

CALL FOR PAPERS

Memory: Silence, Screen and Spectacle, the Forth

Annual Interdisciplinary Memory Conference, March 24-26, 2011, The New School, NY

Location: New York, United States

Call for Papers Date: 2010-11-22

The clamor of the past can be almost deafening: it preoccupies us through speech, texts, screens, spaces and commemorative spectacles; it makes demands on us to settle scores, uncover the “truth” and search for justice; it begs for enshrinement in museums and memorials; and it shapes our understanding of the present and future. However noisy and ceaseless the demands and memory of the past may seem, though, in every act of remembering there is something silenced, suppressed, or forgotten. Memory’s inherent selectivity means that for every narrative, representation, image, or sound evoking the past, there is another that has become silent – deliberately forgotten, carelessly omitted, or simply neglected.

It is the tension between the loud and often spectacular past and those forgotten pasts we strain to hear that this conference seeks to address. For those in the booming field of memory studies, this tension between silence and spectacle is especially productive. As the past often serves as a screen on which we project our present ambitions and future aspirations, what is silenced and what is loudly remembered tell us much about the present and future. This tension also illuminates what has been selected for remembering and why; allows for alternative memories and understandings to emerge; reminds us that forgetting is sometimes necessary; and ultimately deepens our theoretical and empirical understanding of memory and its processes. The interplay of silence, screen, and spectacle also raises a number of pressing questions that have been neglected in the field of memory studies, but which will be increasingly important for future studies of memory, including:

- Whose memories are silenced and suppressed (and by whom)?
- When is forgetting beneficial and/or necessary?
- How do forms of testimony and remembering (e.g., legal testimony vs. oral history; traditional memory spaces like museums vs. other forms of remembering like dance, art, and theater) work differently to make memory heard or silenced?
- What is the relationship of memory to “truth” if a part of the past is always silenced?
- What happens when memories long silenced are “heard” again?

- Does too much remembering cause static, keeping us from truly “hearing” the past?
- What kind of knowledge is nostalgia, silence, or forgetting?
- What sources of “evidence” of the past are the most legitimate today, what are the most convincing in public debates, international courts, the media?
- What power does the visual have on us and how does it compete with other sources of knowledge, such as documents, testimonies, audio-recordings, and embodied memory?
- What can the visual hide; what is unspoken?

Panel and workshop themes may include: Remembering and Forgetting 9/11; Truth Commissions: Spectacle and Silence; Memory and Truth; Silences, Memory, and U.S. Counter-Terrorism; Human Rights, Law and Memory; Tourism and the Memory Market; New Media, Memory, and Silence; Archives, Communities and Memory; Screening Silence: Visual Memory and Forgetting; Nostalgia: Silence, Screen and Spectacle.

Please send an abstract with title of no longer than 250 words and a short bio (200 words) including institutional affiliation, with 2011 ABSTRACT in the subject line to NSSRMemoryConference@gmail.com by November 22, 2010. Decisions will be made by mid-January 2011 and conference papers will be due February 18, 2011. We are examining different avenues for possible publication of conference papers. Only original papers submitted by February 18 will be considered for publication.

NSSR Interdisciplinary Memory Studies Group

Email: nssrmemoryconference@gmail.com

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