

a public lectures and discussions series as part of the exhibition (un)named

September – November, 2017
Center for Urban History | Lviv

6. 09 - wed - 18.30

(un)overcome and (un)divided: on Artistic and Historical Re-Thinking of the 20th Century Mass Violence

Conversation with exhibition curator Sofia Dyak, artist Nikita Kadan, and historian John-Paul Himka. Moderator – Bohdan Shumlyovych

This panel seeks to highlight the imaginable ways of making public narrations about the contested past – through art, exhibition, or books. We designed the exhibition to combine reflections of an artist and academic researchers, who work with the topics of challenged past, such as issues connected with the crimes of Nazism and Stalinism, ethnic cleansing and other acts of violence in the 1930-1940s. In this talk, we intend to demonstrate what happens when one takes a look on the past not from a political perspective based on stereotypical categories, but through the history of the locality, of cities, and of people, in the first place.

Sofia Dyak, project curator.

A historian based in Lviv, director of the Center for Urban History. She received her Master's degree in history (MA) in Central European University in Budapest, and a PhD in Sociology in the Institute of Sociology and Philosophy of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. She is finishing her book with the provisional title «(Re)imagined Urban Space: Lviv and Wrocław after the Second World War» about the transformations of cities upon the crucial change of population and political orders. She had held a scholarship in the Holocaust and Genocide Studies Center in Amsterdam, Institute for Humanities in Vienna and the Institute for the Study Human Rights at Columbia University. Her research interests include the topics on the post-war history of cities, such as heritage practices, promotion and representation of cities; actors and concepts of Soviet «historical cities» and engagement of local experts from the «Soviet West» in the infrastructural projects in the Second World cities. She participates in implementation of projects for public history, such as in the fields of re-thinking the 20th century legacy and heritage.

Nikita Kadan, an artist

Based in Kyiv. In 2007, he graduated from the National Academy of Arts and Architecture in Kyiv. Painter, graphic artist, author of objects and installations. Was nominated to the Award of PinchukArtCentre in 2009. In 2011, was awarded with the First Prize. His works were represented in Ukraine and internationally, including the Index Contemporary Art Centre, Stockholm (2008), First Kyiv International Biennale of Contemporary Art «ARSENAL» in Artistic Arsenal and the «Lavra» Kyiv City Gallery of Arts (both in 2012). Nikita Kadan combines intellectual reflections with ongoing social activism. He uses his artistic practices to engage in sociopolitical discussions in Ukraine. He most often works in painting and sculpture, uses abstraction and modelling as art strategies referring to Russian avant-garde movements of the early 20th century.

John-Paul Himka, historian

Since 1977, he has taught in Alberta University. In 1992, he became professor of history of East Europe and retired in 2014. John-Paul Himka was awarded with several prizes and scholarships, such as the Rutherford Prize for excellence in teaching basic studies in 2006, Philip Lawson Award for higher education in the field of teaching and the J.Gordin Kaplan Award for excellence in research. He was a co-editor of the «Encyclopaedia of Ukraine» for three volumes on history. In his academic interests, Himka focused on the history of Greek-Catholic church and socialism in the Habsburg Galicia, the religious culture of East Slavs (such as iconography) and the Holocaust in Ukraine. Since the late 1990s, his deconstruction of Ukrainian "nationalist historical myths" has become widely known. Himka disclaims the stance that Ukrainian nationalism and nationalists had not played or hardly played any role in the history of the Holocaust in Ukraine.

21. 09 - thu - 19.00

The Babi Yar Massacre: History, Memory, and Current Projects

Lecture by Karel Berkhoff (Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences)

Dr. Karel Berkhoff will describe the current state of knowledge on Babi Yar (Babyn Yar) during the Second World War. In late September and early October 1941, for the very first time in history, a metropolitan city in Europe lost virtually all of its Jewish inhabitants to deliberate murder. Important issues that are becoming clearer but that still require much more study, include Jewish responses before and during the massacre; the extremely small chances for survival; the entanglement of non-Jewish Ukrainians; and the specific nature of the mass murder of Jews and Roma as compared to later shootings and gassings at the site. In addition, Karel Berkhoff will discuss features of Soviet and post-Soviet treatment of this history, the ongoing attempts to improve the landscape of the former killing site, and his involvement in the development of a basic historical narrative for a Holocaust memorial center in Kyiv.

Karel Berkhoff (Ph.D., NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Netherlands) is a historian of Eastern Europe (particularly Ukraine and the Soviet Union), the Holocaust, and World War II. A Senior Researcher at NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, he also teaches in the MA program in Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the University of Amsterdam. He published the book «Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule» (2004), translated as «Жнива розпачу: Життя і смерть в Україні під нацистською владою» (Крытукя, 2011); and the book «Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda during World War II» (2012).

