



## **Remembrances of Things Lost: Triggering the memory of the historic house through loss (and regain) Belgrade, Serbia 22-26 October 2023**

Over a month has passed since we wrapped up our annual conference, and it is time to cast a look back at the exciting programming of **Remembrances of Things Lost: Triggering the memory of the historic house through loss (and regain)** held in Belgrade, Serbia on October 22-26 2023. You can rediscover the full theme and programme on the BELGRADEM HIST23 website: <https://www.belgrademhist.com/> .

On Sunday, October 22, for participants who arrived early, there was the chance to visit a number of historic house museums and museums in Belgrade. In the evening, the DEMHIST Meet and Greet was held at the Museum of Science and Technology where participants were hosted and greeted by the director Zoran Lević.

We started the first day at the Yugoslav Film Archive with registration efficiently run by student volunteers from the Art History Department (Faculty of Philosophy) of the University of Belgrade. Registration was accompanied with handing out materials from various Serbian museums which was a way to spread the news about the important work these museums do.



*Milja Stijović introducing the conference to onsite and remote attendees*

After the Official Opening and introductory speeches by DEMHIST chair Yvonne Ploum, ICOM Serbia Chair Nikola Krstović, and conference organizer Milja Stijović, participants were transferred to the Royal Compound where they were guided by Milica Marčić. The Royal Compound is a complex of residences built by King Alexander I for the Karađorđević royal family between 1924 and 1937. It consists of two primary residences: the Royal Palace and the White Palace. The Royal Palace, a grand stucco villa in the Serbo-Byzantine style by architect Živojin Nikolić and assisted by Russian immigrant architects Nikolai Krasnov and Victor Lukomsky, was built from 1924 to 1929 as a home for King Alexander I and Queen Maria. The tour included the formal entrance hall with details taken from Serbian medieval art, Blue Salon, Royal Dining Room, Royal Library, Atrium, the Salon of the Wedding Gifts or Palma il Vecchio Salon – and The King’s Office. The palace's basement features a unique leisure room with a cinema theatre and billiard tables.



*Visiting the Royal Compound*

We then continued to the Museum of African Art where we enjoyed lunch in the museum's beautiful garden. The Museum of African Art's interesting history is rooted in the collections of journalist and diplomat Dr. Zdravko Pečar and his wife Veda Zagorac who donated much of their private collection to the Assembly of the City of Belgrade. It opened to the public in 1977. The Zagorac/Pečar collection forms the basis of the museum's permanent exhibition which has been enriched through acquisitions and donations of both individual pieces and whole collections. The museum collection now contains several thousand items of authentic traditional art objects from countries of West, Central and East Africa. The museum curator Milica Pešić Naumov gave a talk about the history and importance of the Museum of African Art in Belgrade as an introduction to the keynote speech by Arc. David Kojo Derban (Ghana), "Survivors of a Forgotten Past – Reviving the Ashanti Traditional Building". He spoke about the Ashanti sacred spaces or temples as the only survivors of the unique traditional architecture of the Ashanti after the destruction of the Kingdom's capital city of Kumasi by the British in 1874. This ushered in the age of colonialism and modernism which completely suppressed the artistic Ashanti building traditions and aesthetics to this day. He also prescribed two ways to revive its memory and significance to world architectural cultural heritage. The talk was followed by an interesting discussion moderated by Maria Szadkowska, Head of the Center of the Monuments of the Modern Architecture City of Prague Museum Czech Republic.



*David Kojo Derban at the Museum of African Art*



The evening reception was held at the House of Jevrem Grujić where participants were greeted by the owner Mr Lazar Šećerović. The house was the first heritage building designated by the Cultural Heritage Protection Institute of the City of Belgrade in 1961. The descendants of Jevrem Grujić, a prominent figure of Serbian 19th century diplomacy, still live in this house and the life and work of members and descendants of the Grujić family are associated with the important political and social events in Serbia.



*Conference participants at the House of Jevrem Grujić*

The second full conference day began with the keynote presentation "Beirut's Afterlife/Afterlives: Heritage, Remembrance and Amnesia by Nelly P. Abboud from Lebanon," and was moderated by Yvonne Ploum. She spoke eloquently about Beirut, comparing it to a phoenix that rises from the ashes after being ravaged multiple times. As the capital of Lebanon, Beirut is a city full of contradictions. It has endured various demolitions throughout its ancient and contemporary histories. The city still has problems recovering despite continued efforts to remediate the damage. However, are reconstruction and rehabilitation sufficient to nurture healing, or are remembrance and mourning vital to new beginnings? What steps must be taken to ensure a more stable and healthy revival? Is it possible to rebuild and resist without acknowledging our historical foundations? Finally, why do we hold on to certain memories and forget others?

