

Press Release

No. 01 / 13th of January 2016

War and Destruction: How do museums deal with the loss of culture and identity?

Experts discuss the challenges and consequences of armed conflicts at a symposium from the University of Applied Sciences Berlin on the first of February

The destruction of the world heritage sites Aleppo and Palmyra in Syria is just one of many examples: Wars, including the war in Syria, do not only claim human lives. In the wake of war, cultural heritage is destroyed and with it, cultural identities are lost. The Symposium "Dealing with Damage" at the University of Applied Sciences Berlin (HTW) offers a platform for museum experts to discuss how museums deal with the ongoing loss of cultural heritage. Around 100 participants are expected to take part.

Museums and memorial sites have a responsibility as social and cultural institutions. What options do museums have to document and reclaim a loss like the one in Palmyra and Aleppo? Are there ways to absorb the losses or compensate for the destruction? Can culturally valuable objects be protected and, if necessary, be removed from conflict zones? And in the face of war and the plight of the Syrian people affected by it, is this task negligible considering that lives are lost in the conflict?

While the first part of the symposium deals with the possibilities of protection and documentation - physical or digital - the second part will focus on the part museums play as places that engage with war and destruction in their exhibitions. What challenges do they face in the representation of destruction and terror? And where are the limits for presenting the unrepresentable?

Syrian expert Prof. Dr. Kay Kohlmeyer gives an account of the challenges posed by the destruction of cultural heritage in Aleppo. Isam Ballouz and Katrin Pütt speak about the Syrian Heritage Project, which aims to record and safeguard cultural heritage for generations to come using already existing data. Isber Sabine asks what the civil society can do to protect Cultural Heritage during a conflict. Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek gives an insight into forms of presentation that deal with the unbearable. Via a live video link, Tom Hennes, a New York based exhibition designer speaks about how museums can engage with trauma and voids. The symposium concludes with a panel discussion presented by Prof. Dr. Dr. Frederike Fless, president of the German Archaeological Institute.

Symposium "Dealing with Damage. War and destruction: Museums between loss and remembrance"

Monday, 1st of February 2016, 9.00 till 18.00

University of Applied Sciences, HTW Berlin, Campus Wilhelminenhof, Wilhelminenhofstr. 75 A, 12459 Berlin Halle B1

<http://mmk.htw-berlin.de/aktivitaeten/tagungen/dealing-with-damage/>

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