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The next issue of the magazine – due out at the end of 2024 – is dedicated to history museums.

This is a category of museums that at an international level is united with museums of archaeology, so much so that ICOM's international committee is the ICMAH, the International Committee of Museums of Archaeology and History, while in Italy it is distinct, and this is a first aspect to which we would like to draw attention, seeking the reasons for this in the history of Italian museums and explicitly posing the question of whether this distinction makes sense today.

The second question is that of the framework within which would be included a category of museums that is much more heterogeneous than others. UNESCO identifies so the one, which, even if only for statistical purposes, includes «museums with collections of historical relics, memorials, archives museums, military museums, museums dedicated to historical figures, museums of archaeology, museums of antiquities, etc., » i.e. all museums that aim to «present the historical development of a region, area or province over a limited or long period of time».

Krzysztof Pomian, years ago, in researching the time when history entered museums, between the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, not without difficulty, had sharply pointed out that since then almost all museums could be considered history museums, although there are museums within them that are such because they define themselves as such. What criteria can we adopt to define the boundaries of this galaxy, within which – quite clearly – there are groups with their own, distinct evidence, from military museums, to museums dedicated to individual personalities that are often museum-houses, to memorials, similar in some respects to monuments, in others to 'places of remembrance', to site museums (such as museums or centres of battle interpretation, to give an example) or even monumental complexes that present themselves as 'museums of their history'?

Another aspect that seems worthy of examination is the new character assumed by 20th century history museums which, instead of glorifying the past, emphasise its negativity, devoting themselves to its darkest moments, from wars to exterminations, in some cases overturning the very mission of museums created, for example, to celebrate colonial conquests, through projects of 'decolonisation'.

How and to what extent do museums dedicated to the horrors of the past – going back in time we also find museums dedicated to slavery – succeed in becoming bearers of the opposite values:

peace, democracy, equality, fraternity, the universal rights of humanity? And with what results, given the current situation in which war and oppression are an ever closer reality?

And also to what extent does this attitude of radical critique of the past influence national museums or, in other ways, prevent them from coming into being in the past decades, with the failure, for example, of the Museum of the History of France wanted by President Sarkozy and never born? To what extent does a museum like the Europe Museum in Brussels represent a real alternative to national museums?

These are just some of the questions that can be addressed, others we hope will come through this call for contributions.

Contributions must be sent to the scientific direction of the journal (Giuliana Ericani: giuliana.ericani@gmail.com; Daniele Jalla: daniele.jalla@hotmail.it) by 30 June 2024.

For editorial rules see: <https://www.libraweb.net/Norme.pdf>

Submissions that do not conform to the Editor's editorial standards will not be accepted.

The International Journal of Museum Studies publishes annual monographic issues on topics chosen by the Editors and the Scientific Committee, whose texts, selected through a "Call for papers" procedure, are all – with rare and justified exceptions – subject to double blind peer review. In the case of the aforementioned exceptions, it is the management, in its collegiality, which, after careful examination, takes responsibility for accepting the texts.

Reference:

CFP: The International Journal of Museum Studies, no. 4, 2024. In: ArtHist.net, Apr 9, 2024 (accessed May 10, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/41607>>.