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Dipartimento
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International Conference

Artistic Practices between Aesthetics and Power: Propaganda, Mobilization, and Resistance

29 June - 01 July 2026, Tartu

When ideologies clash, the instrumentalization of artistic works and cultural practices allows propaganda to reach new target groups and influence them more effectively. Works of art function in different spheres simultaneously: as objects of aesthetics, economics, ethics, memory and politics, they fulfill various goals, transmit different meanings, and are interpreted in differing ways.. The content of the work depends on the context in which it is interpreted, but other meanings are also present and become relevant in the process of comprehending a work. This polysemanticism creates many opportunities for propaganda to work. However, if the linguistic manipulations of propaganda have been well studied and easily deconstructed (Kris & Leites 1947; Malinova 2013; and others), the instrumentalization of visual and performative works in propaganda requires closer scholarly attention. Propaganda reassembles the semantics of a work by re-contextualizing and/or collaging elements of a well-known work. Modern technologies allow this to be done quickly and efficiently. At the same time, a wide range of technical means and the democratization of cultural practices make it possible not only to overcome the modern exclusivity of the creator, to increase public access to creative work as much as possible, but also to blur the boundaries between art and non-art (Benjamin 1935). Popular culture and Internet folklore play an essential role in the inclusion of works of art in the propaganda arsenal. The history of crisis events demonstrates the rapid transformation of popular culture into a “propaganda mouthpiece.” Research on Internet folklore shows how internet users create their works using a wide range of artistic tools, how works of art and their elements function as reassembled messages (Laineste et al. 2024). Various genres of Internet folklore (Laineste & Shilikhina 2024) are also becoming a propaganda tool (Wiggins 2019).

We invite you to participate in an interdisciplinary conference on the complex relationship between art, propaganda, collective memory, and forms of social activism. We aim to explore how artistic practices shape public consciousness, rewrite history, activate protest, or, conversely, strengthen the ideological narratives of power. In recent decades, we have witnessed the increasing role of visual art, theater, digital media, and cultural products in the process of political mobilization, traumatization, and collective reflection on the past. In the context of growing conflicts, identity crises, mass migration, and repressive policies, art

becomes an active tool of influence: it is used to perpetuate and erase, to resist and to manipulate. This duality of artistic expression, which is realized in aesthetics, criticism and ideology, requires careful analysis and rethinking.

Example research topics:

- Ideology and visuality: artistic propaganda strategies
- Visual and performative propaganda: a separate type of propaganda?
- Memory politics: censorship, editing of the past and cultural amnesia
- Testimony and artistic gesture: art as a form of complicity
- The politics of ritual and spectacle in totalitarian and post-totalitarian societies
- Artists under pressure: self-censorship, emigration, survival
- The image of the enemy and the image of the hero in visual culture
- Means of “visual/performative” propaganda
- Art during war: culture, propaganda, ethics
- The post-Soviet space and the "return" of the ideological in culture
- Art as a tool for shaping and undermining collective memory
- Monuments, memorials and counter-memorials: the struggle for symbolic space
- Memory promotion: visual strategies for perpetuation and forgetting
- The archive as an artistic and political field
- Artistic activism: visual forms of resistance
- Performance art and street interventions as a political statement
- Trauma memory and aesthetics of testimony
- Aestheticizing protest: feminist, environmental, and anti-war movements
- Digital memory and online activism: memes, storytelling, visual campaigns
- Between document and myth: artistic reconstructions of historical events
- Culture as a mediator of ideological narratives of power
- Linguistic strategies for normalizing violence
- Language policy as an instrument of ideological control

