

ICOM International Committee for Museums and Collections of Decorative Arts and Design
Annual Conference

Dwelling, Design, and the Decorative Arts
Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, United States

Conference: November 19-21, 2024

Post-conference tour: November 22-23, 2024

The Peabody Essex Museum, in Salem, Massachusetts, is the oldest continually operating museum in the United States, founded in 1799. And so it is fitting that it is also the first museum to install period rooms within its galleries as well as being an early leader in the preservation of historic houses. This commitment to “rooms” reflects a longstanding preoccupation with the domestic sphere in the world of decorative arts and design. Many of the decorative objects found in museums today were originally made for use in the home and by families, and so their interpretation and study must grapple with the domestic in a myriad of ways.

How do domestic objects reflect the values and mores of their time? How do they declare or hide their production histories? How do homes function as constructed spaces, and how do museums reconstruct them or, as is sometimes the case, create imagined interiors? Questions around gender, comfort, emotion, taste, function, politics, nationhood, technology are just a few of the topics that emerge when considering the decorative arts of the home.

This conference explores domesticity and the home through decorative arts and design, and we invite papers that interpret all these terms (domestic, home, decorative arts, design) from a broad perspective. The town of Salem and the Peabody Essex Museum itself have numerous homes dating from the seventeenth through early nineteenth centuries; however, this conference also welcomes papers that explore the domestic sphere both before and after the heyday of Salem’s historic architecture. In addition, explorations of non-traditional domestic spaces and their objects (ships, trains, institutional homes) are equally welcome, as we are interested in the “production of home” through objects in unexpected places.

Why Salem?

Salem is a historic New England city that served as a hub of cultural exchange at the crossroads of the early Atlantic World. An international port city, Salem was an eighteenth and nineteenth century center for global trade, art, furniture making and architecture. Today it is home to a density of historic houses and examples of architecture from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, including Yin Yu Tang, a reconstructed and relocated nineteenth century multigenerational merchant’s home from the Huizhou region of China. Salem is perhaps most famous for the Salem Witch Trials of 1692, and the city continues to explore and engage with this troubling yet compelling history. Its location on the North Shore of Massachusetts makes it a site of rich maritime history, and the city’s harbor provides both a dramatic backdrop

to the workings of this contemporary community and an important and ongoing area of historic research.

While Salem will serve as our home base for the conference, we will also explore sites of historic and contemporary decorative arts and design throughout the region. The post conference tour will take participants farther afield into broader New England. For attendees coming from outside the United States, this conference represents a unique opportunity to engage with Boston and New England's rich museum resources. Its location along the Eastern seaboard also makes it convenient for further travel to major cities such as New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.

How do I apply?

Send an abstract of 250–300 words and a short CV to ICDAD_Salem_2024@pem.org.

Proposals must be written in English, and participants will also be expected to give their presentations in English.

Presentations should be 15 minutes in length and include a visual presentation component (Powerpoint, Google Slides, etc.). Results of the conference may be published, and participants will have the opportunity to participate in the publication should that occur.

The deadline to submit proposals is July 1, and applicants will be informed of the results by July 15.

Presenters will be expected to cover their own registration and travel expenses. Travel grants for junior ICOM members (under 40 years old) are available.

Please note: ICDAD welcomes abstracts from museum professionals worldwide, members and non-members. However, all participants must be individual members (voting or non-voting) or representatives of institutional members of ICOM and ICDAD at the time of the conference. Please check with your national committee of ICOM beforehand if you are eligible for membership.

Find more information about how to become a member of ICOM and ICDAD here:

<https://icom.museum/en/get-involved/>.

If you are already a member of ICOM, please log in to the IRIS memberspace and choose ICDAD as your primary International Committee: <https://icom-museum.force.com/login>

Commenté [1]: @sarah_chasse@pem.org
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@Eva.VanRegenmortel@stad.gent
@anika.reineke@gmail.com hi all! Just realized that we didn't set a due date for the proposals! Does this timing make sense? Thanks!