

HOLOCAUST ART – AN ESSENTIAL TOOL FOR THE METHODOLOGY OF CONSTRUCTING A HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

International Workshop

**within the Framework of the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI),
supported by the European Commission**

Yad Vashem, Jerusalem

9-11 February, 2015

We would like to invite you to participate in the international workshop on Holocaust Art to be held at Yad Vashem, Jerusalem on 9-11 February, 2015.

The workshop is organized within the framework of the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI) project, supported by the European Commission. Launched in November 2010, EHRI is dedicated to opening up collections related to Holocaust history within a web-based environment with the purpose of generating a creative exchange of knowledge and views between professionals in various subfields of Holocaust research and documentation.

Workshop Rationale

By his very function, the artist is the witness of freedom.... By his function he is engaged in the density of history, where man's very flesh stifles.

Albert Camus, "The Artist as Witness of Freedom: The Independent Mind in an Age of Ideologies", Commentary Magazine, January 1949

Camus' words quoted above assert the unique role of the recording of history by artists. Camus does not limit his observation to the visual arts; however, his emphasis on the negation of the abstract idols places the visual arts in a proper context, implying their unique role.

Following this preamble, the ethical role of the witnesses of Holocaust atrocities have manifested in their commitment to record for the generations to come, forcing us to confront the horrors with our own eyes. By facing reality via the visual arts, the Holocaust no longer can be defined as indescribable; it constitutes a reaffirmation of the human experience by the mostly Jewish victims.

This workshop is dedicated to the role of the visual arts in the attempt to build a historical narrative. Through an array of approaches, we will examine this phenomenon; namely, the subjective and objective inherent qualities of the artistic manifestation, which affords a vantage point to history not provided by any other tool. We will be examining art not as an embellishment, a beautification or an illustrative agent; but rather as, at times, the one and only visual account of an historical event.

With the advance of time and the introduction of photography, art was given a lower case presence in the recording of the annals.

Indeed these visuals, at times intimate and fragile, and extremely personal, are to be viewed as important documents, written by means of artistic expression rather than with words. They are there for us to decipher and use as a most valuable tool for comprehending the inconceivable reality of the Holocaust.

When this approach is validated, then we are faced with the mission of building a comprehensive methodology for integrating the visual into research and education about the Holocaust. The workshop will promote a discussion on seeking the means and ways of implementing this approach in museums, classrooms and research.

"And they (the artists) will then know that this singular vocation creates for them the most overwhelming of brotherhoods, which, through all the ages of the intelligence, has never stopped struggling to affirm against the abstractions of history that which exceeds history, and that is the flesh, be it suffering or be it happy."

Albert Camus, Ibid.

Call for Papers

Proposals are now invited for individual presentations, participation in round tables, or workshop sessions.

Topics of interest include but are not limited to:

1. Art and the Holocaust

- What is Holocaust Art? Setting the stage
- Holocaust Art – validity of first hand/eye-witness testimony in the attempt to reconstruct the visual component of the historical occurrence
- Jewish documentation projects vs. personal accounts
- Art as a weapon against propaganda

2. Holocaust art - Methodology

- Enlisting historical lexical elements in the cataloguing of Holocaust art
- Art vs. photography – methodology of comparison
- Integration of art in the narrative of museums of history – formulating methodologies
- A methodology of dissemination: The post Holocaust Jewish Historical Commissions and the enlistment of art as a promulgation tool
- Nazi Art Looting– Building a methodology for reconstructing the Nazi art confiscation apparatus, as part of the final solution

We are open also to suggestions for additional aspects within the general topic.

The workshop will be conducted in **English**. Translation from or to other languages will not be available.

If you are interested in giving an individual paper or participating in a round table discussion, please send a short 500 word proposal and a CV (including all relevant contact information) to:

Hillel Solomon: hillel.solomon@yadvashem.org.il

The deadline for submissions of proposals is December 15, 2014

Notification of acceptance will be sent via email by January 10, 2015

Subsidies will be available to participants in accordance with European Commission guidelines and the EHRI project budget.

Contact

Proposals send to: hillel.solomon@yadvashem.org.il

Questions on administrative matters send to: hillel.solomon@yadvashem.org.il