The day continued with two full paper sessions. The session "Community Engagement and Changing Values" was moderated by Demhist vice-chair, Antonio Ponte with papers given by Iman Afify (Egypt), Luz Frias-Hernandez and Dr. Stephen Cannon-Brookes (UK), Maria Riadova (Russia), Lingun Li (UK), and Timna Seligman and Meydad Eliyahu (Israel) that explored the way in which memories connected to historic houses and sites are used to build community narrative and action.

In the afternoon, Yvonne Ploum stepped in for Milja Stijović to moderate the session "Remembrance Lost & Regained" which explored the use of objects to trigger and support narrative. The session began with a report from the XVI Brazilian Meeting on Palaces and Historic House Museums "The Power of Memory and the Strength of Oblivion" by Paolo Costas and proceeded to presentations by Denise Maior-Barron (UK and Romania), Gabriel de Santa Ana Aguiar (Spain), Yoshihiro Nakatani (Japan), and Nirit Shalev Khalifa (Israel).

Wednesday began with the choice of one of two organised guided walking tours: Sephardic Belgrade (tour initially organised by Instituto Cervantes and Jewish municipality in Belgrade), led by Čedomila Marinković and Belgrade Art Nouveau Architecture led by Vladana Putnik Prica, who initially developed the tour. Technical issues at the Film Archive required a change of venue for the sessions and the conference was welcomed by the Ethnographic Museum who hosted us for the day. The morning session gave us the opportunity to learn more about the current process of protection of historic houses in Serbia. The experts were from following institutions: Belgrade City Museum (Angelina Bankovic, PhD Museum Advisor), Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia (Ana Radovanac Živanov, Conservator Researcher, Senior Consultant), The Heritage House Belgrade (Dina Debeljak, Curator) and University in Belgrade – Faculty of Philosophy, Art History Department (Vladana Putnik Prica, PhD. Senior Research Associate). Milja Stijović moderated the session and discussion. The afternoon paper session on the general conference theme was moderated by Vladana Putnik Prica and included papers by Lidija Cvetić Vučković (Serbia), Vasily Pankratov (Russia), Suzanne Bravery (Australia), Vera Gonçalves (Portugal) and instead of Elizaveta Fokina (Russia), Olga Papadina (Russia) and Alexandra Gerasimova (Russia) presented the paper.



*Learning about Belgrade, on foot and in the lecture hall*

The day ended with everyone boarding the Sirena boat cruise along the Danube for the Gala dinner and dance that will go down in DEMHIST lore as a night not to be missed!

We again changed location for the last day of the conference, decamping to the Princess Ljubica Residence for the annual DEMHIST (hybrid) General Assembly and tours of the house. Princess Ljubica's Residence is a palace located in Belgrade, designated a Monument of Culture of Exceptional Importance. In 1829 Prince Miloš Obrenović decided that it was time to build a new residence in place of the old palace across the way. The residence is one of the most remarkable buildings among the preserved examples of civil architecture in the first half of 19th century Belgrade, built according to the ideas and under supervision of Hadži-Neimar, the pioneer of Serbian building and construction. Constructed in 1829-30, Prince Miloš planned that the residence would have a twofold purpose – to be a home for his family, Princess Ljubica and his sons Milan and Mihailo, later rulers of Serbia, and also a residential palace. The General Assembly was for DEMHIST members only, other conference participants were able to enjoy a tour of The Cathedral Church of St. Michael the Archangel and visit the Serbian Orthodox Church Museum. At the General Assembly, everyone came together for a tour of the Residence given by the curator of the Belgrade City Museum Dušan Jovanović.



*The Princess Ljubica Residence*

During the General Assembly, Remko Jansonius and Daniela Ball presented the results of the elections for the DEMHIST board for 2023-26. We wish to thank all the candidates for putting their names forward, whether they were elected or not. We congratulate the new board, and wish them luck as they start on this new adventure together. The DEMHIST 2023-26 board is made up of Timna Seligman (Israel) as Chair and ten board members: Vice Chairs: Milja Stijović (Serbia) and Roberto Andreu Quevedo



(Guatemala); Secretary: Cecilia Casas Desantes (Spain); Treasurer: Frank Louhenapessy (Netherlands); Councillors: António Ponte (Portugal), Caroline Gaillard (France), Gianluca Kannès (Italy), Ximena Jordán (Mexico), Yvonne Ploum (Netherlands), and Zhanna Manukyan (Armenia). This is also an opportunity to thank the parting board, some of whom continue with us, and some who sadly will be leaving official positions within the committee. We truly hope that Remko Jansonius, Yoshihiro Nakatani, Amilcar Vargas, Dalia Gallico, Denis Verdier-Magneau, and Maria Szadkowska will continue to be involved and active DEMHIST members.

