

EDITORS' PREFACE

Museums acquire, conserve, research, communicate and exhibit according to their own definition the heritage of humanity (cultural heritage) as well as the environment in which it is integrated (natural heritage). The institutions see themselves as the guardians, preservers and labelling institutions of »authentic« things and thus »singled out« in many ways. With the claim of presenting original, thus »real« objects in exhibitions and collections, they generate the feeling of a supposedly direct encounter with the past but also with the unknown or the otherwise unreachable. In their own claim, this makes them »authentic places« like historical buildings, urban ensembles or memorial sites that appear in a similar way. All of them fulfil the widespread longing for authenticity, which seeks to connect the present with the past, one's own self with the other, one's own questions with scientific knowledge in the mode of the genuine, true and real.

However, whether and to what extent museums, as well as archives and similar institutions are actual places of authenticity should certainly be questioned. The contributions collected in this volume show, in a fundamental way and using selected case studies, the different dimensions of dealing with the phenomenon of »authenticity«. Relevant aspects in collections, research, conservation, restoration, exhibition and learning in museums and in dealing with cultural heritage have been highlighted. The contributions reflect the most diverse disciplinary perspectives and approaches of the authors to a topic that is of great relevance across all disciplinary boundaries and can only be researched on an interdisciplinary basis. The »types of museums« covered range from history, archaeology and natural history to science and art-museums. Specific topics are dealt with in university museums and biographical museums. However, contributions also go beyond this in that they touch on other collecting institutions such as libraries and archives. The collections represented range from archaeology and art to scientific and musical instruments as well as books.

The present volume, »Museums – Places of Authenticity?« for the most part is based on the international conference of the same name, which took place in Mainz, in 2016. Around 200 scholars from various disciplines as well as representatives of practice from museums, collections and educational institutions discussed the »authentic« – the supposedly »real«, »true« and »original« – in fifty contributions in thirteen panels and discussion groups. The good international participation included speakers and attendees from Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, France, Great Britain, Italy, Portugal, Hungary, Qatar, the United States and Australia. Another part of the contributions in this volume result from two jointly organized conferences of the Leibniz Research Alliance Historical Authenticity and the Museums and Collections of the University of Cambridge in Cambridge 2017 and 2019.

With this publication, we would like to inspire the continuation of the debate on the at first sight unambiguous value of »authenticity« in institutions for the preservation of cultural heritage. Beyond this we hope that the contributions collected here will encourage fundamental reflection on collection strategies, conservation and restoration practice, as well as the engagement- and learning activities of museums and other collection-led research institutions. While the aim of the conferences was to take stock of and discuss as broadly as possible the discipline-based views and approaches to the topic of »authenticity«, the present publication presents a specific selection of these perspectives. The conference and the publication are intended as a contribution to further advance the discussion in research, but also to having an impact on the public.

The publication is a result of the close cooperation within the Leibniz Research Network Historical Authenticity – which also organised the conferences together with the research museums in the Leibniz Association. With its research alliances, the Leibniz Association has created an instrument for pooling the research

of its member institutes on certain socially relevant topics. In the Alliance on Historical Authenticity, the thematic focus of »Identification and communication of authenticity in museums« in particular has contributed to the linking of players from the collection, restoration, exhibiting and learning and in doing so has jointly discussed questions of different collection logics, restoration ethics and the reception of the authentic by visitors.

The content of the conference was planned by a programme committee consisting of representatives of the research museums and other research institutions. The Deutsche Museumsbund was involved as a cooperation partner, as was »mainzed«, the Mainz Centre for Digitality in the Humanities, which accompanied the conference digitally on Twitter. The conference in Mainz was supported by the Daimler and Benz Foundation. The conferences in Cambridge were supported by the DAAD-University of Cambridge Research Hub for German Studies with funds from the German Federal Foreign Office and the Arts Council England.

