curatorial approach "From Donations to Dialogue: Personal Collections and Youth Engagement in the Museum Interpretation of the Second World War". The exhibition presents a state-oriented narrative of the historical trajectory toward statehood, independence and sovereignty in which the Second World War and the formation of the foundations of the modern Macedonian state represent a key turning point. While this narrative remains essential for understanding nation-building and collective memory, contemporary musicological discourse shows that it gains additional depth when complemented by micro-histories and individual experiences. The integration of family archives, personal objects, and oral testimonies, enables a more multi-layered and affective reading of historical experience. Methodologically, the study adopts a case study report approach, integrating museum documentation, historical analysis, participatory approaches to cultural heritage interpretation and the evaluation of educational practice. This framework enables an in-depth examination of both curatorial structures and decision-making processes. The findings indicate increased levels of engagement, interpretative curiosity, as well as the development of empathy and critical historical awareness among participants. In conclusion, integrating donations helps transform permanent exhibitions into dynamic spaces of interpretation, where institutional and personal memories are brought into dialogue to create a better understanding of Macedonian history and cultural heritage of the Second World War.

BIOGRAPHY

Danijela Trajkova Krstikj is a historian - archivist with a Bachelor's degree in History (archival studies) from the Department of History, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje and a Master's degree in Historical Sciences from the Institute of National History in Skopje. She is currently a doctoral candidate. Since 2011, she has been employed at the NI Museum of the Macedonian Struggle for Independence - Skopje, where she has worked in various positions, and currently is working as a Senior Curator - Historian. Her professional work focuses on museology, history and cultural heritage interpretation with a strong emphasis on interdisciplinary approaches, collection management and public engagement.

Breaking the Silence: Family Memory, Testimony, and Narrative Reconstruction at the War Childhood Museum

Emina Zoletic & Maida Salkanović

In post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina, silence often functions as a coping mechanism within families affected by war. Many individuals who experienced the 1992–1995 war as children grew up with fragmented memories of their families and a limited understanding of the broader circumstances surrounding their wartime experiences. This paper explores how the participatory collection process at the War Childhood Museum fosters openings of these intergenerational silences and creates space for dialogue within families and broader society. The research focuses on the Museum's methodology for collecting personal objects associated with wartime childhoods, alongside written testimonies developed collaboratively by contributors and museum researchers. Rather than serving solely as an archival practice, this process frequently becomes an act of memory reconstruction. Contributors revisit family histories about the war past, ask questions that had remained unspoken for years, and seek to understand the stories behind the objects they preserve. Drawing on qualitative, in-depth, sensitively informed interviews with ten contributors to the museum, this paper examines how the process of object donation and story development reshapes family communication about war. Combining oral history approaches, participatory museology, and memory studies, following ethical codes, the research investigates how everyday objects can mediate difficult conversations and help destabilize inherited "codes of silence." The paper argues that the War Childhood Museum functions not only as a site of preservation and public education but also as a facilitator of interpersonal and intergenerational dialogue. By centering lived experiences and ordinary objects rather than dominant political or military narratives, the Museum creates ethically sensitive frameworks through which contributors can collaboratively reconstruct personal histories. In doing so, the Museum demonstrates how participatory museum practices can transform private silence into shared reflection and contribute to broader processes of social healing and peacebuilding in post-conflict societies.

BIOGRAPHY

Emina Zoletic is a PhD student at the Doctoral School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Sociology, University of Warsaw. Her research examines the intergenerational transmission of war-family memory in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and among the Bosnian diaspora in the EU and North America. She held research fellowships at the Institute of Sociology, University of Vienna, as well as at the Institute for East and Southeast European Studies (IOS) in Regensburg. She was previously a Fulbright Visiting Researcher at Syracuse University (2023–2024). Her doctoral research has been supported by a Preludium grant from the National Science Centre (Poland), the Zeit Stiftung Bucerius Scholarship, and a CEFRES Junior Fellowship in Prague, Czech Republic. eminazoletic81@gmail.com

Maida Salkanović is a PhD student in Media and Communications at the Faculty for Political Sciences at University of Belgrade. She holds an MA in Democracy and Human Rights from the Universities of Sarajevo and Bologna and a BA in Psychology from Occidental College in Los Angeles. She currently works as Communications Manager at the War Childhood Museum in Sarajevo, where she focuses on storytelling, memory practices, peacebuilding communication, and public engagement. maida.salkanovic@warchildhood.org

PANEL 2 | Curatorial Ethics, Conservation and "Slow" Memory

Beyond Spectacle: Slow Curating and the Afterlives of Conflict

Dr. Alice Semedo

Contemporary museums and memory spaces increasingly confront the challenge of engaging with the afterlives of conflict, dictatorship and political violence without reducing them to spectacle, emotional consumption or reconciliatory narratives of closure. In response to these tensions, this paper explores slow curating as an ethical, political and relational practice capable of sustaining more complex engagements with difficult pasts. Situated at the intersection of critical museology, slow memory and post-representational approaches to heritage and curation, the paper asks: how might museums curate difficult heritage without reproducing the accelerated and extractive logics through which violence is often consumed, simplified or stabilised? The paper argues that the legacies of violence frequently persist through silences, absences, everyday materialities, embodied memories and unresolved temporalities that exceed stable representational frameworks. Methodologically, the paper adopts a critical- theoretical and interdisciplinary approach, drawing on museum studies,

memory studies and curatorial theory, alongside the analysis of selected post-conflict and post-dictatorial museum and exhibition practices, including Southern European contexts marked by authoritarianism and historical silencing. Particular attention is given to curatorial strategies grounded in slowness, hesitation, fragmentation and human-scale narratives, where ordinary objects, incomplete testimonies and sensory atmospheres operate not as transparent representations of the past, but as mediating presences that complicate historical certainty and resist mnemonic simplification. Rather than understanding museums as spaces of reconciliation achieved through narrative coherence, the paper approaches them as agonistic and relational infrastructures where difficult histories remain open to negotiation, friction and critical reactivation. It concludes that slow curating can contribute to more ethically and politically responsive forms of public memory by resisting the spectacularisation of violence and creating conditions for sustained attention, critical co-presence and the ongoing negotiation of unresolved pasts.

