

26th Annual Cambridge Heritage Symposium

The Cambridge Heritage Research Centre is excited to announce and share the Call for Papers for the 26th annual Cambridge Heritage Symposium, which will take place between the **8th-9th May 2026** at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge.

The annual Cambridge Heritage Symposium (CHS) was set up in 1996 as a forum for discussing and sharing ideas, questions, and case studies arising from working with or studying heritage. Past CHS have been instrumental to recognizing the varied forms of heritage, the wide-ranging interest in the field, and the many ways heritage is being studied and practiced – confirming the centrality of this field and the many areas it contributes to.

The Role of Heritage in Shaping Ontological Security in the Contemporary World



A repaired celadon lotus bowl, from 'Kintsugi – The Poetic Mind' Bonnie Kemske, 2021

In her 2007 seminal paper, Jane Grenville argued about the significance of built environment for ontological security and invited us to reflect on how heritage contributes to our everyday living. Recent economic, environmental and political crises, urban gentrification, wars, and the shifting dynamics of the global landscape, along with the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, prompt us to reconsider the role that heritage plays in fostering ontological security, or the security of being.



Ontological security provides individuals, communities and societies with modes of survival during periods of political, social, economic, and cultural upheaval. Heritage offers reassurance of belonging, identity, and a shared past, which are essential for ensuring a hopeful future.

We invite contributions for a two-day conference focused on the topic of heritage and ontological security and how it relates to ideas of reconciliation and commemoration. Our emphasis will be on resilience, a sense of belonging to a place and/or community, and well-being as integral components of emotional and physical safety.

The topics we invite the participants to focus on are, identity, belongings, shared past reconciliation and commemoration.

This year the CHRC is joining forces with the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures. The symposium (CHS26) will be supported by the McDonald Institute for Archaeology, the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures and the A.G. Leventis Foundation.

Submission guidelines

We welcome proposals from all disciplinary backgrounds that address how heritage in all its forms contributes to ontological security on individual, communal, national, and international scales.

We hope to turn a selection of conference papers into a publication.

Please submit an abstract of **no more than 300 words** by **Sunday 15th February 2026** to the organisers at chrcsymposium@gmail.com.

