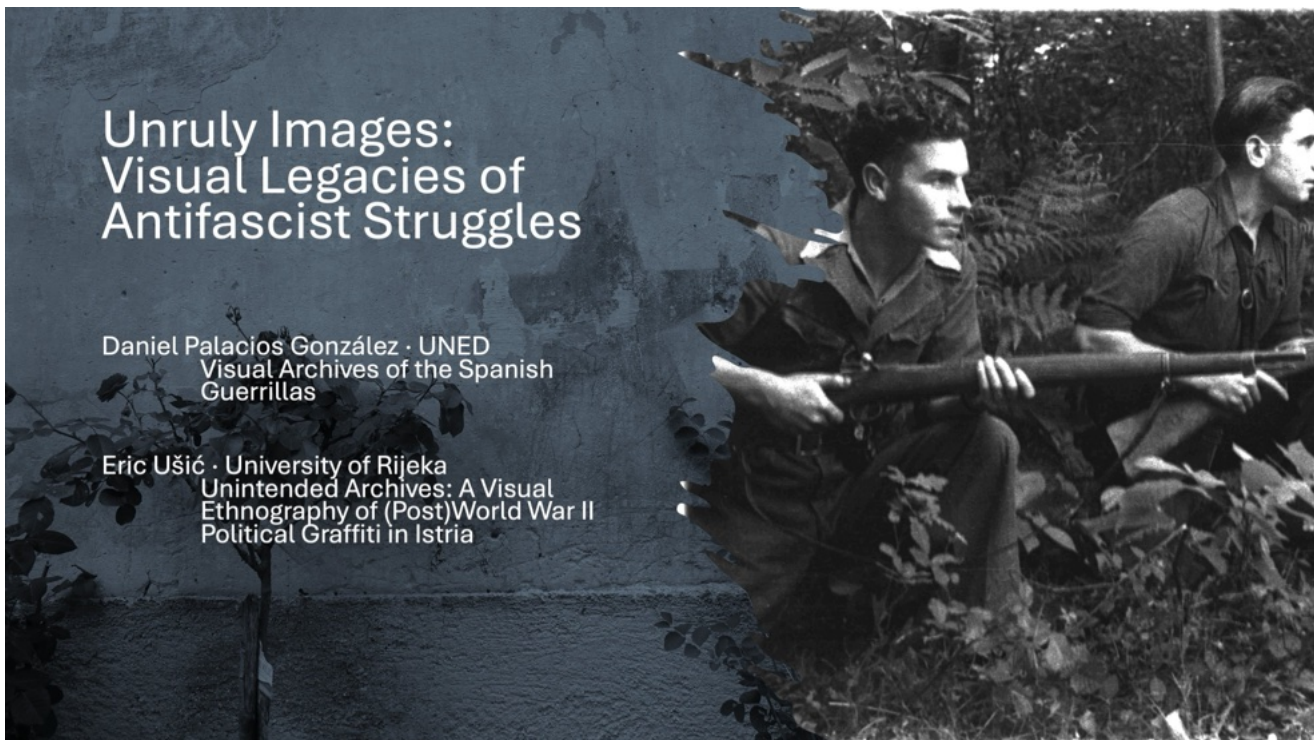


Unruly Images: Visual Legacies of Antifascist Struggles

Daniel Palacios González · UNED
Visual Archives of the Spanish
Guerrillas

Eric Ušić · University of Rijeka
Unintended Archives: A Visual
Ethnography of (Post)World War II
Political Graffiti in Istria



International Research Seminar

8 May 2026 · Institute of Art History, Zagreb, Room 235 · 15:00–17:00

This research seminar brings together two researchers working on visual materials produced within antifascist and communist struggles that survived outside, or despite, official archival and heritage frameworks. From photographs and printed matter made by Spanish guerrilla fighters, to political graffiti inscribed on Istrian walls during and after World War II, both contributions ask what it means to work with such images and traces today — methodologically, theoretically, and politically.

The seminar is hosted by the Institute of Art History within the framework of the DIGitART project, which examines the critical-analytical potential of digital and visual approaches to the artistic and cultural heritage of the 20th century.

PROGRAM

15:00–15:15

Unruly Images: Visual Legacies of Antifascist Struggles — introduction

Sanja Horvatinčić · Institute of Art History

15:15–15:45

Visual Archives of the Spanish Guerrillas

Daniel Palacios González · UNED, Visiting Researcher

15:45–16:15

Unintended Archives: A Visual Ethnography of (Post)World War II Political Graffiti in Istria

Eric Ušić · University of Rijeka, Post-doc

16:15–17:00

Discussion



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The seminar is organized as part of the research project of the Institute of Art History in Zagreb Digital network, spatial and (con)textual analysis of artistic phenomena and heritage of the 20th century (DIGitART, 2023–2027) funded by the European Union – NextGenerationEU.