BIOGRAPHY

I am Associate Professor of Museology at the University of Porto, Portugal, and a researcher at CITCEM – Transdisciplinary Research Centre for Culture, Space and Memory. My work explores the intersections between museums, heritage, memory and education, with a particular interest in dissonant heritage, slow curating, critical museology and museum pedagogy. I examine how museums participate in the public negotiation of memory, the amplification of historically silenced voices and the creation of more reflective, relational and ethically engaged encounters with the past. My research and publications focus on museums, memory, curatorship, education and participatory practices in heritage and dissonant heritage contexts.

Material Truths, Living Memories: Conservation of Difficult Heritage

Dr. Jane E. Klinger

Conservation of the material culture of conflict and genocide extends beyond physical preservation and identification of an object's material composition; it shapes how societies witness rupture and pursue repair. Such objects function simultaneously as evidence and embodied memory. This paper examines how conservation decisions — what to preserve, mitigate, or contextualize -- negotiate professional codes of practice along with professional codes of ethics, historical truth and survivor and witness testimonies. Three case studies from the U S Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) ground the analysis. Concentration camp uniforms have become embedded in collective memory as symbols of victims of the Holocaust. However, understanding a uniform through donor testimony and structural analysis such as wear patterns and alterations, problematizes the underlying assumption of an object conveying the memory of a single individual. The second study will consider strips of cloth bearing the names of 82 prisoners held in a single cell of a Syrian detention center by the Assad regime. The five pieces of cloth were slated for exhibition and later legal submission as part of the growing evidence in charging Bashar al Assad with crimes against humanity. The third case study is of a photographic fragment carrying a powerful memory of personal loss and the work of remembrance. The survivor's testimony regarding the photograph speaks directly to networks of community and personal agency. A cultural heritage scientist's proposal to test the object to verify the survivor's account confronted the conservator's approach anchored in testimony and historical context. Each example surfaces a distinct but related tension: individual vs. collective memory, evidentiary requirements for legal processes vs. preventive conservation needs, and survivor testimony vs. scientific analysis. Together, they effectively demonstrate how objects operate simultaneously as material evidence and embodied memory, and how conservators are often positioned at the fault lines between professional standards and lived experience.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Jane E Klinger is the Principal of Cultural Heritage Consultancy, with project areas in conservation management, curatorial and collections services, and policy development for cultural institutions with a particular focus on the material culture of difficult histories. Previously, she was Special Advisor and Senior Researcher at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum after having served as Chief Conservator. She was a Coreman Fellow at the University of Delaware. Dr. Klinger is a Fellow of the American Institute for Conservation (AIC) and has served in various positions on the AIC board. She received the Rutherford J. Gettens award for service to the profession and was inducted as a member of Smithsonian's Women in Science. She is Past President and Honorary Member of the Washington Conservation Guild. Dr. Klinger is also Chair Emerita of IC-MEMOHRI and a current member of SAREC.

PANEL 3 | Space, Architecture and Participatory Empathy

Creating Conscience: Reframing Prevention Through Participatory Aesthetics

Dr. Catherine Gilbert & Dr. Philippa Page

In recent decades, institutions dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of difficult pasts have assumed an increasingly prominent role in public life. Museums, memorials, archives and place-based initiatives concerned with histories of violence, dictatorship, colonialism and structural injustice have become key arenas in which societies navigate

their relationships to the past. Increasingly, cultural institutions are confronted not only with the imperative of preservation, but with the deeper question of how memory can continue to inform civic responsibility under conditions of political uncertainty. The “never again” mandate at the heart of memory work has demonstrably failed to prevent the recurrence of mass violence and structural injustice. This paper argues that the failure is, in part, methodological: dominant approaches have prioritised institutional commemoration and liberal-judicial frameworks of accountability over the socialised, relational practices through which communities come to feel and act on conscience. In response, this paper asks: how do sites of memory support communities to collectively form conscience, and what aesthetic practices enable that formation? This paper argues that conscience must be understood not only as an individual moral capacity but as a collectively produced, aesthetically mediated social practice. Drawing on the guiding principle of conscience as “memory into action” – developed by the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC) – this paper advances participatory aesthetics as a framework for understanding how socialised practices of conscience can more effectively inform prevention of future violence. Participatory aesthetics – encompassing co-creative, dialogic, and sensory engagement with difficult pasts – offers a methodological lens that centres community agency, intercultural dialogue, and affective knowledge as drivers of prevention. This reframing, developed in partnership with the ICSC as part of a project on ‘creating conscience’, positions participatory aesthetics as a methodological intervention with implications for how memory work conceptualises its relationship to prevention – moving from institutional preservation toward the relational, affective, and imaginative processes through which civic responsibility is collectively made. The presenters draw on their own fieldwork experiences in Argentina, Peru and Rwanda.

