

Conference

Places of Amnesia: An Interdisciplinary perspective on forgotten pasts

University of Cambridge, April 5-6, 2016

In April 2016, the Museums and Controversial Collections project contributed to the organization of the conference *Places of Amnesia: An Interdisciplinary perspective on forgotten pasts* at the University of Cambridge. Gruia Badescu, one of the project members, has been one of the initiators and conveners of the *Places of Amnesia* interdisciplinary research group at CRASSH, University of Cambridge. In 2014/2015, *Places of Amnesia* hosted twelve seminars on various instances of forgetting, featuring diverse speakers such as Andrew Herscher, Marianne Hirsch, Wulf Kansteiner, Emiliano Perra and Xun Zhou. With the support of the Museums and Controversial Collections project, on 5th and 6th April 2016, the *Places of Amnesia* group organized its first international, interdisciplinary conference at the University of Cambridge: *Places of Amnesia: An Interdisciplinary perspective on forgotten pasts*. Gruia Badescu was one of the four conveners, alongside Daria Mattingly, Elena Zezlina and Maria Ana Correia, all PhD students at the University of Cambridge.

The conference brought together over 80 researchers from 20 countries who discussed topics related to how societies forget and sought to establish whether specific sites (people, events, knowledge) could be viewed as places of amnesia, in dialogue with Nora's lieux de mémoire. It focused on a number of overarching questions, interrogating collective memory understood as a social discursive practice: How do the intersections of personal biography with historical events influence the way in which social groups remember and forget? How do museums, ceremonies, and public events filter memory and amnesia? The aim was to encourage new and creative insights and contributions to memory studies, and indeed pave the way for a new focus on amnesia studies.

The keynote speakers were Professor Carlo Ginzburg (UCLA/University of Pisa) and Professor Paul Connerton (University of Cambridge). The conference featured a diverse set of panels, including *Marginalized Memories and Taboo Heritage*, *Holocaust Sites Between Memoryscapes and Places of Amnesia*, *Place, Memorials and Post-Socialist Amnesia*, *Erasures and Appropriations* etc. Furthermore, the conferences included a methodology workshop for PhD students, led by Professor Ginzburg. Two other Museums project members took part, Damiana Otoi, who chaired the panel on *Post-Colonial Amnesia* and Felicity Bodenstein, chair for the *Art of Amnesia* panel. In addition to the 'Museums and Controversial Collections. Politics and Policies of Heritage-Making in post-colonial and post-socialist Contexts' project, the event was also supported by grants provided by the Cambridge School of Arts and Humanities and the Centre for Doctoral Training (previously Centre for East European Language Based Area Studies).