We would like to thank all the authors and the members of the conference committee, who also formed the editorial board for this publication, especially Achim Saupe, the coordinator of the research association. Many thanks go to the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum as publisher, to the colleagues of the publishing house at the RGZM, especially Claudia Nickel, Marie Reiter, Martin Schönfelder and Michael Braun for editing and typesetting, Anna Kleuser and Friederike Mangelsen for the editorial support of the editors and the organisation of the conference and Joy Titheridge, Alex Kay, Debbie Jenne and Sophie Leighton for translations and the English editing.

The Leibniz Research Alliance Historical Authenticity has led to an enormous increase in the exchange and discussion between Leibniz research museums and far beyond. We hope that this book will help to advance the discussion about a central value for our society internationally. It is therefore our concern that the publication, which also appears as an open access e-book, is discussed, shared and received as »open« as possible.

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Dominik Kimmel

Stefan Brüggerhoff

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE »MUSEUMS, PLACES OF AUTHENTICITY?« MAINZ, MARCH 3-4, 2016

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Organizer

Leibniz-Forschungsverbund Historische Authentizität
in association with:

Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum – Leibniz-Forschungsinstitut für Archäologie, Mainz (Conference Host)

Deutsches Bergbau-Museum Bochum – Leibniz-Forschungsmuseum für Georessourcen

Deutsches Museum, München

Deutsches Schifffahrtsmuseum – Leibniz-Institut für Maritime Geschichte, Bremerhaven

Germanisches Nationalmuseum – Leibniz-Forschungsmuseum für Kulturgeschichte, Nürnberg

Museum für Naturkunde – Leibniz-Institut für Evolutions- und Biodiversitätsforschung, Berlin

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Frankfurt am Main, Görlitz, Dresden

Zoologisches Forschungsmuseum Alexander Koenig – Leibniz-Institut für Biodiversität der Tiere, Bonn

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The Leibniz Research Alliance Historical Authenticity

The Leibniz Research Alliance Historical Authenticity seeks to explore how contemporary conceptions of authenticity affect the way we deal with our cultural heritage. It currently brings together 21 Leibniz institutions and other cooperation partners including historical, educational, social sciences and spatial research institutes as well as research museums. The aim of the Research Alliance is to analyse the public, museal and scientific construction of authenticity in dealing with the past as well as its significance in terms of theory of science, culture, society and politics across countries and epochs.

(www.leibniz-historische-authentizitaet.de/en/)

The Research Museums of the Leibniz Association

The eight research museums of the Leibniz Association combine research and educational mission in a special way. In addition to permanent and special exhibitions, extensive research on the history of the earth, biodiversity and the history of culture and technology is carried out here. The unique collections comprise well over a hundred million objects and form the foundation for science. With their exhibitions, the museums reach millions of people every year and thus make an important contribution to the transfer of knowledge. The research museums of the Leibniz Association are:

- Deutsches Bergbau-Museum Bochum – Leibniz-Forschungsmuseum für Georessourcen
- Deutsches Museum, München
- Deutsches Schifffahrtsmuseum – Leibniz-Institut für Maritime Geschichte, Bremerhaven
- Germanisches Nationalmuseum – Leibniz-Forschungsmuseum für Kulturgeschichte, Nürnberg
- Museum für Naturkunde – Leibniz-Institut für Evolutions- und Biodiversitätsforschung, Berlin
- Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum – Leibniz-Forschungsinstitut für Archäologie, Mainz
- Senckenberg Gesellschaft für Naturforschung – Leibniz Institution for Biodiversity and Earth System Research, Frankfurt am Main, Görlitz, Dresden
- Zoologisches Forschungsmuseum Alexander Koenig – Leibniz-Institut für Biodiversität der Tiere, Bonn

Contact

Stefan Brüggerhoff, Museumsdirektor Deutsches Bergbau-Museum Bochum (Stefan.Brueggerhoff@bergbaumuseum.de)

Dominik Kimmel, Conference Chair and Deputy Speaker, Leibniz Research Alliance Historical Authenticity; Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum, Mainz (kimmel@rgzm.de)