BIOGRAPHY

Catherine Gilbert is Senior Lecturer in French and Memory Studies at Newcastle University, UK. Her current research sits at the intersection of memory, social and environmental justice. She is author of *From Surviving to Living: Voice, Trauma and Witness in Rwandan Women’s Writing* (Pulm, 2018), which received the Memory Studies Association Outstanding First Book Award in 2019. More recently, she has published on decolonial and trauma-informed approaches to memory work, and she co-edited the volume *On Commemoration: Global Reflections on Remembering War* (Peter Lang, 2020). In 2024, she worked with the North East Rwandan Association and Newcastle City Council to inaugurate a memorial stone to commemorate the victims of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

Dr Philippa Page, Newcastle University, UK philippa.page@newcastle.ac.uk Philippa Page is Senior Lecturer in Hispanic Studies and Co-Director of the Humanities Research Institute at Newcastle University, UK. She has also worked as the cultural programme coordinator at the Maison de l’Argentine in Paris. Her research sits at the intersection between democracy, aesthetics and social imagination through a feminist lens. She is author of *Politics and Performance in Post-Dictatorship Argentine Film and Theatre* (Tamesis, 2011) and co-editor of *Entre/telones y pantallas. Afectos y saberes en la performance argentina contemporánea* (Libreria, 2020). She recently published a chapter in the *Cambridge History of Argentine Literature* (2024) and co-produced the experimental documentary film *Cantos insumisos* (dir. Alejo Mogueillansky, 2023).

Welcome to our tables! Contextual Architectural Thinking as a Tool for Engaging with the Exhibition

Dr. Donika Georgieva

The paper presents insights into the development and successful implementation of the permanent exhibition *Stories of Humaneness* (2025) at the Jules Pascin Cultural Centre in the former synagogue in Vidin, Bulgaria. The exhibition brings together the narratives of the Jews of Vidin, including World War II, and the world-renowned artist Jules Pascin, a Jew from Vidin. Focusing on the architectural perspective, the paper addresses a broader challenge facing contemporary museums: how can exhibitions meaningfully engage visitors, particularly when presenting difficult or contested histories? Methodologically, the paper adopts a case-study analysis informed by the concept of the “Architecture of Empathy,” in which the architect acts as both contextual interpreter and unifier. The approach moves beyond the mere presentation of information, transforming the exhibition from a collection of information into a personal, sensory experience. The paper argues that architectural thinking is the crucial medium. The exhibition demonstrates how contextual architecture can integrate three essential components into a coherent narrative framework: (1) content – the big idea translated into human-scale stories rather than grand political narratives; (2) architecture – the spatial environment and physical elements that add meaning and stimulate the senses; and (3) information – the design-driven, multisensory modes of presentation that facilitate understanding and engagement. The Vidin project further suggests that a careful balance between digital and material forms of communication is essential for engaging contemporary audiences and fostering a sense of shared social space rather than merely creating a tourist destination. The exhibition prioritizes physical interaction through tactile elements, including pop-up comics and casts of lost objects. In an age of AI and digital saturation, exhibitions can provide meaningful contact with the material world. By encouraging visitors to bend over, lift, peer, and explore, architectural design cultivates embodied empathy and creates an inclusive environment in which history is not only observed but physically experienced.

BIOGRAPHY

Donika Georgieva is a doctor, architect, researcher, and Associate Professor at the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy in Sofia, Bulgaria. A member of ICOM and ICOMOS, her work focuses on heritage conservation theory and practice, and she has authored numerous scholarly publications. She is also a co-founder of Atelier 3, an architectural studio guided by the motto Mind the Context!. The studio specializes in interpreting cultural heritage sites and creating engaging, context-sensitive environments, including museum exhibitions.

From Survival to Exhibition: Interpreting Creativity and Resilience in Wartime Goražde

Adisa Džino Šuta & Admir Džemidžić

How can museums move beyond narratives of victimhood to highlight human agency during war? This paper examines the development of the permanent “war exhibition” created by Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB) and the Museum of Goražde, in collaboration with the local community. The exhibition presents the 1,336 days of siege endured by the citizens of Goražde during the 1992–1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina through personal objects, oral histories, and everyday practices of resilience. The paper draws on a practice-based methodology combining exhibition design, oral history, participatory heritage, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Architects, designers, journalists, archaeologists, art historians, and museum professionals worked together to transform a former cinema wardrobe into an exhibition space through low-cost and reversible interventions that respected the original function of the building. The exhibition explores how siege conditions generated innovation, creativity, and resilience, focuses on stories of ingenuity and adaptation under siege conditions through objects and oral testimonies related to communication, education, domestic life, and cultural resistance. Through handmade toys, improvised lanterns and electricity generators (“mote” and “vintala”), handmade stoves, tobacco-cutting tools, stories of dangerous humanitarian aid collection known locally as “holtanje”, etc, the exhibition reveals how ordinary citizens maintained education, communication, cultural life, and social cohesion under extreme circumstances. The exhibition also incorporates testimonies documented by journalist and graphic novelist Joe Sacco in Safe Area Goražde, connecting local memories with international audiences. The paper argues that post-conflict exhibitions can shift attention from trauma alone toward human agency and community resilience. As a living and expandable exhibition, conceived as an ongoing process of collecting memories and testimonies, the Goražde War Exhibition demonstrates how museums can contribute to ethical representation, collective remembrance, and peacebuilding. Its significance has also been recognized through its inclusion as a case study in ICCROM's PATH: Peacebuilding Assessment Tool for Heritage Recovery and Rehabilitation.

