

# ENCOUNTERS WITH POPULAR PASTS

## *meanings and myths at the interface between heritage and popular culture*



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a workshop organized by

Collaborative for Cultural Heritage Management and Policy  
(CHAMP - University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA)

Ironbridge International Institute for Cultural Heritage  
(IIICH – University of Birmingham, UK)

Institute of Advanced Studies  
(IAS – University of Birmingham, UK)

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on the campus of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign:  
KRANNERT ART MUSEUM, room 62 (the lower level auditorium)

The critical study of “heritage” encompasses many domains, from “governance” to the more spontaneous and fluid realms of popular custom and practice. While tangible and intangible heritage are still authoritatively deployed as symbols of nation, authority and continuity, they are also widely and freely appropriated for purposes of entertainment, pleasure, and to mark more localized and ephemeral identities. Media of many kinds are central in such processes, thereby raising issues of re-inscribed hegemonies of ‘old world’ and ‘new world’ heritage, together with the creation and expression of new cultural forms capable of being transformed into heritage.

The on-going processes by which heritage is made and re-made are closely tied to particular interest groups, social trends and various forms and flows of mediation. Established, ‘traditional’ types of heritage are being re-cast and circulated across cultures while emergent heritages, rooted in popular cultures, are cutting through long standing global relations and perceptions. Moreover, the media produces heritage as well as distributing and consuming it with performance, performers, stage sets and the remembered, shared moments of being part of an audience, all forming part of a popular and widely shared inheritance.

This workshop is premised on the recognition that heritage is popular and popular culture is now readily transformed into heritage with meanings and myths which are re-shaping social life, political and economic realities and, are re-making ‘tradition’. What does popular heritage look like? Who does it speak to? Is it active in dissolving class and cultural boundaries or just reproducing new ones? How do societies manage a heritage that is fluid, immediate and that straddles extremes of serious conflict and hedonistic frivolity?

By bringing together scholars from North America and Europe working out of a range of disciplinary perspectives and by focusing upon a range of cases dealing with the heritage / popular culture interface, we seek to explore and problematize how various communities are generating and encountering recent heritage forms.

