

International Conference **Masquerading:** From Ritual to Carnival

CALL FOR PAPERS



You are warmly invited to join us at the international conference **Masquerading: From Ritual to Carnival.**

The international conference will be held at **the Slovene Ethnographic Museum in Ljubljana, Slovenia, on 15th and 16th October 2026.**

The conference organizers welcome a broad range of papers exploring the diverse relationship between carnival masking as intangible cultural heritage, and its bearers, creators, visitors and researchers. A variety of scholarly standpoints, voices, and disciplines is encouraged, as well as contributions from professionals working at the interface of Carnival masking as a tradition and a contemporary phenomenon.

Submission Guidelines:

- Abstracts must be written in English and should not exceed 300 words.
- Include a brief biography (up to 100 words).
- Please submit your proposal to: sem@sem.si

Important Dates to Remember:

- Deadline for abstract submission: **31 December 2025**
- Notification of acceptance: **28 February 2026**

If you encounter any problems or have further questions or concerns, please feel free to email the Programme Committee at: sem@sem.si

Conference Programme Committee:

Dr. Zvezdana Antoš (Etnografski muzej Zagreb, Croatia), Dr. Aleš Gačnik (Univerza na Primorskem, Fakulteta za turistične študije Turistica, Slovenia), Dr. Maja Godina Golija (Inštitut za slovensko narodopisje ZRC SAZU, Slovenia), Dr. Giovanni Kezich (ex-Museo degli Usi e Costumi della Gente Trentina, Italy), Dr. Clemence Mathieu (Musée international du Carnaval et du Masque, Belgium), Mag. Adela Pukl (Slovenski etnografski muzej, Slovenia), Dr. Tomaž Simetinger (Univerza v Ljubljani, Filozofska fakulteta, Oddelek za etnologijo in kulturno antropologijo, Slovenia)

The conference aims to highlight the following **general topics:**

1. Homologies and Continuities of Carnival Traditions through Space and Time

Traditional carnival customs represent a vibrant part of Europe's intangible cultural heritage, embodying the calendric transitions and communal identities. How have these traditions adapted in the 21st century or rather, stayed the same? This section invites reflections on how traditional practices have survived, adapted, or faded, asking: What remains "traditional" today? How do communities negotiate between safeguarding and innovation?

2. The Role of Cultural Institutions and Museums in Relation to the Local Communities

Museums, cultural institutions, and local organizations serve as mediators between living cultural heritage and conservation issues. They collect, research, exhibit, and reinterpret masks, outfits and props, pursuing the process of restitution, in co-creation processes with heritage bearers. This section explores research methodologies, curatorial strategies, community collaboration and the performative potential of museum spaces in presenting the carnival culture as both a historical and living phenomenon.

3. Urban and Rural Carnivals: Emerging Forms, Tourism and the Experience Economy

While some revive local traditions, others create new identities and performances inspired by multicultural exchange or creative industries. This section examines comparative case studies of how rural processions and urban parades differ in their organization, aesthetics, and social function, revealing how contemporary carnivals serve as spaces of negotiation between locality and cosmopolitanism. Tourism plays an increasingly decisive role in shaping carnival culture. Events once embedded in local calendars are now recontextualized as tourist attractions. This section considers the double-edged relationship between heritage and tourism: how the commodification and festivalization of carnivals may support economic vitality but also risk the erosion of meaning and authenticity. Comparative perspectives are encouraged to assess how European regions balance spectacle, sustainability, and identity.

4. UNESCO, Heritage Policies, and the Dynamics of Safeguarding

Since the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, many European carnival traditions have sought recognition as elements at the UNESCO intangible cultural heritage lists. However, such recognition brings both visibility and vulnerability. This section critically examines how UNESCO frameworks influence the safeguarding, transformation, or even erosion of carnival culture—questioning whether institutional safeguarding always ensures cultural vitality, and analysing how practitioners deal with pressures from tourism challenges and how carnival groups work to safeguard their heritage on their own terms and in line with their traditions.



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