BIOGRAPHY

Adisa Džino Šuta is executive director of CHwB BiH. Since 2005, she has been engaged in various aspects of the post-war rehabilitation of damaged cultural heritage in BiH. Adisa is further engaged in inclusive practices of education for cultural heritage and developing participatory tools in community engagement. Her engagement has expanded to include museums and the ways in which museums in the region work together through joint exhibitions and dialogue.

Admir Džemidžić is director of the Bosnian-Podrinje Canton (BPK) Archive in Bosnia and Herzegovina. His work as archaeologist and curator connects archaeological research, museum interpretation, and archival preservation, with a particular focus on documenting and safeguarding the cultural and historical heritage of the Goražde region. Through his roles in both museum and archival institutions, he actively contributes to heritage preservation, public engagement, and community-based cultural initiatives.

PANEL 4 | Living and Digital Archives and Counter-Memories

Memories Amidst the Rubble: The Ethics and Praxis of Inheriting “Fragile Heritage” in Wartime

Yukiko Miyagoshi

On 24 May 2026, the attack on the Chornobyl (Chernobyl) National Museum exposed a profound challenge: historical memory is increasingly vulnerable to the physical erasure of archives and collections in conflict zones. For museums under fire, preservation can no longer be limited to protecting material objects. The survival of memory now depends on sustaining narratives beyond the physical walls of the institution.

This research builds upon the author's experience coordinating the Prayers for Fukushima exhibition at the Chornobyl National Museum. While that project sought to generate transnational empathy, the museum's subsequent vulnerability highlights the fragility of the infrastructure through which collective memory is transmitted.

This paper asks: How can museums construct sustainable infrastructures of memory under conditions of imminent destruction? It examines how institutions can respond to this threat through digital mediation, distributed archiving, and community-based transmission. While existing scholarship focuses on post-conflict reconstruction, this paper addresses the gap in long-term transmission when destruction remains an ongoing possibility. It introduces the concept of “resilient

transmission”—the capacity of memory practices to survive the loss of their original material carriers through distributed social and digital networks.

Drawing on disaster-related curatorial practices and digital heritage studies, the paper argues that museums must transcend the model of the fixed repository. Instead, they must function as dynamic infrastructures that embed memory within everyday social practices. Ultimately, this paper proposes a framework for curatorial practice in high-risk environments, arguing that museums must act not only as custodians of objects but as facilitators of resilient memory capable of enduring conditions of violence, displacement, and uncertainty.

BIOGRAPHY

Yukiko Miyagoshi (Japan) is currently an international cooperation consultant at the National Children's Medical Center in Uzbekistan. She has been involved in humanitarian aid work in Chernobyl and Chechnya since her teenage years. In 2006, she raised funds to enable a Chechen boy, who had a bullet lodged in his head, to undergo surgery in Japan. She also contributes her academic expertise to the University of World Economy and Diplomacy. Notably, she served as the coordinator for the "Prayers for Fukushima" exhibition at the Chernobyl National Museum in Kyiv in 2013.

Mapping Absence: Digital Counter-Memory and the Genocide Denial in Srebrenica

Andrea Rizza Goldstein

This paper examines Srebrenica 2.0, a digital memory project developed by ARCI Bolzano-Bozen in partnership with the Memorial Center Srebrenica, as a case study in critical digital memorialization within a post-genocide context still marked by denial and competing public narratives. The project maps significant locations connected to the siege of Srebrenica, the fall of the UN Safe Area, the "Death March," and the mass executions of July 1995 through geolocated archival materials, testimonies, photographs, videos, and historical contextualization. The research investigates how digital memory infrastructures can function as forms of counter-memory in environments where physical memorialization is absent, contested, or actively undermined. The paper focuses particularly on the relationship between memory, public space, and genocide denial in Republika Srpska, where many sites linked to the genocide remain unmarked, normalized, or symbolically resemanticized. Methodologically, the contribution combines public history, memory studies, critical museology, and spatial analysis with direct project-based educational practice developed through study visits and political education activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The paper argues that Srebrenica 2.0 does not simply digitize memory, but creates a digital layer of historical visibility superimposed onto a contested territorial landscape. In doing so, it raises broader ethical questions concerning trauma representation, dark tourism, difficult heritage, and the politics of Erinnerungskultur in post-conflict societies. Rather than proposing an abstract model of "shared memory," the project seeks to create accessible spaces for engagement with the "history of the other" while resisting erasure, depoliticization, and historical revisionism.

BIOGRAPHY

Andrea Rizza Goldstein is a project coordinator, educator, and researcher working on memory politics, post-conflict educational practices, and dealing with the past in the context of the former Yugoslavia, with particular focus on Bosnia and Herzegovina and Srebrenica. He collaborates with ARCI Bolzano-Bozen on study visits, political education projects, and memory-related initiatives connected to genocide prevention and human rights education. He is the author and coordinator of the digital memory project Srebrenica 2.0, developed in partnership with the Memorial Center Srebrenica.

