Emergence, transformation, maintenance (Poznan, 29–31 May 25)

Rogalin Palace, National Museum in Poznań / Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland, May 29–31, 2025
Deadline: Sep 6, 2024

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Emergence, transformation, maintenance. Private collections open to the public from the 18th century to the present day.

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The relationship between private collecting and public museums formation has a long trajectory in the history of museums. Over the last three centuries, private collecting has developed swiftly around the world. Although initially it was an activity reserved for privileged groups, reflecting acquisitive interests of a wealthy individuals and their advisers, over the time it covered almost all circles of society. Since the 18th century private collectors have been opening their collections to the public. Apart from the princely and aristocratic collections, in the 19th century also bankers, industrialists, art dealers and connoisseurs, as well as doctors, artists and representatives of the intelligentsia more and more often made their collections available. The existence of collections opened to the public frequently ended with the death of collectors and the subsequent sale of their property. Sometimes, however, private collection turned into a private museum, which material existence was ensured by funds left by collectors and managed by their family, heirs or a special foundation. Established in this way centuries ago, private museums often function to this day in private hands, as a part of foundations formed by the collectors themselves, or transformed into a state institution. Private collections and museums currently owned by the state and managed by public museums are often arranged with respect for the private history of the collections and the original concept of the founder. Usually, the latter are located within the collectors' residences as to some extent, it was almost a rule that private collections were made available within collectors' homes - in apartments, city palaces or country residences. Less often, collectors founded special buildings dedicated to gather, display and make their collections available to the public. The conference will be dedicated to private collections open to the public. Although there are many important aspects related to the functioning of private collections, we are not interested in the history of private collections, their establishment and content, nor in the shaping of collections on the art market. Investigating the relationship between private collections and public sphere we are interested in different types of private museums, from art and science collections open to the public, to houses of famous personalities (e.g. artists' ateliers, writers' houses). We aim to reflect mostly on such problems as:

1. Accessibility of collections (On what terms collections were accessible and available for the public? What was the legal and organizational framework and principles of visiting the collections? How museums facilitate access to the collection and how the idea of accessibility has change over time base, since the moment of foundation of collection to the present day?).

2. Display of collections (How individual concepts of collectors are visible in a display? What was the impact of exhibitions in public museums on the arrangement of private collections? What are the methods of displaying private collections after transformation into public institution - preserving the arrangement proposed by the collector or rethinking the old concept, and opening to new exhibition trends?).

3. Collectors and their vision (How collectors' original intentions manifested themselves in their museums and how is it maintained present day? How the original concept or a will of the collector may impact the current appearance of the collection?).

4. Work of museologists with private collections (How to research private collections in public display or transformed into public institution? How these collections evolved over time, and how have museums reinterpreted these collections to remain relevant to contemporary and diverse audiences? How museum cooperate with collector's descendants? What is the legal situation of the collections, especially in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, where the collections were plundered and dispersed during World War II, and then nationalized during communism?).

Applicants are kindly asked to submit: a brief abstract (250 words) and a short biographical note (100 words).
The deadline to apply is Friday 6 September 2024.

Please email your proposals to: m.lukasiewicz@amu.edu.pl, kamila.kludkiewicz@amu.edu.pl

Reference:

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