

Silent Lecture DIY Guide



The Democracy School's **Silent Lecture Series** is a global collaboration between arts organisations and NGOs, between activists and artists, that connects and highlights struggles and movements around the world in a celebration of our shared humanity. This DIY guide is intended to help people develop and host their own *Silent Lecture*.

The world is in the grip of multiple global crises: from climate change and the Corona pandemic, to economic nationalism and the growing threat of global recession. Whilst these crises do need our collective attention, there are countless concurrent local crises and longstanding unresolved local conflicts that also deserve international attention and need resolution. It is within this wider context of local versus global challenges that Nicodemus (see unruhe.eu) has conceived the *Silent Lecture Series*.

The *Silent Lecture Series*' overarching purpose is to unite, to nourish and to amplify. In other words, it is **postdramatic theatre** (or performance art) at its best. On unruhe.eu Nicodemus puts it this way: we hope not only to make a meaningful contribution to support-worthy initiatives around the world, but also to celebrate and document, in all their richness and diversity, some of the defining struggles of our time.

The *Silent Lecture Series* is a globally distributed, open-source, collaborative event. Hence, in principle anyone can do a *Silent Lecture*. All it takes is **an issue** (or complex of issues) and **a place** where that issue resonates so much that it can be summarised in a single word and still be understood by many, if not all. Given the site-specific nature of *Silent Lectures*, they need to be **framed and developed locally**.

Silent Lectures are acts of solidarity, of shared grief, joy or anger. Their poetic force lies in the simplicity and authenticity of the format used. When thinking about hosting a *Silent Lecture*, a number of elements need to be considered by the host. These are:

- **Project participants & audiences:** There are three groups involved, all three are important: local participants, local audiences and the host's global audience. All participants and local audiences are drawn from local communities and affiliated movements. They are politically aligned, emotionally supportive and share the host's concerns. The host's global audience, which we reach through the internet and other media, is heterogeneous and not necessarily sympathetic to the host's cause.
- **A specific topic:** A widely shared concern that deeply matters to local participants and local audiences, a loss, pain or injustice for instance, that can be expressed in a single word or phrase and still be understood by everyone.
- **A particular place:** A historic site that embodies/reflects the concern in question, a place where the chosen topic resonates. *Silent Lectures* are site-specific events.

- **Documentation:** A process that allows the host to document photographically the context (topic), development (process) and staging (site) of the *Silent Lecture*.
- **Contextualisation:** A mechanism for commissioning up to three papers or articles from local authors that contextualise the *Silent Lecture* and its topic.

Of these five elements, two deserve further consideration. These elements are the host's local participants and audience and the need for engaging writers.

Silent Lectures work only when the local participants and audience are fully invested emotionally in the development of 'their' *Silent Lecture*. In some cases, we achieve this by organising a series of workshops. Through these workshops we are able to reach deep into the local community (our local audience) and collaboratively frame and distil the topic for a given *Silent Lecture*. The workshop participants in that case are not only 'the ears', but also 'the eyes' of the initiative, documenting photographically the entire process, including the staging of the *Silent Lecture* itself. However, there are also less formalised ways of building consensus. It all depends on the budget, historical context and how well integrated the local host is into the target community.

Since *Silent Lectures* are essentially silent contemplations of locally shared concerns, and since an appreciation of the context within which these concerns are embedded is an important element of the work at the global level where a knowledge of these issues cannot be taken for granted, we always invite up to three writers to engage with the proposed initiative from different (artistic, historic etc) perspectives. All writers involved are briefed on the particulars of the project and have access to the documentary material we collect (photographs etc). If they are based locally, they are also welcome to observe some of the workshops/outreach we conduct and will be invited to take part as members of the audience in the *Silent Lecture* they will be writing about. We expect each paper or essay to be approx. 1,200 words long and intend to publish them in English alongside the visual documentation of the project on silentlectures.org, as well as on unruhe.eu. Local hosts that are participating in the Democracy School's *Silent Lecture Series* are welcome to publish any material (writing and documentation) generated in this process through their own channels as well. Subject to funding, we also hope to produce a highly visual coffee table publication or catalogue which we plan to distribute internationally through our partnership network (local hosts).

Further information about Nicodemus, aka Nico Andreas Heller, can be found at mutualground.net, his personal website. Anyone interested in hosting a *Silent Lecture*, please get in touch using the contact details provided in the footer below.

We look forward to hearing from you.