PANEL 5 | Minorities, Borderlands, and Contested Heritage

Curating Islamic Pluralism as Peacebuilding: Ethical Memory and Interreligious Solidarity in the Museum of Islamic Culture and Art Sarajevo

Selma Pandžić

This paper explores how museums can contribute to peacebuilding and post-conflict reconciliation through the curation of ethical memory and narratives of interreligious solidarity. Drawing on the permanent exhibition currently under development at the Museum of Islamic Culture and Art in Sarajevo, the paper examines Islam in plural, a thematic room conceived to present how the Bosnian experience of Islam has been historically shaped by pluralism, coexistence, and encounters across religious and cultural boundaries. Rather than centering on objects, the exhibition adopts a narrative approach, inviting visitors to engage with heritage as a living source of social, spiritual and ethical meaning. The analysis is informed by Sharon Macdonald's concept of difficult heritage, which highlights the museum's role in negotiating ethically charged histories, as well as James Clifford's understanding of the museum as a contact zone, a space where identities, memories and meanings are continuously reinterpreted through encounter and dialogue. Within this framework, Islam in

Plural foregrounds Bosnia and Herzegovina's traditions of neighbourliness through archival photographs, historical documents, and interpretive storytelling. The room presents examples of Muslim protection of religious others, including the safeguarding of the Sarajevo Haggadah, Ottoman guarantees of religious freedom, and the Muslim Resolutions of 1941 calling for protection of Jewish, Serbian and Roma populations during the Second World War. Contemporary examples of interreligious cooperation further connect this ethical legacy to the present. Using a curatorial case-study approach, the paper argues that museums need not only preserve memories of violence but can also actively recover and amplify memories of moral courage, coexistence, and civic responsibility. In Sarajevo, a city marked by both historical trauma and enduring pluralism, the Museum of Islamic Culture and Art demonstrates how narrative-based museum practice can move beyond commemoration toward cultivating empathy and contributing to a culture of peace.

BIOGRAPHY

Selma Pandžić studied Oriental Philology at the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo and earned her Masters' degree in Art Studies at the University of Tehran, specializing in Islamic visual culture. With extensive experience in cultural media, she combines communication expertise with curatorial and educational practice. As an educator, she teaches tazhib (Islamic illumination) and has participated in collaborative exhibitions highlighting the spiritual and aesthetic dimensions of Islamic art. She is currently a curator at the Museum of Islamic Culture and Art Sarajevo, contributing to narrative-based and multisensory exhibition models that reinterpret Islamic heritage for diverse audiences.

Minority Identity and the Representation of Difficult Heritage: The Case of Deutsches Museum Nordschleswig

Jelena Mihajlov

Museum engagements with difficult pasts raise persistent questions regarding how historical narratives are represented and how they shape processes of identity construction. This issue becomes particularly pronounced in the case of “new minorities”, groups that, in post-conflict contexts and as a result of changing state borders, have moved from a majority position to minority status, with their contemporary position continuing to be shaped by this historical legacy. Drawing on the concept of difficult heritage (Macdonald, 2008) and taking as a reference point the German community and its historical entanglement with the Nazi past as the most prominent example, the analysis focuses on the Deutsches Museum Nordschleswig (Sønderborg, Denmark), a German minority museum situated in the German–Danish border region. The German community in this region today holds the status of a recognized national minority, while the history of this borderland area has been marked by conflicts, changes in the border between Germany and Denmark, as well as post-conflict processes of rebuilding relations between majority and minority populations.

The paper presents findings from a research project conducted in Denmark in 2024, based on the analysis of different sections of the museum exhibition as well as interviews with museum staff. It examines approaches and strategies that engage with difficult and contested historical narratives, with a focus on the representation of individual experiences and subjective perspectives. Although the analysis is based on a specific museum and a specific historical context, it moves beyond the individual case and opens broader questions about how museums may contribute to processes of reconciliation between majority and minority populations, while avoiding both revisionist downplaying of historical responsibility, and the reproduction of collective guilt and the stigmatization of minority communities. The analysis does not adopt an uncritical stance by presenting this museum's approach as an ideal model, but instead examines possible ways of addressing these issues, underscoring that such processes require context-specific rather than universal approaches.

BIOGRAPHY

Jelena Mihajlov is an independent researcher and consultant with an interdisciplinary background in art history and political science. Her work focuses on the political and cultural dynamics of minority communities, with particular emphasis on identity formation through museum practices, interethnic relations, and memory politics in post-conflict societies in the Western Balkans. She has authored and co-authored publications in the fields of culture, minority rights, and regional cooperation.

Negotiating Transcultural Interpretation of Shared Difficult Heritage

Eliška Pekárková & Michaela Šmídová

Twentieth-century Czechoslovak history is marked by a controversial legacy of war, occupation, political repression or forced migration that resulted in conflicting histories and shared trauma, mutual coexistence and conflict, culminating in the current society with the undercurrent of unresolved historical tensions. Many of these topics, such as wartime collaboration, post-war expulsion of Germans or the Communist regime's self-contradictory approach to national minorities, remain sensitive and continue to shape public debates. The presentation examines how the difficult heritage pertaining to multiple ethnic groups within a multinational shared space can be interpreted within the framework of the permanent exhibition History of the 20th century at the National Museum in Prague, Czechia. Drawing on participative and inclusive approaches in museum education that emphasize cultural sensitivity and ethical awareness, National Museum facilitates

public programs that aim to build upon and expand the dominant historical narrative of the exhibition primarily for the target audience of national and ethnic minority members or their descendants. Rather than simply translating existing content, these programs led by educators of minority origin create space for alternative perspectives and personal multigenerational experiences that are often absent from dominant national narratives. Using minority languages and facilitators' own cultural and historical viewpoints, participants are invited to engage with difficult histories from different angles and to reflect on how historical events are remembered and interpreted by various communities. Specific focus will be put on the analysis of how the language, its terminology and phrasing influence the perception and perspective of shared historical events.

BIOGRAPHY

Eliška Pekárková is a historian and a museum educator at the Department of Education and Cultural Activities of the National Museum of the Czech Republic. She creates educational programs for the historical permanent and temporary exhibitions. Her research focuses on Jewish history, history of national minorities and the didactics of history.

