



WORKSHOP INVITATION/CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

Caring for Difficult Knowledge: Prospects for the Canadian Museum for Human Rights
an invitational workshop hosted by
the University of Winnipeg Cultural Studies Research Group
at the University of Winnipeg
September 27-29, 2013

In their introduction to *Curating Difficult Knowledge*, Erica Lehrer and Cynthia Milton reflect on the term “curate” – originally meaning “to care for” – and its significance in the context of spaces dedicated to public engagements with traumatic histories and violent pasts, such as museums, memorial sites and heritage tours. They ask, what does it mean to care for difficult knowledge in these spaces? What curatorial practices or approaches are suited to this kind of care-taking? In turn, educational theorists Alice Pitt and Deborah Britzman use the phrase “difficult knowledge” to describe secondhand encounters with traumatic histories (via narratives or other re-presentations) that, due to their sheer affective force, unsettle our fundamental frameworks for making sense of ourselves and the world around us. They argue that what is difficult about difficult knowledge in these instances is not merely the terrible fact(s) of what happened in the past, but the problem of what to do with such knowledge in the present,

- How might caring for difficult knowledge be enacted (or limited) by the museum's curatorial approaches, exhibition design, educational programming, use of technology, public relations strategies, community engagements, or governance? What are the institutional challenges to caring for difficult knowledge faced by curators and other staff at the CMHR?
- How might caring for difficult knowledge be reflected in or limited by expressions such as, for example, the museum's architecture, including the "discursive environment" constituted by its surrounding signage and billboard campaigns?
- What might be the role of museum-goers or "the public" in caring for difficult knowledge at/in relation to the CMHR? How might considering this question require a rethinking of dominant cultural conceptions of "the public"?
- How might university educators, cultural studies scholars, artists or other cultural workers be uniquely positioned to help care for difficult knowledge in relation to the work of the CMHR, or in relation to publics and counterpublics as they form alongside the museum and contribute to discourses on human rights?

You are invited to submit a proposed presentation including a title and abstract (250-300 words) relevant to the themes/inquiries outlined above, along with a short bio, by Friday, May 31, 2013 to:

Angela Failler (Research Group Leader): a.failer@uwinnipeg.ca

Please also cc: Chris Campbell (Coordinator): ch.campbell@uwinnipeg.ca

Presenters/participants and a preliminary workshop itinerary will be confirmed shortly thereafter.

Confirmed keynote speakers:

Dr. Erica Lehrer is Associate Professor of History and Sociology/Anthropology, as well as Director of the Centre for Ethnographic Research and Exhibition in the Aftermath of Violence (CEREV) at Concordia University where she also holds a Canada Research Chair in Post-Conflict Memory, Ethnography, and Museology. Her research looks at cultural practices and products that attempt to apprehend, represent, or come to terms with mass violence and its aftermath — from the stories told in theoretical and creative texts to films, monuments, exhibitions and the 'happenings' of everyday life. In addition to several published journal articles and book chapters, she is the co-editor of *Caring for Difficult Knowledge in the Past and Present* (2012).

