

## ARTH1128 – Global Perspectives on Western Art: Renaissance to the Present

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Focusing on the “western tradition” of visual art from the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup>, this course tracks how historical forms of global exchange (political, social, economic, cultural) impacted the production and uses of visual culture in Europe and the Americas. Beginning in the period when a global world history first emerged, we'll examine how selected artistic traditions were allied to forms of global expansion. Broadly, these include the growth of maritime trade and humanist thought in Renaissance Italy; the global influence of the Ottoman Empire; Dutch trade and international market economies in the 17<sup>th</sup> century; Spanish expansion in Europe and the New World; the transatlantic slave trade and its global impact; the European “Age of Empire”; 19th century imperialism and Europe’s colonial enterprise; the impact of modernization, and cultural/spatial globalization on visual representation in the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup>. Our aim is to examine visual arts and culture within their specific historical, social, and political contexts, and analyze how exchanges between the “West” and its “Others” not only shaped the subject matter of artworks, but their material forms, meanings, and functions. We'll see that these circumstances not only influenced artists' perceptions, but altered the motivations of patrons and publics (e.g. states, religious bodies, social/cultural elites), and recast the social and cultural expectations that were placed upon art and artists. They also opening-up new possibilities for artists and redefined the meaning of “creative expression.” Our aim is to examine how “global” exchanges fundamentally shaped “western” ways of imagining and representing not only “the world” out there, but “ourselves” as well.

This class is designed to help you increase your awareness of the historical origins of modern visual culture. It also highlights the diversity of human culture and experience by demonstrating the various ways in which Western cultures from the fifteenth century restated deeply held social values by means of the visual arts and architecture. The course foregrounds the multicultural character of “Western” society and culture, by drawing attention to global exchanges that historically shaped the dynamics of social, political and/or economic interconnections between European and non-European cultures.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

1. Describe the distinctive visual characteristics of the principal stylistic categories of painting, sculpture and/or architecture during the period studied.
2. Apply a working vocabulary and set of interpretive skills (ie. formal analysis, iconography) to analyze a range of works of art and architecture presented in this class.
3. Analyze how visual images and aesthetics functioned in the service of political, social, or religious interests in Europe/US during the period studied, and how they could also operate to critique, destabilize, or subvert those interests.
4. Explain how visual representation served to both create or reinforce social norms concerning race, gender, and social hierarchies and, at the same time, challenge or undermine these very norms.
5. Explain how visual art both shaped –and was shaped by-- factors such as global trade, colonial expansion, conquest and political relations on the part of European interests.

6. Analyze the specific historical contexts –ie. political, social, cultural circumstances—that shaped the visual/material forms, techniques, meanings and uses of art works.

Required Text:

• FRED S. KLEINER, GARDNER'S ART THROUGH THE AGES: THE WESTERN

PERSPECTIVE, 15<sup>TH</sup> ED., VOLUME II, CENGAGE, 2017. Kleiner's book is published in many different editions, so be sure to purchase only "THE WESTERN TRADITION" : only VOLUME II, and only the 15TH EDITION. Reading assignments are keyed ONLY to this edition: no other will do. You may rent or buy Kleiner's book (in e-book or print form) through Amazon, the UConn bookstore, etc.

### **Course requirements:**

The course will be graded on the following components:

1. Semester portfolio: **70% of the final grade.**

You are required every week to write up the visit made. This record may be maintained in electronic form, but the final version must be a physical object, a permanent reminder of what you have seen during the semester. You will be required to show your portfolio during the first half of the course, so that I can offer support and guidance.

The final book should have a word count of a minimum of 6,000 words which works out at a minimum of 600 words per weekly entry. Each week's entry should summarize the theme of our visit and also demonstrate some independent research concerning the gallery or exhibition viewed as well as evidence of thought and understanding of what you saw. It is important that you maintain this record on a weekly basis. You may also include independent visits to museums and galleries. These can be written up within the portfolio or included at the end. Please leave the first six pages of your book blank and complete these pages in December, adding a title page, contents page, introduction, photo etc.

Please start each new weekly entry on the right side of the book. Aim for clear presentation and to integrate text and image. Please cite the source of your information at the end of each entry.

Your final grade will be based on:

1. Semester portfolio: 70%
2. Presentation in the White Cube and Saatchi Gallery: 10% each = 20% of the final grade
3. Participation in discussion and evidence of independent study: 10%

### **COURSE OUTLINE**

#### **Week 1**

Introduction to the course. Students will look at examples of academic portfolios to gain an understanding of what is required from the student in compiling the portfolio.