Michaela Smidová is a historian and a researcher in the Centre for Presentation of Cultural Heritage, a department of the National Museum of the Czech Republic that focuses on museum and cultural heritage presentation, interpretation and communication. Her research focuses on the heritage of national minorities and its presentation and interpretation in museums, as well as the social responsibility (sustainability, gender equality etc.) of museum institutions.

PANEL 6 | Curatorial Politics, Absence, and Community Resilience

Curating the Partition of India: Materiality, Memory and Trauma in Partition Museums

Suchandrima Das & Hari Nair

This paper analyses the difficulties in representing the partition of India at the two Partition Museums in Amritsar and Delhi. India was partitioned in 1947 along religious lines, which was accompanied by massacres, abductions, rapes, dislocation of individuals, and other acts of violence. It impacted generations of people in South Asia, its diaspora, State formation, and even international relations beyond the region. However, the partition that displaced approximately 10-12 million people did not have even a single gallery in Indian museums until 2016. The seven decade long delay in opening the first partition museum was because of concerns about representing a difficult past. There were fears that memorialising partition could reopen old wounds and hinder nation-building after India's independence from British rule in 1947. But memorialising could also help in healing the trauma and remind us of the consequences of religious violence so that such events were not repeated. Eventually, the first Partition Museum was inaugurated in 2016-17 at the Town Hall Building in Amritsar, India. Another one was opened in Delhi in 2023. Besides, there were three specific curatorial concerns. Although millions of people were directly affected by the partition, only a small number of material objects survived their flight to safety. These were predominantly clothes, a few documents, and utensils used in everyday life. So, a greater part of the partition material were oral or written accounts of survivors that were later digitized. Yet, only a tiny fraction of the survivors were represented. The third curatorial concern was the dilemma over showcasing violence. It had the potential for further traumatizing the museum visitors. Despite these difficulties, this museological novelty in India has been gaining traction over the last decade.

BIOGRAPHY

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Co-Author: Hari Nair (MA History 2004, PhD History 2010 UNAM, Mexico) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani (Pilani Campus). He teaches the history and politics of Contemporary India, and his research areas include Gandhi Studies and University History.

Museums and the Search of the Disappeared Persons

Eduardo Santana, T. Chávez & C. Rodríguez

Enforced disappearances in Latin America constitute a human-rights crisis that devastates victims and their families and generates corruption in government institutions. In Mexico, the main contemporary driver of the disappearance of over 130 thousand people, is the USA-market induced drug/gun trafficking and attacks on environmental and human-rights defenders. Mexico has the highest number of collectives of volunteer citizens (mostly women) that are searching for their missing loved ones. Natural science museums evoke display cases with taxidermy, fossils, whale skeletons, dioramas, and interactive exhibits on environmental themes/problems. Few imagine them participating in the search for human corpses.

The Environmental Sciences Museum of the University of Guadalajara has begun to help reduce the emotional pain of the families of the disappeared by using environmental and citizen sciences, artistic/cultural programming, and institutional/civic alliances in the search of missing people. Interviews with mothers from search collectives allowed us to identify “knowledge born of pain” and systematize their activities to show they conduct bona fide citizen science by international standards. With the Jalisco State Search Commission and search collectives four campus experimental plots were established with proxy pig carcasses where botany, entomology, edaphology, hydrology, georadars and multispectral drones are used to improve forensic taphonomic techniques to expedite finding clandestine graves. The new scientific techniques are having success. Neurosciences and moral philosophy show that emotion-generating art can contribute to producing empathy about human rights violations by activating moral feelings-compassion, indignation- that make someone else’s far away injustice feel close. At the university’s Museo de las Artes, a participatory sculptural ensemble titled “Voluntary Blindness” created with plaster, cement and clay, helped to visualize the crimes committed at a drug cartel training and extermination camp in Jalisco. The work was a tribute to the disappeared and an invitation to collectively build new landscapes of memory and solidarity.

BIOGRAPHY

Eduardo Santana (speaker) is founding Director of the University of Guadalajara’s Environmental Sciences Museum (ICOM member), whose mission is “understanding the city and inspiring the conservation of nature that sustains it, to catalyze social and ecological transformations for the benefit of our communities”. Ecologist, emeritus professor, has published over 170 scientific and popular articles, and directed more than 30 university thesis.

T. Chávez is an environmental engineer Director of Context Analysis of the Jalisco State Commission.

C. Rodriguez is a psychologist and a plastic artist that has specialized on installations exploring pollution, feminicides and other human rights violations.

PANEL 7 | Military Heritage, Moral Injury, and Post-War Society

Museums and the Morality of War: Remembering Civilian Harm Between Neutrality and Activism

Daniel Fabricius

Military history is often presented in museums through its material remains like weapons, uniforms, medals, and battlefield narratives. While these objects are central to the history of armed conflict, many museums risk reducing war to artefacts, strategy, and chronology. This approach is problematic, as it can lead both museums and their visitors to overlook the fact that war is also a political, social, and deep human experience that leaves lasting wounds on individuals and post-war societies. This becomes especially problematic when museums address wartime atrocities such as civilian harm and violations of military conventions. My claim is that these subjects cannot be understood only through objects or military narratives. They require museums to confront questions of responsibility, moral judgement, and ethical interpretation. This paper asks: How can museums interpret civilian harm as more than tragic consequences, while navigating the tension between neutrality and ethical responsibility? It examines how museums can present civilian harm not merely as collateral damage, but as a question of moral choices, legal boundaries, and contested military necessity. It also considers whether neutrality can become a form of moral avoidance when museums address atrocities committed against civilian populations. Methodologically, the paper combines museum ethics with military history. The paper examines in which ways museums use testimony, photographs, labels, and narrative framing to interpret difficult histories including the morality of war and the institution responsibility between neutrality and activism. I will draw on illustrative examples including the moral debate surrounding gas warfare during the First World War, strategic bombing during the Second World War, the My Lai Massacre during the Vietnam War, and the killing of civilians during the wars in former Yugoslavia. These cases show how civilian harm has been justified, condemned, remembered, and sometimes avoided. The paper argues that museums should preserve historical complexity without treating civilian harm as morally neutral. By distinguishing between explaining violence and excusing it, museums can become spaces of ethical education, helping visitors understand not only how wars were fought, but also what war does to people, societies, and moral responsibility.