References

- Kris, E. & N.Leites (1947). "Trends in Twentieth Century Propaganda". In: Roheim, G. (ed.). *Psychoanalysis and the Social Sciences*, Vol.1. New York: International Universities Press, p. (394) 393-409.
- Wiggins, Bradley. 2019. *The discursive power of memes in digital culture: Ideology, semiotics, and intertextuality*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Laineste, Liisi; Castañar, Guillem; Fiadotava, Anastasiya; Troitskiy, Sergey (2024). The power of memes: Personification as a marker of psychological distance in memes about the war in Ukraine. *Humor - International Journal of Humor Research*, 37 (3), 383–419. DOI: 10.1515/humor-2023-0112.
- Laineste, Liisi; Shilikhina, Ksenia (2024). 19 New Forms and Genres of Humor in Social Media. In: *De Gruyter Handbook of Humor Studies*. (345–362). De Gruyter. DOI: 10.1515/9783110755770-020.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* (erste deutsche Fassung, 1935)
- Малинова О.Ю. Конструирование смыслов: Исследование символической политики в современной России. Москва: РАН. ИНИОН. Центр социальных науч.-информ. исслед. Отд. полит. науки, 2013.

Organizing Committee:

Elena Curant (Jagiellonian University, Poland), Sergey Troitskiy (Estonian Literary Museum, Estonia), Marta Lechowska (Jagiellonian University, Poland), Katarzyna Syska (Jagiellonian University, Poland), Natasha Kadlec (Harvard University - University of Tartu), Bartłomiej Brązkiewicz (Jagiellonian University, Poland), Anna Krasnikova (eCampus University, Italy), Emma Lotta Lõhmus (Estonian Literary Museum, Estonia - University of Tartu, Estonia), Maurizia Calusio (Università Cattolica, Italy), Olga Caspers (Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany)

Program Committee:

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Keynote speakers:

- Natalia Artemenko (TU Dortmund, Germany). *Propaganda of Memory vs. Politics of Oblivion: On the Possibility of Bearing Witness*
- Jan Levchenko (Montenegro Faculty of Liberal Arts & Sciences): *Imagery of Visual Resistance: Photos by Dmitry Vyshemirsky and the issue of time and moment*
- Beata Valigorska-Oleinicak (University im. Adama Mickiewicza in Poznań). *Between Witnessing and Visual Experimentation. New East European Cinema of War*

Working languages:

English, Polish, Russian, Estonian

Registration fee:

The conference organizers strive to minimize costs for conference participants, but are obliged to charge a registration fee to cover the costs of coffee breaks and lunches for conference participants, as well as the translation and editing of conference materials. Further information on how to pay the registration fee will be provided at a later date.

The registration fee is **€60 (€30 for online participants)**. The organizing committee may offer a number of grants to cover the registration fee for participants who have difficulty paying.

Post-conference publication:

We plan to publish articles after the conference in a special issue of the journal *Studia Rossica Posnaniensia* (1/2027), which will be released in June 2027. The journal is indexed by Scopus. The deadline for submitting articles is 30 September 2026. Please submit full articles (25,000-40,000 characters with spaces, including bibliography) using the OJS platform, available at: <https://pressto.amu.edu.pl/index.php/strp/login>. Detailed instructions for authors on formatting, etc. can be found at:

<https://pressto.amu.edu.pl/index.php/strp/about/submissions>. More detailed information about the journal and its indexing is available on the journal's website:
<http://srp.amu.edu.pl/en/about-the-journal/>.

Key dates:

November 15, 2025 – application for the organization of panels, presentations of books and projects, and round tables within the framework of the conference. We ask those who wish to organize events within the framework of the conference to send the following information for consideration by the program committee (sergei.troitskii (at) folklore.ee):

- the name,
- the name of the event leader(s), their affiliation and contact information,
- desired event date,
- a short description (up to 500 characters)
- list of participants (if they are already in place) or send data for the preparation of a Call for Papers (if the event is open to other participants)

January 15, 2026 – application for participation. To send your application, please fill out the form <https://forms.gle/XoQn7syfMtjsCKDM7>

June 29 - July 01, 2026 – conference

July 02 – 07, 2026 – International Summer School “Traces of the past and prospects for the future: Linguistic and cultural practices in Estonia”

30 September 2026 – deadline for submitting articles after the conference.

June 2027 – publication of conference participants' articles in a special issue of the journal *Studia Rossica Posnaniensia* (1/2027).