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CALL FOR PAPERS

International Conference on

Creative Heritage in the Making – Contemporary Folk Design

23–24 April 2020
Budapest, Hungary

Organizer: Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Ethnology (“Excellent MTA Institute”), Historical Ethnography Department

Location: Research Centre for the Humanities, H-1097 Budapest, Tóth Kálmán u. 4., 8th floor

The concept of handicraft heritage is undergoing significant transformations today. Due to dynamic social and economic transformations, experts have been continuously redefining and interpreting “folk” handicraft activities since the folkloristic discovery and different waves of revival of folk art. The socio-historical context, materials, techniques, function and usage, work organization, and market environment of “traditional” crafts have changed considerably. It is being creatively individualized while constantly referring to the community-created tradition of the past as a value that must be preserved. Craftsmen working within the revival movement continue to rediscover and further develop object-making techniques necessary for their activities, often using the traditional material culture of the distant or more recent past as a point of reference. Designers (with degrees in various genres of applied arts, industrial design, and fashion), however, adopt an entirely different approach, modernizing objects and techniques with much more creative freedom than “traditional” craftsmen. Artists’ statements and self-definition are indispensable for a clearer definition of the artisans’ image and the categorization of their activities.

Discourses about the phenomena of craft design suggest new concepts and provide frameworks for new interpretations, representations, and displays. Certain traditional object-making activities are called to life and sustained through local practices, which then affects the definition of a community’s identity. (The UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage system encompasses such knowledge and traditions in a transparent way.) Some museums have a predilection for collecting contemporary objects, and many excellent exhibitions display these creations, just about elevating them to the status of artworks. Another issue to re-consider is that contemporary artistic crafts

and design activities are, in fact, cultural capital and naturally represent – or could represent – a life-career opportunity and economic value that has not yet been sufficiently recognized and utilized.

The ethnographer's task is not only to provide a detailed description of the technical conditions and technologies that have changed in certain handicrafts, and to uncover the makers' changed social background and self-identity, but also to highlight the motivating factors influencing the process of creation, as well as to produce an aesthetic analysis of the end product/artwork. An applied aspect of ethnography is the extent to which researchers take on an active role in providing expertise in the advisory, mentoring, qualifying, curating, and advocacy aspects of the crafts movements, and the kinds of issues and responsibilities (self-reflections) that arise from it.

Each country maintains different practices as to how and to what extent handicraft activities continue to exist: as an independent craft industry or as activities of specialists (or hobbyist individuals), or having to reinterpret goals and reach audiences through an applied folk art design or tourism industry. Internationally, a lot has been published on the place and status of folk art and handicraft heritage in the complex art system, revealing a kind of theoretical and value categorization. Comparative studies could highlight the fact that, due to their divergent economic and historical backgrounds, each country may generate different concepts and approaches to contemporary object design.

As a result of continuously and intensively changing frames of reference, the research of folk art and handicraft heritage is rife with new and emerging issues and requires a complex methodology. Our hope is that international exchange of experiences would enrich the "toolbox" needed to develop new approaches and interpretations and call for new perspectives in the field of handicrafts and design, which can also benefit the methodology of research, museology, as well as the concepts and practices of intangible cultural heritage.

There is no registration fee for the conference; the cost of meals and accommodations is covered by the organizers. Accommodations for all participants will be in the Domus Hotel near the conference venue.

Accommodation costs will be reimbursed through the Academic Exchange Program; please indicate if your institute has such cooperation with the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and whether travel and accommodation costs are eligible. Travel support for conference participants outside of the Academic Exchange Program is limited, so please indicate such request by email.

Application deadline: 10 January 2019

We ask for one page long (about 3500 characters) extract of your presentation.

The conference organizers provide an opportunity to publish the papers in *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica*.

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