BIOGRAPHY

My name is Daniel Fabricius, and I am a PhD Fellow at the Natural History Museum of Denmark, University of Copenhagen. My PhD investigates museum ethics, with a particular focus on research ethics and exhibition practices. My background as a historian is rooted in military history and the ethical interpretation of warfare. My MA thesis, now published in the University of Copenhagen Library, examined chemical weapons and Western perceptions of unjust warfare between 1915 and 1925. I have worked as a tour guide and collections assistant at military and communication museums, including The Gordon Highlanders Museum (Scotland), Second World War Museum of Tórshavn (the Faroe Islands), and ENIGMA Museum (Denmark). This combination of museum ethics, military history, and practical exhibition experience supports my experience in how museums present war and civilian harm to public audiences. Email: ddf@snm.ku.dk

Curating Peace without Resolution: Kinmen Museum and the Depoliticisation of Military Heritage**Yi-Ru Guo**

Kinmen occupies a distinctive geopolitical position in cross-Strait relations between Taiwan and mainland China. After the Chinese Civil War, the Nationalist government retreated to Taiwan in 1949, while the Communist Party established control over mainland China. Mainland China continues to claim sovereignty over Taiwan and has not renounced the use of force to achieve unification, keeping cross-Strait tensions politically unresolved and geopolitically sensitive. Governed by Taiwan and located only a few kilometres from mainland China, Kinmen became both an anti-communist frontline and a site of cross-Strait armed conflict. Since the late 1980s, family visits, transport links, tourism, commerce, and cooperation with mainland China have repositioned Kinmen from a battlefield frontier into a site of cross-Strait exchange. As the island's sole official museum, the Kinmen Museum therefore holds significant potential to facilitate reconciliation between Taiwan and mainland China. This study critically examines how the Kinmen Museum uses the difficult heritage of past armed confrontation to construct peace narratives amid ongoing cross-Strait political conflict. Through discourse analysis of museum interpretative texts and semi-structured interviews with Kinmen residents and stakeholders from Taiwan and mainland China, the study analyses how the museum foregrounds selected narratives while marginalising local perspectives. The findings demonstrate that the museum's peace discourse depoliticises military heritage by emphasising cultural connection, reused military spaces, and narratives of cross-Strait coexistence, while sidestepping past warfare, current political confrontation, and competing interpretations of cross-Strait relations. The museum's joint exhibitions with mainland Chinese cultural institutions further show that peace-oriented exchange remains constrained by political authority, discursive control, and limits on public expression. I argue that mobilising Kinmen's difficult heritage to mitigate cross-Strait tensions requires critical acknowledgement of unresolved political division and stronger inclusion of underrepresented local voices and multiple stakeholder perspectives.

BIOGRAPHY

Yi-Ru Guo is a PhD candidate in Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. Her doctoral research, funded by Taiwan's Ministry of Education, examines museum interpretations of cross-Strait military heritage, reconciliation politics, and stakeholders' discursive rights, with a focus on Kinmen. She previously worked in Taiwan's museum sector for over eight years, including as Director of the Kinmen Museum, where she developed curatorial, research, and public engagement experience. Her interests include difficult heritage, heritage politics, peacebuilding, and stakeholder participation.

INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP | Latvian War Museum & Museum of the Occupation of Latvia**How to Speak About War? Military Museums in Shaping Identity, Security and Resilience****Kristīne Skrīvere**

War and military history museums increasingly function not only as custodians of historical artefacts and testimonies, but also as spaces in which societies engage with questions of war experience, security, and national values. Drawing upon the experience of the Latvian War Museum and employing a museological perspective, this paper examines the ongoing transformation of military history museums and their expanding role within the public sphere. The paper explores contemporary approaches to representing war in permanent exhibitions and temporary displays, as well as the growing involvement of museums in public discussions and academic conferences addressing the history of warfare and its relevance in the present day. Particular attention is devoted to the interpretative and ethical challenges associated with exhibiting and discussing war in a contemporary European context marked by renewed armed conflict and heightened security concerns. It is argued that military history museums constitute significant actors in the construction of national identity, the cultivation of defence awareness and civic responsibility, and the strengthening of societal resilience. Rather than serving solely as repositories of military heritage, these institutions increasingly operate as forums for dialogue, historical interpretation, and public engagement with questions of conflict, memory, and collective security.

BIOGRAPHY

Kristīne Skrīvere, Director of the Latvian War Museum.