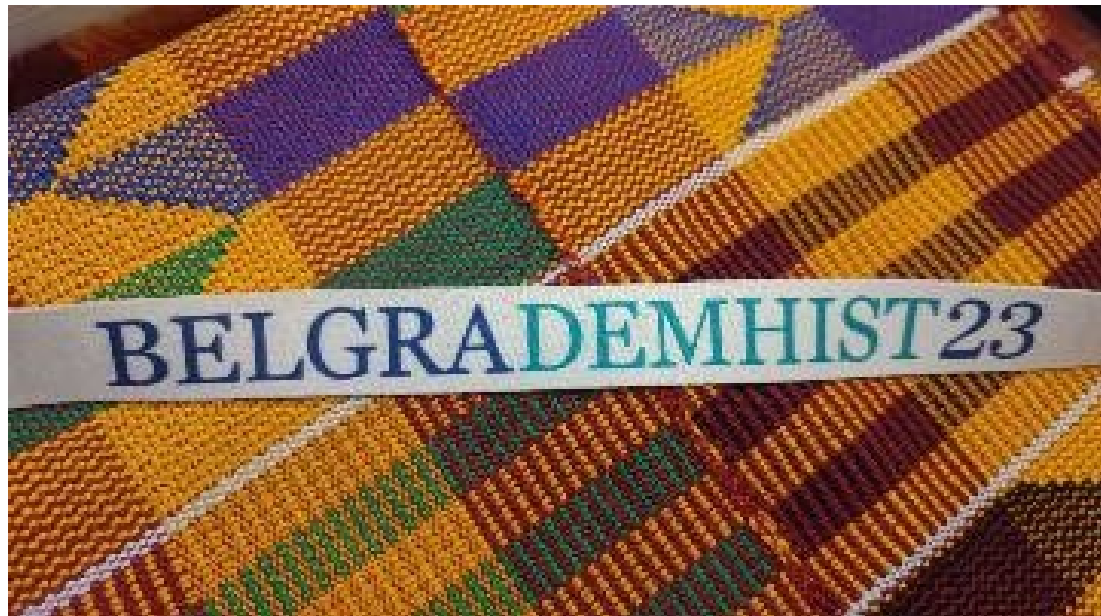


*Conference participants at the Royal Compound*

25 participants enjoyed in the post-conference tour on Friday October 27. The first stop was Krusedol monastery, founded in the early 16th century by members of Serbian medieval dynasty Brankovic. From there, we drove to the close-by baroque town of Sremski Karlovci. This town, with its interesting and rich past, left a deep mark on the national history of Serbia. We then enjoyed a tour and honey and wine tasting at the Zivanovic family museum of Beekeeping and Winemaking. Their wines were popular at the Palace of Vienna, and were even served on the Titanic! In a good mood, we left the winery and drove to the magnificent Petrovarad Fortress and explored the town of Novi Sad. Our exploration included churches, houses, and art exhibitions. After Novi Sad we drove to a local farm for a great domestic lunch.

A quick summary of the conference shows we had 61 participants from all over the world, including 10 remote attendees and 7 student volunteers. There were 2 keynote sessions and 4 paper sessions: Community Engagement and Changing Values; Remembrance Lost & Regained; General Theme; and a session devoted to the current situation in Serbia.

17 papers were presented and 4 lecturers from Serbia. There were also 4 poster presentations which were available for viewing during the conference. The conference changed location 7 times and the tech team, Anita Portanje and Jochem van Rijs from the ErfgoedAcademie in the Netherlands were there to make the remote attendance of the conference possible with great professionalism and smiles. They donated their skills to the realisation of the conference, which including packing and unpacking their equipment 10 times.



We look forward to seeing you all at our next annual conference in Tbilisi, Georgia in 2024.

#### DEMHIST Board

(Timna Seligman, Cecilia Casas Desantes, Frank Louhenapessy, Milja Stijovic, Roberto Andreu Quevedo, António Ponte, Yvonne Ploum, Caroline Gaillard, Gianluca Kannès, Ximena Jordan, Zhanna Manukyan).