

CFP "Prisms of Silence" Symposium in Tallinn

Announcement published by Margaret Tali on Monday, November 11, 2019

Type:

Call for Papers

Date:

December 2, 2019

Location:

Estonia

Subject Fields:

Art, Art History & Visual Studies, Cultural History / Studies, Women's & Gender History / Studies, Oral History, European History / Studies

Symposium "Prisms of Silence"

21–22 February 2020, Tallinn

Institute of Art History and Visual Culture at the Estonian Academy of Arts

Early career humanities scholars, curators and artists are welcome to apply.

In this symposium we seek to analyse and understand the prisms through which we could meaningfully reconsider significant silences. Our particular interest is in rethinking the silences about WWII, its aftermath and the Soviet era in order to explore how they could offer productive ways of understanding present social change. We wish to discuss silence as a layered and complex phenomenon in the context in which relationships between communities and individuals often escape easy descriptions and have instead produced scattered histories and memories that remain divided. Recently, several concepts have been proposed by scholars, such as *multidirectional memory* and the *implicated subject* (Michael Rothberg), *concentrationary memory* (Griselda Pollock) or *warped mourning* (Alexander Etkind), that offer alternative ways for thinking about specific memory conflicts and their persistence. Our point of departure is understanding silence as a means of repression as well as a possible tactic of resistance. We are interested in through which methods have scholars, curators and artists analysed significant silences to make them communicate. How can we think about silence, for instance, in relation to the rise of right-wing movements and in relation to the repression of women and minority communities? Does post-conflict silence embed different qualities for different communities, and if so how could they be described? Which ethical and aesthetic strategies have been used to communicate the unspoken and silenced past? We invite presentations that explore the entangled relationships between violence, fear and silence as well as their transmission. Furthermore, given the painful experiences left by WWII, German and Soviet repressions in the Baltic area, we are particularly interested in the ways that silence transforms, finding new manifestations and expressions and consequently shapes social narratives.

We particularly welcome contributions, which in order to explore complexities, shift their approach from a nationalist paradigm to shared histories and interdisciplinary perspectives. Geographically our aim is to use the Baltic Sea Region as a starting point and extend this geographical frame further to explore other resonating contexts.

Possible themes include, but are not limited to:

- complex temporalities of silence,
- negotiating competitive or contradictory narratives of the past in arts and images,
- transgenerational transmission of trauma and psychic damage,
- reframing narratives through archival research and bodily experience,
- creating and breaking structural silences,
- silence as empowerment and a strategy of resistance,
- alternative conceptual frames to analyse long-term trauma in Eastern Europe,
- potential and limitations of art in returning sensitivity to narratives of violence in a context of desensitisation,
- methodological reflections on how to study silence and absence.

This symposium forms part of the project “**Communicating Difficult Pasts**” (2018–2020) held in collaboration between the Institute of Art History and Visual Culture, Estonian Academy of Arts and Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art. It is curated by Margaret Tali and Ieva Astahovska. For more information about the previous and ongoing activities see [here](#). The program will lead to a journal special issue that will gather selected papers presented at the symposium.

The language of the symposium will be English. Please send your proposals (max. 300 words) for a 20-minute presentation together with a short bio by **2 December** to mari.laaniste@artun.ee. We will respond to all applicants by 15 December.

We will be able to offer *limited* support for covering travel costs and stay for selected speakers. In case you cannot apply for support from elsewhere please add a short justification.

Questions can be sent to Margaret Tali at margaret.tali@artun.ee

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<https://lcca.lv/en/exhibitions/communicating-difficult-pasts-/#izstade>