Curating the Aftermath: Bridging Legal Classifications and Contemporary Combat Realities**Daniela Rihtere**

Today, museums face a unique challenge: representing modern conflicts that do not fit into traditional legal or historical categories. The Latvian War Museum is currently developing a new exhibition, Soldier After War (Karavīrs pēc kara), which

explores the reintegration, societal reception, and internal dialogue of Latvian veterans from the 20th and 21st centuries. While curating the experiences of WWI and WWII veterans relies on established historical frameworks, a profound curatorial and linguistic paradox emerges when addressing the contemporary Latvian National Armed Forces (NBS). Since the restoration of independence, Latvia has not legally declared war. However, its soldiers have engaged in combat and sustained casualties during deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, because these deployments occur outside the legal definition of a declared state of war, traditional exhibition terminologies fall short. This paper explores the linguistic and curatorial friction between official bureaucratic classifications and the visceral realities of combat. When legal terminology does not fully encompass the lived experiences of soldiers, museums face a critical dilemma: how do we create a framework that allows veterans to articulate their experiences authentically without conflicting with historical and legal accuracy? Rather than relying strictly on the legal definitions that define the “what” of these operations, our curatorial team explores the “how” of moving on after the operation is over by centring individual-experience-based narratives. This paper will examine how museums can actively bridge this linguistic and legal gap by developing an empathy-based curatorial approach. By utilizing personal testimonies, internal dialogues, and everyday objects, we argue that curators can provide the vocabulary necessary to validate these individual combat experiences, fostering a more inclusive and ethically aware dialogue around modern post-conflict reintegration.

BIOGRAPHY

Daniela Rihtere is a historian and researcher at the Latvian War Museum.

Forgotten Witnesses of the Past: Items as Reflections of Soldiers' Life Experiences

Kaspars Strods

Over the centuries museum collections in many countries have accumulated evidences describing various wars and military conflicts, as well as the participants in these events. A large part of these objects describes not only the military-political developments of these processes but also reflects the experiences of the soldiers who were direct witnesses to these events at the front. Furthermore, they provide insight into the soldiers return to post-war life and the challenges associated with it. Often, behind seemingly ordinary, everyday objects hiding the personal experiences of a specific individual – including physical and moral trauma, and the subsequent integration into civil life. Deciphering these specific stories requires a fresh approach and a search for relevant historical context, which is heavily influenced by available sources and their interpretation. Different interpretive perspectives allow us to focus on the individual soldier and their experience, reflecting both their future life paths and personal choices during post-war conditions. These stories also highlight existing trends in post-war society, including the evolving relationships between soldiers and the civil world. The aim of this report is to reflect the individual stories of soldiers experiences through specific documents, photographs, and artifacts within the collection of the Latvian War Museum, while simultaneously highlighting potential avenues for their interpretation.

BIOGRAPHY

Kaspars Strods is a historian and researcher at the Latvian War Museum.

Curating Beyond Judgement - Curatorial Self-Reflection and the Laboratory for Empathy

Katrīna Kūkoja

This paper examines the development of the exhibition “Soldier After War” as a process of ethical self-reflection among museum professionals who have no lived experience of war. Through interviews with veterans, analysis of oral testimonies, consultations with psychologists, psychotherapists and philosophers, and collaborative curatorial discussions, the project became an opportunity to critically examine our own assumptions about the long-term consequences of war. Significant consideration is given to the concept of moral injury as a framework for understanding behaviours that are often publicly interpreted through moral judgement, such as aggression, addiction, social withdrawal or involvement in crime. Rather than focusing solely on veterans as subjects of representation, the paper investigates how the perspectives of curators evolved throughout the exhibition-making process and how this transformation may reflect broader societal attitudes toward veterans and post-war life. It argues that examining one's own biases can serve as a valuable method for understanding public perceptions and for developing museum narratives that nurture compassion without excusing harmful behaviour. In this sense, the curatorial process becomes a laboratory for empathy, demonstrating how sustained engagement with lived experience can move understanding beyond simplistic categories of heroism, victimhood and blame.

BIOGRAPHY

Katrīna Kūkoja is an exhibition curator at the Latvian War Museum.

Experience of the Latvian Legionnaires during and after WWII in Video Testimonies**Evita Feldenāle**

The Museum of the Occupation of Latvia started its video testimony collection in 1996 and until nowadays collection consists of more than 2615 (May 2026) recordings of people whose lives were impacted by the policies of the Soviet Union and/or Nazi Germany. Recording cover different topics regarding the history of the 20th century of Latvia (mass deportations of June 14, 1941, March 25, 1949, children born in places of forced resettlement, members of national resistance and youth anti Soviet resistance movement, refugee movement of summer of 1944 and Latvians in exile and their descendants, eyewitnesses of Holocaust and other people who were eyewitnesses of warfare during WW2), where one of the main interests includes life stories of the Latvian Legionnaires who voluntary or in the process of mobilization were forced to participate in the WW2. For now, out of 2615 recordings 458 (or 17.5%) are recordings of former Legionnaires, who describe their life before WW2, their motivation to join voluntary or how they experienced mobilization, military training, participation in warfare, injuries, different battles and other aspects during WW2. Recordings also cover different experiences of former soldiers depending on the place they were located after WW2 ended (filtration camps in the Soviet Union, POW camps in Western Europe) and their life afterwards until the moment of the recording (including other experienced repressions, if the person stayed in the territory of the occupied Latvia). It must be noted that recordings of videotestimonies took place not only in Latvia, but as well in other countries where former legionnaires emigrated to (Australia, the USA, Canada, Sweden, Germany). Usage of the collection of the videotestimonies, including the experiences of the former Latvian legionnaires, is an additional resource to already existing sources – letters, diaries, photographs giving extra possibilities to understand experiences those people had after the WW2 ended (while former Legionnaires in the Western world had chances to get higher education and develop careers, former legionnaires could not continue their education or works they had before, having to work less skilled jobs).

BIOGRAPHY

Evita Feldenāle is Head of the Audiovisual Archive at the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia.