National Museums: Narrating the Nation (Dublin, 29 Oct/5 Nov 21)

National Museum of Ireland and National College of Art and Design, Dublin, Oct 29–Nov 5, 2021
Deadline: Jun 30, 2021

David Crowley

This cross-disciplinary conference will address how the conception, collecting, exhibitions and experience of national museums have worked and been understood in the creation and maintenance of ideas of the nation. The conference will take place on Friday 29th October 2021 and on Friday 5th November 2021 - further details below. Proposals are invited for contributions that interrogate, analyse and illuminate national museums in their contemporary and historical contexts. Originating in the collections of various institutions, when the museum opened as the Museum of Science and Art, Dublin, it was part of a network that included the South Kensington museums in London and its collections included Irish antiquities, decorative arts, ethnographical collections and natural history specimens. Following the foundation of the Irish state in 1922, its focus shifted to include Irish folklife material and artefacts connected with Irish archaeology.

The question of who or what is the nation has been asked repeatedly throughout the Museum's history, and always in response to the needs and concerns of the present. Ireland has also had the distinction of being a colony and engaged in colonial activities as part of the British Empire and through missionary and commercial activities. In our age – marked by identity conflicts, the politics of decolonisation, and populism in Europe and elsewhere – the matter of the nation has become a matter of keen concern again. This conference will provide a forum for discussion of current museum practices and debates in different national settings. Moreover, with plans in development for a new Twentieth Century gallery, it will support the task of helping NMI to reflect on its current and future displays. The conference will contribute to our understanding of how ideas about the nation have been collected, visualised, manufactured, articulated, materialised, displayed and performed in national museums in the past and in the present day.Proposals are welcomed from researchers and practitioners across various fields including Museum Studies, Anthropology, Archaeology, Art History, Architectural History, History of Media, Design History, Geography, Cultural History, Sociology and Critical theory.

Themes could include:
The agonistic museum (the museum as a space for disputation)
Museological representations of contested geographies (for example, borders and border zones, disputed territories)
National museums and populism
Museum building in the new Europe (particularly Eastern Europe post 1989)
National museums after conflict - role of museums after civil war / internal strife - Sarajevo, Bel-

fast, etc
Museum Collections and Diasporic and Deterritorialized Peoples
The Participatory Museum Revisited - thinking about the impact of politics of the under-commons on museum design / operation / display
Museums and imagining the future
Foundational myths of national museums
National museums and folklife
National museums and ethnography
National museums and conflict
National museums and decolonisation‘
National’ artefacts and everyday material culture
National museums and independence movements
National museums and civil rights
Programmes of collecting which connect with underrepresented and minority communities

The conference will be held both online and in person before a limited audience in the National Museum of Ireland. In other words, speakers will have the option to present remotely or on site (within any requirements relating to Covid safety).

Proposals should take the form of an abstract of 100-200 words plus a short biographical statement.

They should be sent to narratingthenation@ncad.ie by June 30th 2021.

A selection made and speakers will be informed by mid July 2021.

Any queries please contact narratingthenation@ncad.ie

Reference:
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