Empty Spaces and the Representation of Isolation (Split, 3 Dec 20)

Split, Croatia, Dec 03, 2020
Deadline: Jun 30, 2020

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Watching, Waiting – Empty Spaces and the Representation of Isolation

The Institute of Art History – The Cvito Fiskovic Centre in Split calls for papers for an international conference of academics and professionals: "Watching, Waiting – Empty Spaces and the Representation of Isolation".
Across the globe, the year 2020 was unexpectedly marked by the COVID-19 pandemic. Photographs of empty public spaces – the locations of historic events, celebrations, protests, social gatherings, crowds of tourists – from Milan, Paris, London, Istanbul, and Hong Kong to Dubrovnik and Split… these sights stir up bittersweet emotions. On the one hand, these pictures are intensely beautiful. They recall artist's books and historical photographer's monographs whose authors took pains to produce scenes devoid of people. On the other hand, they remind us how important human interaction is for any given place.
This period in history will be marked, among other things, by a questioning of personal and collective memory – of the past and the present, but also of a future that we are all anticipating, although we are still unsure how it will look. Now, perhaps more than ever before, we consider the present by reflecting on a past that contains a collective future. At the moment, the linear nature of time has been reduced to a "time loop" where hopes, boredom, fear, memory, and many other aspects of human life circulate. It is necessary to consider all of them outside of the established methodological patterns, using the experience of "repeat performances" (or at the very least, the imagining of them), as well as posing questions that are, perhaps, even more important than their answers. Can visualisations of empty spaces focus our attention on the act of waiting, can we escape excessive consumption (which in any case has a negative influence on productivity)?
Inspired by the Institute of Art History's project "Exposition [Ekspozicija]. Themes and Aspects of Croatian Photography from the 19th Century until Today", which is financed by the Croatian Science Foundation, we have decided to organise an international conference entitled "Watching, Waiting – Empty Spaces and the Representation of Isolation". The experience of working on a project that brings together the work of experts in the fields of art history, ethnology, medicine, architecture, and others highlights the importance of a range of diverse approaches to the theme of this conference.
Inspired by the current situation, this interdisciplinary conference will be dedicated to the history and theory of representing empty space through the media of photography, film, and other artistic practices. The conference is likewise open to the themes of empty spaces, isolation, and loneliness from the perspective of other scholarly disciplines.

We hope that this conference will be held after we have already returned to our cities, in the post-isolation period, when the experiences gained during our separation from public space will begin, in various ways, to contribute to the long-term improvement of life within it, and which will require sensitivity, patience, and care to overcome the dystopian ideas caused by the pandemic.

We therefore invite all those who wish to study the history and theory of representations of empty space and the phenomenon of emptiness, isolation, and loneliness in an interdisciplinary dialogue, primarily through the medium of photography, to send a 250-word abstract and a short CV in English as a pdf attachment to discoveringdalmatia@gmail.com by 30/06/2020. We welcome proposals for 20-minute papers.

Proposal submission deadline: 30/06/2020
Notification of acceptance: 15/07/2020
Conference day: 03/12/2020

Important information
- In the light of current uncertainties, we plan to host the conference both live in Split and via online platforms to facilitate international participation.
- Registration will take place on the evening of the 2nd of December, the closing address will take place on the 5th of December, and the hosts will organise coffee and refreshments for the conference participants during breaks.
- No participation fee will be charged for this conference. The organisers do not cover travel and accommodation costs.
- The organisers can help participants to find reasonably-priced accommodation in the historical city centre.
- The duration of a spoken contribution should not exceed 20 minutes.
- Contributions will be divided into sections according to topics. Each section will be followed by a discussion.
- We propose to publish a collection of papers from the conference.

Scientific Committee
Josko Belamaric (Institute of Art History – Cvito Fiskovic Centre Split)
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Organizing Committee
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Reference:

CFP: Empty Spaces and the Representation of Isolation (Split, 3 Dec 20). In: ArtHist.net, May 7, 2020 (accessed Nov 18, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/23065>.