22.09 - fri - 16.00

Assembly Hall of Lviv University

Memory and Literary Imagination as a Remedy to Evil

Public Discussion with Writers

Boubacar Boris Diop (Senegal), Svetlana Aleksievich (Belarus), Adam Zagajewski (Poland), Madeleine Thien (Canada). Moderator - Kateryna Smahlii (Ukraine)

Memory is one of the writers' major resources, while literary imagination is one of their main tools. Both of them are very human and therefore fragile, both are social and therefore vulnerable. Memory can be suppressed or even erased, and we know just too many examples of the kind. But it also can be deliberately distorted or even invented, and this tends to become even more widespread phenomenon. Imagination can serve one goal being driven by ideology and can serve the other being driven by marketability. In both cases, the truth falls victim – to either propagandistic or genuinely commercial expedience. The post-truth era that we arguably ushering in, poses new challenges to our tools and resources. It not merely relativizes the notion of truth, but undermines the very idea of rules, principles, and morality. How the writers can counter the challenge? What kind of a personal experience they have that they may shared with the readers and colleagues? – these are the questions to be discussed at the panel by four prominent international authors and a Ukrainian scholar.

Organized in cooperation with the 83rd PEN International Congress in Lviv

28 09 - thu - 18.30

On the Outskirts of Genocide: Roma Community in Social and Urban Space of Lviv Under Nazi Occupation

Presentation of the research project by Piotr Wawrzeńnik and Taras Martynenko

Throughout centuries, Roma used to be part and parcel of social fabric of Lviv outskirts. One of the key periods in the history of the Roma community of the city and a sort of decisive moment was the Second World War. Establishment of Soviet rule, and later, of Nazi totalitarian rule implied development of a strict system of social control on the subject territories. The «disorderly» traditional lifestyles of Roma people would inevitably turn them into a risk group. It fully manifested itself under Nazi occupation.

The long-standing paradigm for persecuting the Roma within the Governorate General, in the historiographic and narrative tradition, implies genocide (ethnocide) similar to Jews. Recent studies of the situation in the district of Galicia and in its capital Lviv offer fair grounds for reconsidering the approach. The sources unknown before proved there had been large Roma community who had not been exterminated and had existed throughout the entire period of Nazi occupation. The comparative reconstruction of the situation of the Roma community suggests that in the actual political and legal practices of authorities as to local population they were treated as «non-Germans» (Ukrainians or Poles), rather than Jews.

The researchers will cover the general picture of persecuting the Roma in Central Europe and its peculiarities in the district of Galicia, and Lviv as such as well as will place Roma community into local social and urban context combining the topic with a research of the wartime Lviv.

Piotr Wawrzeńnik is director of studies at the Department of Military History at National Defence University (Sweden) and head of the project Roma Genocide in Ukraine: History, Memory and Representation at Södertörn University (Sweden).

Taras Martynenko is a historian, finishing his Ph.D thesis on wartime Lviv untitled «Citizens of Lviv during the World War II: social conscience and social behavior».

5.10 - thu - 18.30

The Need to Forget. The Desire to See. How Contemporary Art Approaches Contested Topics of the Past

Projects Presentation and Conversation with a Polish artist Mirosław Bałka. Moderator – Lizaveta German

In the time of information rush and omnipresent manipulations with public opinion, it is getting increasingly difficult to shape an independent stance on some debatable issues of concern to community. It is true both about the red hot issues, and also about the recent developments, since the living memory about them keeps contesting the further speculative layers and myths. It seems that in the Ukrainian society, the most manifest problem is lack of public unbiased view on history and some of the ambivalent episodes, lack of memory and actual reconciliation practices for positions of different communities.

Therefore, art appears to be one of the few areas where deep and frank reflections on the past could be made possible. However, frank does not imply objective, as personal interpretation of the problem by the artist as a citizen might run counter to the generally accepted opinion. Even more so, broad audience are often unprepared to face the «bare nerve» the artist disconcertingly reveals in his works. This means that instead of a needed therapeutic effect the artistic comment would only instigate the already hard tension around a subject.

Thus, could art be a functional tool in the «fight for memory»? What is the role of an artist in a public discussion?

We invited Mirosław Bałka, a well-known artist, one of the key figures of contemporary art in Poland, to talk about this aspect, among others, as illustrated by his own art practices. Bałka works with the topics of individual and shared experiences related to the contested history of his country. He reveals links between personal memories and social disaster, and studies how subjective traumas transform into collective histories, and vice versa.

Lizaveta German – Candidate of Art History, an independent curator. Lizaveta German works on independent curator projects along with Maria Lanko. She is a co-founder of the research platform openarchive.com.ua and a co-curator of the «Modern Art» course in Kyiv Academy of Media Arts. Since 2012, Lizaveta has worked as an art critic with the «Ukrayinska Pravda» portal. Some of her recent explosive publications was the text on the «Remembering Culture» on the issue of lack of due state memory policy and the impotence of art to be a tool of social discussions and overcoming collective traumas related to the debatable episodes from the past.

19. 10 - thu - 18.30

Who Whom? Problems in Identifying Perpetrators and Victims in Ukraine on the Eve of and During the Second World War

Lecture by John-Paul Himka (University of Alberta, Canada)

The surprise attack of Nazi Germany on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 initiated a storm of violence. The Soviet authorities failed to arrange the evacuation of prisoners and simply murdered them instead, in the thousands. When the Germans arrived in Lviv and many other West Ukrainian localities in the summer of 1941, they opened the prisons and other make-shift mass graves. The air stank of bodies decomposing in the heat of the summer. The apocalyptic atmosphere proved fertile ground for anti-Jewish violence. In addition to pogroms inspired by Germans, mass shootings of Jews and Communists also took place, perpetrated mostly by the German SS.

