

CONFERENCE, 2004 Berlin, Germany

Rooms with a view. Historic House Museums and their surroundings

(NOTE: Papers are arranged alphabetically by country)

BRAZIL - "The House Museum Emeric Marcier"
Leonardo Castro de Carvalho, Barbacena

When the Foundation of Culture from Barbacena began work to revitalize the Sant'anna site into a house museum, the biggest challenge was how to interact with the neighborhood population. This focused upon helping neighbors respect, enjoy and engage themselves in the legacy of the "main sacrum artist" in Brazil during the 20th century. Emeric Marcier lived there for 42 years but the house had been completely abandoned, so saving the murals and the integrity of the house and site became the first priority.

Today there are more than 800 meters of footpath, an organic community vegetable garden, a playground and small theater plus five kiosks. An artistic school for neighborhood children is also planned. Community involvement has resulted in knowledge about its own history and the value of a house museum.

BRAZIL - "Revitalization of the Acude Museum: Art, Nature and Rio"
Marcio Doctors and Paulo Sergio Moreas de SA, Rio de Janeiro

The Acude Museum, nominated as a UNESCO Heritage Site, focuses upon the museum, nature and the city to combine the art collection of founder Raymundo Castro Maya with the forest/urban surroundings. Implemented between 1999 and 2003, the permanent art collection calls attention to the role of preservation of the Tijuca Rainforest, including an open-air exhibition circuit and installations by contemporary artists to link both with the City.

Formerly a private foundation, the Castro Maya Museums, now under the Ministry of Culture, include reflecting Brazilian, European and Eastern art and includes decorative and contemporary art in mansions located in the Santa Teresa district as well as the Acude Museum, located in a National Park. Educational and outreach programs attract local audiences and visitors from around the world.

GERMANY - "Prussian Palaces and Gardens: The Brandenburg Foundation"
Gabriele Horn, Berlin and Potsdam

An independent organization established in 1994 by the state government, the Berlin Brandenburg Foundation (SPSG) combines two foundations financed by the German Federal Government and the states of Berlin and Brandenburg. Included are dozens of palaces and parks, many designated as "World Heritage Sites." These "cultural landscapes", developed between the 18th and early 20th centuries, are known as the "Potsdam-Berliner Kulturlandschaft" with the landscaping beginning in the mid-19th century at Sanssouci Palace.

SPSG is responsible for protection of these environs by an historical preservation law and cooperates with other authorities to retain the view between separate parks. This includes cooperation with state ministries and the city of Potsdam for directional planning to protect and preserve the cultural landscape as an integral part of historical monuments and gardens.

NETHERLANDS - "The Sonneveld House: Home and Garden in the Modernist Style"
Hetty Berens, Rotterdam

The Sonneveld house museum, one of the best preserved examples of Dutch Functionalist domestic architecture, includes the whole interior as well as the garden designed by the same architect. Restoration took place in the late 1990s when the Netherlands Architecture Institute decided to return the house and property to its 1933 status.

At that time new ideas about living healthy and enjoying the landscape played an important role in its design with attention paid to use of outdoor space. The original garden layout was well documented, focusing upon a smooth transition from indoors to outdoors plus application of modern building materials. In the 1930s the Modern Movement focused upon design principles in accordance with social, functionalist and aesthetic ideas. After 70 years the modernity of the Sonneveld house and garden still surprise visitors.

POLAND - "Uphagen House, The 18th Century Patrician House in Gdansk"
Zofia Maciakowska, Gdansk

This tenement house on the main street had been in the Uphagen family since 1775 and remained untouched after purchase by a rich merchant and member of the City Council. After the mid-19th century changes in the neighborhood resulted in dismantling the porches and summer drawing rooms in area houses and the passage between home privacy and public life changed.

Adaptations for new purposes followed but Uphagen House remained one of the last to undergo such changes. The Uphagen family and the City Council agreed to create a museum in its interiors that existed from 1911 until 1944. The house, totally destroyed in March 1945, was reconstructed in the 1950s. However, it was impossible to restore its surroundings and the view from the windows.

RUSSIA - "Pavel Kuznetsov House Museum"
Igor V. Sorokin, Saratov

Opened for the public in 2001, this historic house museum is one of the five branches of the Saratov State Art Museum. It includes the garden, the memorial artist house and part of the wing in the yard. The two-story wooden building has space for temporary exhibitions and two rooms with historic exhibits as well as the artist's studio. Future plans for the museum complex include the house and garden as well as the picture gallery of artist Pavel Kuznetsov's contemporaries canvases.