This will be followed by a visit to the British Museum to see the Enlightenment Gallery, the Rosetta Stone, the Parthenon Marbles, and the influence of the Ottoman Empire.

We will also look at the contemporary installation: *Pharmacopoeia: From Cradle to Grave*, created by artist, textile maker and medical doctor, and consider the changing nature of contemporary artistic practice.

We will also discuss the concept and purpose of museums and collections.

Reading: <https://www.britishmuseum.org>

<https://blog.britishmuseum.org/14-things-not-to-miss-at-the-british-museum/>  
and discuss the concept and purpose of museums and collections.

## **Week 2**

Writing the canon.

How does the history of art write itself? Who are the artists included in the canon? Who decides on what is great art? We consider these questions in the first of our visits to the National Gallery. We will discuss the history of the National Gallery, focus on some of its highlight paintings, and consider the rationale behind its hang.

We consider humanist thought in Renaissance Italy, the growth of maritime trade, focussing on the Venetian Republic

Please meet outside the Sainsbury Wing of the National Gallery, Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 5DN opposite Canada House. Students to show journal.

Reading: <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk>

## **Week 3**

We return to the National Gallery to further consider the impact of trade routes and markets. We focus today on The Dutch Golden Age in which Dutch trade, science, art and the Dutch military were among the most acclaimed in Europe. We note that after an end to Spanish rule was reached in 1648 with the Peace of Münster, when Spain recognised the Dutch Republic as an independent country, a beginning of the Dutch Golden Age and the transition by the Netherlands to becoming the foremost maritime and economic power in the world, described as the "Dutch Miracle" by historian K. W. Swart. <http://www.dianamuirappelbaum.com/?p=583#.YyRUai8w3UI>

Meet outside the Sainsbury Wing of the National Gallery, Trafalgar Square WC2N 5DN, opposite Canada House.

## **Week 4**

The Great Tradition. Established in 1768 the Royal Academy holds a unique position as an independent, privately funded institution led by eminent artists and architects. Its purpose is to promote the creation, enjoyment and appreciation of the visual arts through exhibitions, education and debate. We will visit the recently-opened William Kentridge exhibition to look at the work of a south African artist whose art looks at politics and society in SA and beyond, and consider the global impact of the transatlantic slave trade, the European "Age of Empire", 19th century imperialism and Europe's colonial enterprise.

Meet in the RA courtyard, Burlington House, Piccadilly, W1J 0BD

Read: <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/exhibition/the-making-of-an-artist-the-great-tradition>

## Week 5

John Soane Museum: the Collector's Collection in the Age of Enlightenment

Described as the British Museum in a matchbox, this museum was the house of the eclectic and eccentric architect Sir John Soane, his academy and collection. We shall look at some of the highlights in the gallery and discuss our findings. We consider collecting and collections in the Age of Enlightenment.

Reading: <https://www.soane.org>

**Assignment 1: Academic portfolios to be shown. These must record all visits to date.**

Meet outside 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2A 3BP

## Week 6

Collecting and Collectors.

We visit the Wallace Collection to look at what was initially a private house and collection, and consider the impact of the recent reversal of the initial terms of the bequest. We consolidate our thoughts concerning Renaissance and Baroque painting, and again consider paintings made by artists in the Dutch Republic of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century.

Meet outside the Wallace Collection, Manchester Square WC1U 3BN.

Reading: <https://www.wallacecollection.org/art/collection/>

## Week 7

Art and Empire

The Great Exhibition was the first international exhibition of manufactured products and was enormously influential on the development of many aspects of society including art and design education, international trade and relations, and even tourism. Many of the objects in the Exhibition were used as the first collection for the South Kensington Museum which opened in 1857 and later became the Victoria and Albert Museum.

At the V & A (Victoria and Albert Museum), the national museum of art and design, we will consider works in the collection which not only highlight the power of Britain in the Age of Empire, but it also how this impacted on Europe and several other continents and sub-continent.

Prior to our visit please click to watch an introduction to The Great Exhibition of 1851 which formed the nucleus of what was to become the V&A:

<https://www.vandaimages.com/1000VD0015-A-Day-at-The-Great-Exhibition-Video-THIRD-PARTY.html>

and this on its construction:

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/videos/c/video-construction-of-the-crystal-palace/>

Meet inside the entrance hall of the V&A Cromwell Rd entrance, SW7 2RL

Reading: <https://www.vam.ac.uk/collections?type=featured>.