Things happened so fast that it was sometimes very difficult to figure out who killed whom. The confusion started back in the summer 1941 and has lasted until this day. For example, in July 1941, in a village near Drohobych, there was a solemn funeral ceremony to bury 15 Jews murdered by the German Security Police (Sicherheitspolizei) as Ukrainian heroes butchered by the NKVD. In 2011–2012 mass burials were discovered within the premises of the prison in Volodymyr-Volynskyi. The question of whose remains had been found is still open. Were those victims shot by the NKVD in 1940–1941, or Jews killed by Germans in 1942–1943? In addition to actual mistakes, the situation was aggravated by Soviet propaganda attributing their own crimes to the Germans. Soviet propaganda has also influenced and left its mark on the historiography even outside the Communist world.

John Paul Himka is a professor emeritus in the Department of History and Classics at the University of Alberta (Edmonton). He is author of four monographs on Ukrainian history: «Socialism in Galicia» (1983), «Galician Villagers and the Ukrainian National Movement in the Nineteenth Century» (1988), «Religion and Nationality in Western Ukraine» (1999), «Last Judgment Iconography in the Carpathians» (2009). He is the co-editor, jointly with Joanna Michlic, of the collection «Bringing the Dark Past to Light: The Reception of the Holocaust in Post-Communist Europe» (2014). He is currently working on two research projects – on Ukrainian sacred culture in the Canadian prairies and on the participation of the OUN and UPa in the Holocaust.

11. 11 - sat - 19.00

East West Street: A Song of Good and Evil Lviv Philharmonic

Concert and Performance.

Філіппе Сендс (юрист, Університетський коледж Лондона), Катя Ріман (акторка, Гамбург), Лоран Наурі (баритон, Метрополітен Опера), Гійом де Шоссі (піаніст, Париж).

Philippe Sands' «West East Street. A Song of Good & Evil», based on research for the book «West East Street», offers new insights into the conflict and connections between three men at the heart of the Nuremberg trial – Cambridge academic Hersch Lauterpacht, Polish prosecutor Raphael Lemkin, and Hitler's lawyer Hans Frank. In different ways, their lives were connected to the city known as Lemberg/Lwów/Lviv, located in the western part of present-day Ukraine. By uncovering the connections and conflict between the three men through their shared passion for music, «A Song of Good & Evil» represents a personal exploration of the origins of modern justice and the fate of individuals and groups through images, narrative, and music excerpts from Bach, Beethoven, Rachmaninoff, Paul Mizraki and Leonard Cohen, performed by acclaimed Bass Baritone Laurent Naouri and renowned Jazz Pianist Guillaume de Chassy.

16.11 - thu - 18.30

«Regarding the Pain of Others». Issues of Contemporary World in Film and Photography

Lecture by Małgorzata Radkiewicz (Jagiellonian University, Poland)

The title of the lecture is related to the 2003 essay by Susan Sontag where she analyzes selected images and media stories to show how viewers, the common people, shape their vision of the world based on the media images. The American intellectual in the first place reflects on how viewers respond to dramatism and sufferings of others. She poses the question on where the room for vulnerability and compassion to others is found in such perception.

The lecture will use samples of selected images and film fragments to illustrate different problems of the present world: from artistic visions to actual documents. The presented overviews will show the possible perceptions of reality, as well as of the painful and often controversial topics. It is important to note that the power of impact of images or film fragments does not necessarily have to be related to displaying violence or atrocities. Instead, a simple but very emotional story is often more convincing.

In the world dominated by mass media and visual culture, it is worth remembering that the ability to «look at somebody else's suffering» requires two things from us as viewers. Firstly, special attention is needed to be able to notice the images. Secondly, one needs to be able to interpret things in order to understand their meaning and the response thereto.

Małgorzata Radkiewicz – professor at Jagellonian University. She deals with issues of cultural identity in contemporary cinema and visual art. She studies creative work of women in film, photography, and art. The publications include, among others, «The Female Gaze. Film Theory and Practices of Women Directors and Actresses» («Władczyni spojrzenia». Teoria filmu a praktyka reżyserki i artystek) (2010) and «The Faces of Queer Films» (Oblicza kina queer) (2014). She edited five volumes of the Gender series. She is coordinator in the research project financed by the Polish National Science Centre: Women Pioneers in Film and Photography in Galicia in 1896-1945 (NCN: Pionierki kina i fotografii w Galicji 1896-1945). She was a scholarship holder of the Ministry for Culture and Cultural Heritage, and results of research was published in a book: «Modern Women on Cinema» in which she analysis selected film texts and reviews written by women in Poland 1918-1945.

Organizer – Center for Urban History

Some events in cooperation with:

83rd PEN International Congress in Lviv
International Festival of Audiovisual Art TETRAMATYKA
Lviv Philharmonic