



Demeures historiques-musées  
Historic House Museums  
Residencias históricas-museos

**“The Truth is rarely pure, and never simple”<sup>1</sup>**

***Authenticity in the Conservation of Historic House Museums and Palaces***

Joint Conference of the  
International Committee for Historic House Museums (DEMHIST)  
and the Association of European Royal Residences (ARRE),  
at the Palais de Compiègne,  
Compiègne/France, 7-10 October 2014

Call for papers

The Palais de Compiègne was designed by Jacques-Ange Gabriel for Louis XV, realised under Louis XVI, and refurnished for Napoleon I. Napoleon III made it one of his favourite residences , for the famous so called “Séries” of Compiègne. The result is magnificent apartments reflecting the style, taste and aspirations of the eras, each contributing layers of cultural attributes and, together, defining the significance of the site. This notion of authenticity, developing over time, is the context for much of our work in historic house museums and palaces, and is the theme for our conference.

The subjects and principles of conservation have been defined in an on-going process, from the Charters of Athens (1931) to those of Venice (1964) and Burra (1981). The focus of conservation has shifted from monuments to settings and places of cultural significance; methods, tasks and responsibilities have gradually been specified. The Declarations of Nara (1994), San Antonio (1996) and Quebec (2008) have particularly considered the idea of authenticity and the “Spirit of the Place” as elements of cultural identity and as social values which have to be safeguarded and transmitted.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, authenticity does not have a single definition as it relates to the cultural context and the pre-occupations of the age in which work is taking place. The modernist 1950s and 1960s tended to make contemporary additions to historic buildings which rejected decoration and insisted on the honesty of the new. The postmodernist 1980s and 1990s tended to reconstruct historic buildings and interiors, with an attitude of modesty and recovery. In discussions about conservation and presentation, aesthetic, practical, financial, political and ethical arguments merge, and the decisions taken by curators, conservators and owners are determined not only by their conflicting interests and preferences but also by the notions of their time<sup>3</sup>.

So, where do we stand today? Fifty years after Cesare Brandi's "Teoria del Restauro", the National Museum of the Palais de Compiègne, the Association of European Royal Residences (ARRE) and the Committee for Historic House Museums (DEM HIST) of the International Council of Museum (ICOM) want to discuss up-to-date approaches to conservation from an ethical point of view, taking "authenticity" as starting point. The conference will look at the principles which have been applied in recent years and offer important current case studies of historic house museums and palaces.

The lectures will take place at the Palais de Compiègne. Excursions will go to other palaces in the region. Two workshops will offer an open forum for discussions. English-French simultaneous translation will be provided.

If you want to contribute, please, send an abstract of 200 words and a biography of 100 words until December 31, 2013, to:

[compiègne2014@gmail.com](mailto:compiègne2014@gmail.com)

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<sup>1</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

<sup>2</sup> All texts under: [www.icomos.org/fr/chartes-et-autres-textes-doctrinaux](http://www.icomos.org/fr/chartes-et-autres-textes-doctrinaux).

<sup>3</sup> Katrin Janis, *Restaurierungsethik im Kontext von Wissenschaft und Praxis*, München 2005, p. 93-142.