

# Recording Mass Violence

## Media and Collective Memory of Severe Injustice

### *Seminar on the occasion of the award of the Erasmus Prize to Antonio Cassese and Benjamin Ferencz.*

Date: Wednesday 11 November 2009, 9.30 a.m. – 6.00 p.m.  
Venue: Filmmuseum Amsterdam (morning programme)  
Netherlands Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences Amsterdam (afternoon)  
Registration: [huizinga-fgw@uva.nl](mailto:huizinga-fgw@uva.nl)

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This seminar addresses the role of audiovisual information in documenting, reconstructing and coming to terms with cases of severe injustice. For our memory of injustice - as in crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide - audiovisual records form a dynamic source of information. First there is the documentation of the crimes themselves. This stage is followed by a reconstruction of events on the basis of that documentation – in the courtroom, the archive, written and audiovisual documents. Running in parallel to this process is a movement in space: the space where the crimes were committed; the gathering of evidence for the prosecution, and trial in court. Then there is the collecting of the documentation in the archive, with the purpose of allowing historical research and reflection. Finally, the documentation and reconstructions of the conflict or crime find their way into the public sphere and can be inscribed into collective memory.

Criminal tribunals, first employed after the second World War in Nuremberg, have become a permanent feature of international justice. Such tribunals are staged events, offering a reconstruction of the conflict that aims to reach a solution that is acceptable to all parties involved. Underlining the symbolic role of these tribunals is their audiovisual documentation. From Nuremberg - the first trial that was fully recorded on audio and partly on film - to the trials of Eichmann, Milosevic and Saddam Hussein, the media coverage ensured that the trying of the crimes could get a place in collective memory. Seeing the perpetrators in their cages, disarmed and no longer in uniform, being questioned by international judges and lawyers, is extremely important for reconciliation. The importance of these trials and their audio-visibility is demonstrated by the fact that when they are lacking, as in the case of the Armenian genocide, reconciliation with the event is blocked.

The speakers at this seminar will analyse the role of audiovisual heritage in the documentation of crimes against humanity, in their reconstruction, and finally in the reconciliation with such conflicts.

The seminar is organised by the Huizinga Institute, the Department of Media Studies of the University of Amsterdam, in collaboration with the Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies and the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation. More information regarding the Erasmus Prize Award and the laureates Cassese and Ferencz is available on the website <http://www.erasmusprijs.org/eng/index.htm>