CALL FOR PAPERS
3rd EUI CONFERENCE IN VISUAL AND MATERIAL CULTURE STUDIES

Souvenirs, keepsakes and tokens: material and visual expressions of personal memories (12th-21st centuries)

16th May 2022
European University Institute, Florence

Organizing committee: Elisa Chazal, Isabelle Riepe, Ana Struillou

People use objects as a memento for fragments of their lives, be they ordinary memories of childhood, or extraordinary memories of travel, wonder, belief, rupture or oppression. From the inception of pilgrimage, travellers collected and carried tokens of the places they transited through that were later displayed back home. Similarly, souvenirs are also meaningful objects in sedentary lives, materialising domestic and intimate moments and tensions within the home. Yet, souvenirs were not crafted, distributed, sold and acquired solely by European men and women. Instead, from medieval pilgrimages to present-day immigration, sedentary and mobile individuals are engaged in a form of emotional attachment to objects, as reminders of their past. We define souvenirs as mementoes of places and times, tied to individuals and communities who ascribed to them changing meanings and functions throughout their existence. These ever-evolving objects acquired new values and symbolic status. Taking this broad definition of souvenirs, this conference seeks to ascertain how individuals, families and communities memorialise their past through the visual and material world.

We welcome proposals discussing the trajectory of souvenirs from their creation, distribution and their eventual musealisation or destruction, from the twelfth to the twenty-first century. Papers are expected to use visual and material evidence. We aim for this conference to reach beyond the boundaries of historical scholarship and therefore warmly welcome papers from other fields including art history, historical anthropology, and archaeology.

The researcher-led Visual and Material History Working Group of the European University Institute in Florence invites you to a one-day conference on the material and visual expressions of individual memories. By encouraging exchanges between different disciplines and scholars researching on the medieval, early modern and modern periods, we hope that this event will foster new questions and perspectives on the fields of historical anthropology, history and art history.

Proposals may include, but are not limited to:
- Religion and pilgrimage
- Ruptures: armed conflicts, revolution, end of regime, wars
• Forms of oppression, slavery, prosecution and forceful confinement
• Gender and sexualities
• Health and pandemics
• Family and life trajectories
• Diasporas and migrations
• Grand tour and modern tourism (e.g., mass-produced souvenirs)
• Collecting practices, displays and performances
• Categorization and administration of objects

To submit a paper, send an abstract (no more than 300 words) and a short biography to visual.materialeui@gmail.com by 31st January 2022. Early-career researchers are particularly encouraged to submit.

We hope this event to take place on site, or at least in a hybrid format. Partial covering of travelling and accommodation expenses is possible for the speakers willing to travel to Florence. Please indicate in your submission if you would be willing to come to Florence, should the situation allow it, or would prefer to attend via ZOOM.