Art actions (auctions?) and one-day outdoor exhibitions are frequently held in the museum garden, serving the community at large. The museum's policy includes close contact with modern local artists and other activities focus upon the city environment and new forms of work with the audience. In 2004 the Ministry of Culture presented an "Achievements in Culture" award of excellence.

SCOTLAND - "Stewardship, Continuity and Creativity: Examples of New Thinking on Conservation and Management"

Peter Burman, National Trust for Scotland

As custodians of cultural and natural heritage it is perhaps a duty to add a layer of beauty and interest from the present, engaging the public and turning the visitor into a participant. In Scotland private owners commission works of art to add a layer of contemporary interpretation into the world of the past.

The National Trust aspires to be a leader in conservation, stewardship, continuity and creativity while following the philosophy of "As much as necessary but as little as possible." The opportunity to connect with a local community may include acquisitions of property with its collections and designed landscape. The Black Environment Network shows how diverse communities welcome country houses and gardens, traditionally interpreted as "alien". Such opportunities enrich the nation and the access to historic properties is one of our most exciting challenges, with strong political overtones.

UK - "Filming and Corporate Entertainment within a Historic Environment - Opportunities and Threats"

Gabriella Ruth Williamson, London

Filming and corporate entertainment have become a vital part of life for many historic houses, palaces, museums and galleries while government funding and increased maintenance costs require income from ticket and shop sales to survive. This publicity also encourages management to ensure both collection contents and building fabric remain in good condition.

The increasing use of historic venues for filming and corporate entertainment is a global phenomenon. Each is done with a different level of security, alertness and protection. Some allow events to take place only in confined places where they can be controlled more easily; others allow these events to take place only in the open. Good management, vigilance coupled with common sense and experience help balance opportunities and threats from filming and corporate entertainment.

USA - "The Gamble House: Landscape Design and Setting for a Suburban California Winter 'Residence'"

Ann Scheid, California

Architects Charles and Henry Greene located this house on the highest point of the site with views of two significant natural features, the San Gabriel mountains to the north east, and the Arroyo Seco (a vast ravine) to

the west. In 1900, especially in Pasadena, sleeping out of doors on porches became popular in Southern California at a time when tuberculosis became a major cause of death in an urbanized population. Architects and builders included one sleeping porch per bedroom, as in the Gamble House. Influenced by the Arts and Crafts philosophy, such houses relate to nature with trees preserved and driveways concealed to minimize the height of the house itself. Although many trees and other plants have been removed, restoration of the original Gamble House landscape is being planned. Returning to the original design may result in controversy in the local community and among architectural historians and architects.

USA - "Rooms Outside and In"
Kathleen O'Connor, Texas

Once described as "an oasis in the middle of Houston", Bayou Bend, home of collector Ima Hogg, is now the American decorative arts wing of the Museum of Fine Arts. Surrounded with 14 acres of woodlands and garden, the house and its collections are inseparable and challenge educators to interpret both together. Many of the gardens were created as outdoor rooms and can be considered as "rooms for a view" and often used for concerts.

Crossing the bridge to reach Bayou Bend often means entering a different world for visitors experiencing these spaces as they learn about relationships between house and gardens. These "rooms" help accommodate large crowds that could not be shown through the house and also call attention to their role within the community of Houston, which has no zoning and few public parks.

USA - "The Use of Museums in the Process of Creating Family Histories"
Patricia Marton, Illinois

House museums and their collections can serve as resources for family history when younger people interview older ones about the times when they grew up. Written in story form and illustrated with family photographs and community resources, the interviewers learn about life during earlier times. Museum replicas and/or houses can play central roles in this process by supplying materials similar to those owned by family members. These projects includes information about interior and exterior features that may have changed over time while identifying and comparing similar characteristics in collections and museums. Her research has included visiting late 19th century family homes in Germany and Norway as well as regional house museums providing a more complete view of family's life.

TOURS

- Charlottenburg Palace New Pavilion, Belvedere and Mausoleum, KPM-Archives.
- Potsdam: Pfingstberg-Belvedere, Marmorpalais, New Garden.
- Grunewald Castle, Berlin.
- Glienicke Castle and Garden.plus Glienicker Brucke (by boat).
- Meierei, New Garden