

Art of the Holocaust until 1989 (Budapest, 8–10 Jun 22)

Budapest, Hungary, Jun 8–10, 2022

Deadline: Mar 1, 2022

Agata Pietrasik, Warsaw

CFP: Conference “Art of the Holocaust until 1989: Beyond an East/West Divide” (June 8–10, 2022, Budapest)

Art of the Holocaust until 1989: Beyond an East/West Divide

Organized by: Central European University (CEU) Jewish Studies Program, in cooperation with the Museum of Fine Arts – Central European Research Institute for Art History (KEMKI)

Organizers: Agata Pietrasik (Freie Universität Berlin), Daniel Véri (CEU/KEMKI)

Keynotes:

Samantha Baskind (Cleveland State University)

Rachel Perry (University of Haifa)

Anda Rottenberg (independent curator)

Representations of the Holocaust in visual arts have been the subject of numerous studies from the fields of art history and visual culture. However, these often focus on the end of the 20th century, the period of the so-called “memory boom” and furthermore concern primarily artistic practices originating from the United States or Western Europe. As a consequence, the question of representing the Holocaust before 1989 in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc remains underdeveloped.

Our conference proposes to explore this area by focusing on artworks created during the Holocaust and in its aftermath, up until 1989. In geographical terms, we address art created on both sides of the East/West divide. Despite great differences in the social and political conditions of the two regions, due to structural similarities in the emergence and development of the memory of the Holocaust, a comparison of related art production might connect previously isolated case studies and shed new light on already theorised issues.

We are interested in the analysis of commissioned artworks, representing official memory politics of given states, as well as non-commissioned ones, created on the artists’ initiative.

The involvement of artists themselves represents another important issue, which raises questions such as: Who were the official commissions given to? What was the relationship between the anti-fascist movement and the memory of the Holocaust in the domain of fine arts? Is the pool of

authors of commissioned and non-commissioned works the same, or is there only a partial overlap?

We wish to ask who, besides the survivors, were the artists interested in creating artworks related to the genocide and where did their interest stem from? In questioning this we are seeking distinct Jewish/non-Jewish or survivor/bystander narratives, which are still readable in the artworks and question how they relate to the act(s) of witnessing. Another important aspect is the visibility of the experience of the non-Jewish victims, it particularly the Roma and Sinti.

The issue of generations is of equal significance, as it is necessary to consider how the emergence of different generations defined the artistic production related to the Holocaust. Are there any characteristic perspectives, themes and forms of expression that can be associated with a given generation? How did different approaches, such as figuration, realism, or abstraction and conceptual art influence the art production in question?

The geography of the Holocaust presents another meaningful facet of memory, which calls to investigate the role of organisations (such as museums) and initiatives (such as different associations) connected to the former sites of the Holocaust. That addresses not only the competitions for different memorials, or anniversaries but also considers the afterlife of produced artworks, highlighting the role of private, national or international collections as well as their history.

The institutionalisation of Holocaust memory brings also the question of chronology: Which were the most important dates (trials, debates, etc.) for the development of the Holocaust memory in fine arts? Were these similar in the East and the West, or were they defined by particular, local aspects? Eventually, this leads to question how the artistic production related to the Holocaust was entangled in global, historical processes, for example in contemporaneous anti-Semitism and the episodes of the Arab-Israeli conflict?

We welcome case studies, as well as comparative analyses that relate to any of the above issues. In particular, we encourage presentations dealing with artistic or institutional practices that so far have received little scholarly attention, or have not been presented outside their national context.

We can cover the travel and accommodation costs for a limited number of early career researchers. If you would like to be considered, please indicate this in your application.

Please send the abstract (max. 300 words) of your proposed 20-minute presentation, together with a short biographical note (max. 150 words), by March 1, 2022 to jewishstudies@ceu.edu.

Reference:

CFP: Art of the Holocaust until 1989 (Budapest, 8-10 Jun 22). In: ArtHist.net, Jan 31, 2022 (accessed Sep 16, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/35803>>.