## **Week 8**

Art, Design and Empire

We return to the V&A where we continue to explore one of the world's largest collection of designed objects, please watch this video on the impact of connections between art, design and the British Empire:

**<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/videos/a/video-art,-design-and-empire/>**

We will also explore the New British Galleries, the world's most important collection of British art and design which is displayed in fifteen galleries which house some 3000 exceptional pieces of decorative and fine art spanning the four centuries, 1500-1900. These include a wide variety of ceramics, glass, furniture, metalwork, textiles, costume and wallpapers as well as books, sculpture, prints, paintings and drawings.

Meet inside the entrance hall of the V&A Cromwell Rd entrance, SW7 2RL

## **Week 9**

Britain in the Age of Empire.

In 21st century Britain, 'empire' is highly provocative. Its histories of war, conquest and slavery are difficult and painful to address but its legacy is everywhere and affects us all. We will explore how artists from Britain and around the world have responded to the dramas, tragedies and experiences of the Empire, and at how the histories of the British Empire have shaped art past and present. Contemporary works suggest that the ramifications of the Empire are far from over. We will think about ownership, authorship and how the value and meanings of these diverse objects have changed through history, it also asks what they still mean to us today.

Meet in the Manton entrance of Tate Britain, Atterbury Street, Pimlico SW1P 4RG.

Reading: Reading: <https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/collection>

## **Week 10**

Art, industry and collections

Many of the great collections in Europe and the USA were founded on the wealth of great industrialists, men who had made their money in trade, who bought and later bequeathed their art collection to the nation. These collections reflect tastes of the day, and show us how a collector building a collection looks to tell a story. Today we will look at the collection of the industrialist Samuel Courtauld, currently located in the magnificent historical setting of Somerset House on the Embankment. The Courtauld Gallery is home to one of the greatest art collections in the UK, and provides us with a walk through the history of western art we have been looking at over the past two months. We shall focus on his collection of Impressionist paintings, and consider how they reacted to the prevailing norms of the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup>-century.

**Assignment 2: Academic portfolios to be shown. These must record all visits to date.**

Meet: Courtauld Institute of Art, Somerset House, Strand, London WC2R 0RN.

Read: <https://courtauld.ac.uk>

## Week 11

### The 21<sup>st</sup>-century gallery

Today we visit Tate Modern to consider art of the twentieth century and that of our own century, and see a new kind of hang: one which is neither chronological nor focused on European or American art. Tate looks to move away from the traditional hang, to look at art from other continents. Tate Modern's WoWA (world of women artists) has had an ongoing impact; the Tate aims to foreground women artists and to include those not always working in Europe or the USA.

We will visit the exhibition: *Year in Art: Australia 1992* which brings together works by Australian artists to examine debates around land rights and the ongoing legacies of colonialism which takes as its starting point the landmark 1992 High Court ruling in favour of Torres Strait Islander land-rights activist Edward Koiki Mabo. The ruling overturned terra nullius (meaning 'land belonging to no-one'), the doctrine on which the British justified colonising the land now known as Australia. The exhibition explores how artists have acknowledged the continuing relationship Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with their lands, as well as the ongoing impact of colonisation and the complexities of representation in Australian society today.

Meet in Turbine Hall, Level 0 of Tate Modern, Bankside SE1 9TG

Read: <https://www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-modern>

## Week 12

### The White Cube

We visit the White Cube Gallery, Bermondsey to look at one of the premier commercial art galleries in the UK. Here we will view the work of Harland Miller's solo exhibition of new hard-edge and abstract letter paintings alongside the latest works from his renowned book cover series.

Harland Miller is an artist and writer whose peripatetic career has included time spent in both Europe and America. After living and exhibiting in New York, Berlin and New Orleans during the '80s and '90s, Miller achieved critical acclaim with his debut novel, *Slow Down Arthur, Stick to Thirty* (2000), the story of a kid who travels around northern England with a David Bowie impersonator.

As a writer, Miller's novels and short stories often take his autobiography as the point of departure. A love of books themselves, not only as the carriers of stories but as objects in their own right, equally pervades his artistic practice. In his paintings and works on paper Miller regularly sets up the potential for narratives, characterised by their humanity and tragi-comedy, using titles, phrases or single words to echo or allow for multiple readings.

The exhibition coincides with the release of a revised and expanded edition of *In Shadows I Boogie*, Phaidon's major monograph dedicated to the artist.

Meet outside the gallery at 144 Bermondsey St SE1 3TQ.

Read: <https://whitecube.com>

## Week 13

We meet in class to review the themes we have discussed and works we have seen, to draw together the threads we have traced and consolidate our learning.

## **Week 14**

**Assignment 3: Academic portfolios to be submitted. These must record all visits to date.** This will include a 600+ word entry for every visit made plus frontispiece/dedication/reflection, introduction.

Portfolios will be returned to the Faculty Office for students to collect before departing the UK