

55 International AICA Congress: Contested Infrastructures (Kraków, 13–17 Nov 23)

Kraków, Poland, Nov 13–17, 2023

Deadline: May 15, 2023

Malgorzata Kazmierczak

55 International AICA Congress: Contested Infrastructures. Art Criticism and the Institutionalisation of Art.

In the past two decades, modern cultural institutions have become contested in a twofold sense – rendered as objects of both political rivalry and far-reaching critique. On the one hand, as liberal and social-democratic ideals have been losing their hegemonic status in the West, proponents of illiberal democracy came to compete for authority over public theatres, galleries and museums, viewed primarily as instruments of social influence. On the other hand, more and more voices in the global art field claim that modern institutions are unfit to meet the challenges that arise not only from current cultural or political disputes, but above all from the long-term economic and ecological crises that shake the very foundations of modernity.

Therefore, facing the crisis of modern institutions' legitimacy, many practitioners try to foster new modes of organization in the cultural field; oftentimes, modes that deviate purposefully from the Western cultural hierarchies and social imaginaries. With these developments in mind, we envisage the annual congress of AICA in 2023 as an enquiry into art makers and critics' approaches to the ongoing crisis and transformation of cultural institutions – as well as the shifting grounds of art criticism itself. If the contestation of modern institutions' legitimacy entails a re-evaluation of the public sphere as an Enlightenment-rooted concept, contemporary critical practices' allegiances to the public demands special attention. As frequent employees and collaborators of galleries, museums and art schools, most critics can hardly claim to be objective, neutral arbiters of their operations, or simply to act in the name of the universal common good.

Incidentally, from the Central and Eastern European perspective in particular, the subject of 'cultural institutions' legitimization carries a lot of weight at the present time. In Poland – as in the Czech Republic or Slovakia – the post-transformation network of public museums and galleries has been consolidating over the last thirty years. Today, while the task of building new infrastructure is receding into the background, important and inherently political discussions emerge in the region about the use of existing facilities. Meanwhile, across the eastern border of the European Union, Russian troops are devastating resources in all sectors of Ukrainian public life. The wartime crisis, however, is already provoking discussions about the values that will define the trajectory of institutional reconstruction.

For the above reasons, undertaking a debate about the institutional contexts of art and criticism in

Kraków, seems not just timely, but incredibly urgent. On the occasion of the AICA congress to be held in Kraków, we welcome everyone willing to discuss the extent to which contemporary artistic, critical and curatorial practices require institutional support, what institutions they need, and to what extent they can contribute to counteracting the global ecological and economic crises. While acknowledging the significance of the theme for practitioners within the Eastern-European region, we encourage delegates from all over the world to share their perspectives, point towards problems from different localities and contribute to the exchange of situated knowledges and experiences across national, regional or continental borders. The multi-scalar nature of contemporary social, cultural or environmental phenomena poses a daunting challenge to institutions like AICA itself. At the 2023 Congress, we would like to address it directly.

Proposed subject areas:

- art institutions as instruments of value-creation
- the institutionalisation of art criticism
- decolonial critique of modern institutions
- speculative proposals for novel cultural institutions
- condition of institutional networks in conflict zones
- institutional forms of censorship and responses from art criticism
- art and criticism beyond institutions
- alternative/weak/spectral infrastructures supporting art and criticism
- occupation and reclaiming of cultural institutions
- art institutions facing the eco-crisis

Confirmed keynote speakers: Maria Theresa Alves, Karen Archey, Elizabeth Povinelli, Nikita Kadan.

We encourage the proposals for 15-20 min. presentations in English. Please send extended abstracts of ca. 500-700 words and a short bio (up to 300 words) in English, French or Spanish to: contestedinfrastructures@gmail.com.

On-site presentation will be preferred over online through zoom.

Deadline May 15th 2023.

The speakers will be informed about the acceptance of their proposals by May 31st 2023 and will be exempt from the Congress fee. We kindly request that the papers in languages other than English be sent before October 8th 2023, as the simultaneous translation will not be guaranteed. The post-Congress publication will be in the Art and Documentation peer-reviewed journal indexed in the Web of Science (<http://www.journal.doc.art.pl/english/index.html>).

Reference:

CFP: 55 International AICA Congress: Contested Infrastructures (Kraków, 13-17 Nov 23). In: ArtHist.net, Mar 27, 2023 (accessed Jan 15, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/38894>>.