

THE PUBLIC COUNTRY HOUSE:

‘TREASURE OF QUIET BEAUTY’ OR A SITE FOR PUBLIC HISTORIES?

The British country house: family home or public cultural asset? Glorious exemplar of historic taste or contested site of public history? A visually enthralling historic stage set, or a site to inform understanding of our national histories?

Taking place at the [V&A South Kensington](#) and online on **16 and 17 May 2024**, this conference will bring together an international community of colleagues working across heritage, museums, the cultural sector, and academia to explore the past, present, and potential future/s of the publicly accessible country house.

We invite proposals for 15-minute presentations of any format, as well as full panel proposals, roundtable discussions, workshops, and creative submissions. Abstracts might engage with, but are not limited to, the following themes:

- **Researching the country house:** Narratives of loss, destruction, and nostalgia; authenticity; the role of country houses in national histories; exploring received family histories of place alongside plural local, regional, national and international histories; contested and/or marginalised histories.



- **Contemporary meanings of the public country house:** Imagining the country house of the future; country houses as the nuclei around which entire communities and historical moments are contingent; climate change, the environment, and the country house; country houses as sites of creativity and innovation.
- **Evolving methodologies for interpretation and display, for a range of different audiences:** The future of country house audiences and visiting trends; critique of country house representations for different audiences; tools and methodologies for engagement, especially around presentation and interpretation (e.g. sensory or immersive experiences).

The above themes may be interpreted as broadly or creatively as you wish. We are particularly keen to hear from those working in heritage spaces, museums, galleries, cultural organisations, or as creative practitioners.

Abstracts of c. 250 words (with a brief bio) should be sent to the project's Principal Investigator, Dr Oliver Cox (O.Cox@vam.ac.uk) by **09:00 GMT (UTC+0) on Tuesday 2 January 2024**. We would be grateful if you could also outline any access requirements (e.g. online-only attendance). If you're not sure how or where your proposal might fit, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

This conference is part of **'Private' spaces for public benefit? Country houses as sites for research and knowledge exchange innovation**, a collaborative project led by the V&A and the National Trust. The project is generously supported by a British Academy Innovation Fellowship award.

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ONLINE

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