

CFP: THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF PERSECUTION. PICTURES OF THE HOLOCAUST, The American University of Paris, January 6-8, 2021

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THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF PERSECUTION. PICTURES OF THE HOLOCAUST

The George and Irina Schaeffer Center for the Study of Genocide, Human Rights and Conflict Prevention, The American University of Paris

January 6-8, 2021

Photographs play a central role in representations of the Holocaust. A few photographs have become so widespread and well-known that they are used in popular discourse as metonymic reminders of the genocide. And yet, often enough these iconic photographs do not actually depict what it is claimed that they depict. Instead, they are incorrectly attributed, mistakenly identified, and most importantly underanalyzed. This uncritical approach to the photography of persecution has resulted in significant misrepresentations of the Holocaust, especially in the popular imagination.

Rather than treating photographic images taken under Nazi rule as self-explanatory, immediate, and self-contained, this conference invites interested scholars to approach photographs as they would other documents - by treating photographs as objects of historical inquiry and interrogating the political interests authorizing their creation, the material conditions under which they were produced, the editing process out of which they emerged and were displayed, and the uses to which they were put. The conference will focus on the photographic record of the persecution of Jews in Nazi-dominated Europe and its colonial possessions from 1933 to 1945.

The conference organizers invite contributions that highlight what is missing from scholarly and public discourse about the photography of persecution. We welcome papers that shed new light on persecution and mass murder through an examination of photographic images. In particular, we seek papers that explore the historical context in which photographs were produced, that restore our critical distance to the narratives presented by the photographs, and that take up methodological problems associated with the use of photographic images as instruments of dictatorial rule or the resistance to it.

We welcome contributions that focus on individual or serial photographic images, whether they are iconic or have yet to be widely distributed, whether they were taken by Jews, Nazis, local collaborators, public authorities, photojournalists, or amateur photographers.

Suggested topics include:

- The detailed and analytical assessment of photographic content, such as the profession, age, gender and demeanor of people depicted in the images, the environment and landscape, the presence of objects and buildings, or aesthetic aspects of the image;

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- Technical aspects of specific photographs, including color, light, paper, frame, format, and camera type;
- Arguments about the intention and gaze of photographers;
- The circumstances under which photographs were taken, developed, collected, displayed, and preserved;
- The technical and narrative context in which photographs were presented, such as photo albums, printed books, and newspapers, between 1933 and 1945;
- Photographic albums and the visual narratives they generate through the selection, placement, and sequencing of photographs as well as the captions commenting on them;
- The uses of photographs in postwar venues, such as trials, oral histories, movies and comic books.

At the conference, the organizers will arrange for the appropriate media that will enable contributors to present photographs in detail.

The conference language is English. Proposals must include an abstract of no more than 500 words and a short narrative cv of no more than 250 words. Please send all materials to photographyofpersecution@gmail.com by **June 1, 2020**.

Conference organizers: Tal Bruttman (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales), Sarah Gensburger (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique), Christoph Kreuzmüller (Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz), Constance Pâris de Bollardière (The American University of Paris), Brian Schiff (The American University of Paris), Jonathan Zatin (Boston University)