Archive of the Museum of the Asturian People

Visual Archives of the Spanish Guerrillas

Daniel Palacios González

When fascism was not considered a parliamentary threat but was the actual system of government, as occurred in Spain after the Civil War (1936–1939), in France (1940–1944), and throughout the subsequent National Catholic dictatorship (1937–1977), taking up arms became the chosen option for thousands of people.

From that collective struggle, we are left with their photographs and printed materials that depict their own images: marching, posing with weapons, hiding while picnicking, alongside pamphlets portraying them as a genuine army, enemies kneeling, and acts of sabotage and ambush. In other countries such as Yugoslavia, China, or Cuba, these guerrilla fighters' images were eventually musealised and became hegemonic; in Spain, they ultimately languished in exile archives or within the files of the repressive state apparatus. Moreover, despite their self-representation efforts, they were accused of banditry and terrorism; their corpses were publicly displayed, and photographs of their disfigured faces were reproduced in the press, becoming the only hegemonic representation of them by the fascist apparatus. Decades later, horror has re-emerged with images of their skeletons exhumed from mass graves, transforming anti-fascist guerrilleros into victims.

The aim of this talk is to bring into debate the experience of recovering and working with these images produced by the guerrilleros, as they pose particular challenges to paradigms such as Didi-Huberman's, whose framework is built primarily around images of victimhood rather than political agency, for understanding our past.

Daniel Palacios González is currently a Postdoctoral Researcher at UNED, and previously a Postdoctoral Fellow at Birkbeck, University of London. He holds a PhD in Art History from the Universität zu Köln, Germany, where he was an MSCA Fellow, before he completed his master's studies at the Univerzitet umetnosti u Beogradu and the Universidad de Oriente in Santiago de Cuba. He is the author of *Making Monuments from Mass Graves in Contemporary Spain* (2024) and *De fosas comunes a lugares de memoria* (2022), which received the Memory Studies Association First Book Award in 2023. He is a member of the research project HISTOFOR at the Universitat de Barcelona.



Bale / Valle, Istria (photo: Eric Ušić)

Unintended Archives: A Visual Ethnography of (Post)World War II Political Graffiti in Istria

Eric Ušić

During and after World War II, thousands of graffiti conveying antifascist and communist messages were inscribed across Istria, a borderland region contested between post-Fascist Italy and Socialist Yugoslavia as the war came to an end. Written largely by young antifascists and Party activists, these inscriptions functioned both as means of wartime resistance and communication, and as symbolic claims to territory during postwar geopolitical transformation, when the region's walls were covered with pro-Yugoslav, communist, and Croatian national slogans and symbols.

Today, hundreds of these writings remain visible on the walls of old buildings in Istrian villages and towns, forming a unique yet largely neglected memoryscape. Drawing on a visual-ethnographic methodology — combining photographic documentation, spatial mapping, and fieldwork — this contribution examines these inscriptions as both material objects and living political traces.

After introducing and contextualizing the phenomenon within the broader historical dynamics of the region, the contribution turns to the shifting meanings of these inscriptions in the post-Yugoslav period, when changes in political and mnemonic regimes profoundly transformed their significance. Another tension arises from the fact that many inscriptions are carried on buildings under heritage protection, whose conservation frameworks were designed to preserve architectural fabric rather than political memory. In this context, (post)WW2 graffiti can be understood as unintended archival traces: material and symbolic witnesses to alternative historical experiences and political imaginaries that persist beyond, and sometimes despite, institutionalized frames of memory. Their ongoing visibility provokes an uncomfortable question: who kept them, who ignored them, and what does their stubborn presence reveal about the ruptures that official heritage frameworks have tried, and often failed, to smooth over.

Eric Ušić is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Rijeka, Croatia, working on the MEMPOP research project. He holds a PhD in Balkan Studies from the Faculty of Social Sciences in Ljubljana. In 2024, he published the book *Walls Remember: A Visual Ethnography of (Post)World War II Political Graffiti in Istria* (Srednja Europa, Zagreb). His research interests include cultural studies, memory and historical anthropology, with a current focus on memory cultures in the Northern Adriatic borderland and the broader post-Yugoslav space, with particular attention to the interplay between popular culture, visual practices and memoryscapes. Beyond academia, he is active in Istria's cultural scene, organizing a local film festival, film workshops for young people, exhibitions, cultural events, and antifascist and graffiti walking tours. As a member of the New Vodnjan Film Wave collective, he co-authored two feature films: *The Girl in the Blue Dress* and *La Predstava*. Their third movie, *When God Left the Church*, is currently in post-production.