

'Invisible Hands'? Domestic workers from the seventeenth century to the present day

One-day conference at The Geffrye Museum of the Home

Thursday 21 July 2016

Call for Papers

Deadline for abstracts- 20th June 2016



The home has always been a place of domestic work, both paid and unpaid. But domestic workers have often remained hidden from view. The 'privacy' of the 'modern' home, and its association with leisure and the nuclear family, have long been recognised to conceal the work done within the household, and to render servants and domestic workers 'invisible'. This one-day conference focuses on the domestic lives and labours of servants and domestic workers. At the very core of home and family life, the organisation and performance of domestic tasks reflects fundamental assumptions about our society and of societies in the past. As the number of domestic workers employed in the UK increases, and the vulnerabilities of these workers are made apparent, it is more important than ever that we recognise the presence of these individuals within the home and the labour involved in domestic work. By presenting current research from across a broad historical period, this conference aims to facilitate interdisciplinary discussions and establish continuities and differences between domestic work in Britain over the past 400 years.

The conference will be held at the Geffrye Museum in London on the 21st July 2016. The Geffrye's current exhibition *Swept Under the Carpet? Domestic Service in London Homes, 1600 – 2000* provides the backdrop for the conference, and offers a glimpse into the everyday lives of domestic servants and workers between 1600 and 2000. The conference is free to attend.

Abstracts for 20 minute papers are invited across a broad range of disciplines covering domestic work, including:

- 'Living in' – living and working in the home
- Housework, domestic maintenance, and material culture
- Working hours, regulation and workers' rights
- Division of labour within the home

- Class and income inequality
- Migration, ethnicity and 'race'
- Domestic technologies
- Everyday routine, and conceptions of 'housework'
- Domestic service in museums and heritage sites.

Please e-mail abstracts of no more than 300 words to Danielle Patten at dpatten@geffrye-museum.org.uk by the **20th June 2016**.

['High Life Below Stairs' by James Caldwell after John Collett, published in London by Robert Sayer and John Smith, 1772. © Geffrye Museum; A maid playing a piano in an interior by Ludovic-Rodo Pissarro, c.1916. © Lélia Pissarro of Stern Pissarro Gallery 'The First Place' by A. Erwood, first exhibited 1860. © Geffrye Museum;]